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B.Ed.(Hons.), M.A.

**THE EMBODY-MENT OF POWER? -
WOMEN AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**CENTRE FOR SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the connections between being physically active and becoming empowered. It centres on the experiences of women and investigates their involvement in physical activity and how this relates to the rest of their lives and their subjectivities. In so doing the research explores the relation between physicality and social power, and considers the role of the body in the construction of gender power relations. The key concepts used to explore this area are agency and structure, hegemony, negotiation, empowerment and physicality. More broadly the research has been informed by debates in feminist postmodernism and poststructuralism.

The main data set were generated through interviews with twenty-eight women with additional information coming from questionnaires returned by one hundred and seventy-two women representing a range of activity levels, ages and class locations. The findings were generated largely from the experiences of white women living in a market town within commuting distance of London.

The findings demonstrate the potential for women to become empowered through their bodies, as a result of being involved in physical activity. The acquisition of new skills and the discovery of new physical potential in their bodies such as feeling stronger, having more energy, were foregrounded by the women as being important to them. This led them to feeling more positive about themselves and their potential. There was nothing to suggest that particular activities were more empowering than others, although the context and purpose of the activity was found to be important. There is little evidence of there being any difference between working-class and middle-class women in terms of their experience of empowerment or disempowerment through physical activity. The findings also highlight the need to set an understanding of physical activity within the context of intra-household relations. By doing this it is argued that we are better able to understand how the construction of women's subjectivities operates simultaneously across fields of activity.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A Statement of Aims

This research focuses on the possible connections between being physically active and becoming empowered. It centres on the experiences of women and investigates their involvement in physical activity and how this relates to the rest of their lives and their subjectivities. In so doing the research explores the connections between physicality and social power, and considers the role of the body in the construction of gender power relations.

To develop a more holistic understanding of women's physicality and empowerment, the research seeks to explore the place of physical activity in the women's lives and to understand this within the context of their households. In so doing this research enables further insights to be gained into the way in which women's leisure is part of the fabric of household life and intra-household relations, not least because it may affect what other household members do. This also facilitates an examination of how gendered identities are constructed by the women (and by others) both within, and outside of, the household. The focus on day-to-day life also contributes to a more detailed understanding of how gender power relations are worked and reworked. The household and the body are therefore regarded as key sites for the working out of gender power relations.

Whilst exploring the possible connections between involvement in physical activity and empowerment, the research examines the extent to which certain experiences may well be disempowering for some women. Physical activity and the dominant discourse of

male sport could potentially serve to alienate them from their bodies and from others (Brohm 1978; Whitson 1994). The research therefore considers the nature of women's experiences of physical activity that, it could be argued, are empowering or disempowering, in order to identify any key aspects. In so doing it explores not just what the possibilities for empowerment are, but also what the limits are, and for whom. The research therefore examines how what women bring to the activities (that is, their subjectivities) interacts with their experiences of the activities and the context of them. The context of the activity (for example, team or individual, competitive or recreational) is regarded as being an important dimension of the experience and one that Theberge (1987) and Whitson (1994) suggest is important.

One final aim of the research is related to both my theoretical and political stance as a feminist. Like Smith (1987) I think it is important that as feminists we should seek to find ways of enabling ourselves and other women to explore our potential. The research was therefore, not only about developing an understanding of the connections between empowerment and physicality, but also potentially about producing 'useful' knowledge to facilitate change. My particular feminist stance is somewhat problematic to label and contains traces of postmodernism and poststructuralism,¹ whilst not losing sight of the day-to-day reality of many women's lives as they variously continue to struggle in a capitalist and patriarchal society (Scruton 1994).

Rationale

This research has been partly driven by a dissatisfaction with existing theories about gender power relations (as I discuss in Chapters Two and Three) which seem to underestimate the body as part of the nexus of gender power relations. While the connections between the body and gender power relations could have been explored through a variety of ways such as women's health or women's sexual relations, I decided that given my particular interest and background in sport, I would focus on women's leisure and their involvement in physical activity. The need to engage in such work has been borne out by comments from Theberge (1987, 1991), Hall (1993b),

Scruton (1994) and Hargreaves (1994), who point to the paucity of research in this area.

Since this research was started, there has been much theorising about the body in a modern and postmodern world, but there still remains little empirical work against which to test theoretical concepts and perspectives. The research is therefore firstly directed at exploring the wider context of women's leisure: how women win time for leisure from paid employment, household labour and other commitments. Secondly, it seeks to explore the role that leisure plays in women's lives, what they do with their leisure time, and what it offers them. Finally, it focuses on the potential for involvement in physical activity to lead to empowerment. In so doing it explores women's relation to their bodies and the extent to which they accept or resist dominant discourses of women's bodies as needing to be slim, toned and young.

Despite Theberge's (1987) suggestions that women involved with team sports are more likely to experience those activities as empowering because of their collective nature, this research has focused primarily on individual activities. This was largely because the participation figures that were available suggested that the majority of physically active women in Britain participated in indoor, keep-fit type of activities (Matheson 1991; Central Statistical Office 1989).

Background

An Autobiographical Note

The impetus for engaging in this research came partly from reflecting on my own experiences of physical activity, and partly from a dissatisfaction I experienced with the lack of research which explored the possible connection between physicality and social power. I was doing what Mills (1961:196) advocates all researchers should do, when he argued that as a researcher: '... you must learn to use your life experiences in your intellectual work: continually to examine and interpret it'. Mills' ideas have much in common with feminist research (Stanley and Wise 1993) which has long argued that

women's experiences (as researcher and researched) are not just valid data but are also central to the research process. In this sense then, Mills' work appealed to me as a framework for good practice, not just as a social scientist, but as a feminist social scientist.

If Mills had been writing now he would probably have been an advocate of the use of auto/biography² in research, and it is with an autobiographical note that I can best illustrate how this research grew out of my own experiences.³ Knowing where to begin the story is not as easy as it sounds. Logically it could begin with when the research began, but in reality that was not when the ideas that culminated in the research began to form. The trail needs to go further back to include some of my own experiences of being physically active.

As a child and young woman, I led a very active sporting life supported by a middle class background. Although both my parents had been actively involved in sport in their youth, their later involvement was limited to playing with me and my sisters. They encouraged us to be active if that was what we wanted to do so long as we were not going to come to any harm, and as long as it did not interfere with our school work. A very supportive secondary school Physical Education (PE) department along with some local senior clubs enabled me to develop with the help of specialised coaching. My recollections as a child were of enjoying sport: I liked being outside, it was to me very playful. As I grew older, the action became more focused on one sport (hockey) in which I seemed to show most promise. I still enjoyed my sport, but it was not so playful, it was much more competitive against other teams and against others to get into representative teams: the outcome seemed to matter so much more. Conversely, the other physical activities which I managed to keep going became possibly more playful - they were light relief from the seriousness of disciplined training. Out of all these experiences I came to develop a sense of physical competence and accomplishment - I could turn my hand to most sports, it felt good. At school my sporting abilities were recognised; I knew I could do something. My sense of who I was, was connected to my physical competence. I was aware that this created some 'problems' in relation to others' perceptions of my gendered identity. By continuing

my participation in sport into my teenage years I was already marking myself out as different. As I entered my mid-teens I began to sense a change in reaction to my participation: 'wasn't I growing out of these things?' Although this was largely from some adults outside the family I was also aware that fewer and fewer of my female class-mates were still as involved in physical activity as I was.

Choosing to train as a PE teacher meant that I moved from a mixed school culture in which I was in the minority, to a women's PE college where I was one of the majority: there was no longer any need to justify and explain my involvement in sport. My experiences of being one of a very small number of active young women at school could have been quite threatening: I could possibly have succumbed to the norms for my age and sex and reduced or given up sport - but for some reason I did not. When I later reflected on my involvement in physical activity, I sensed that at least for me my confidence in my physical competence enabled me to operate in a more confident, if not assertive, manner socially. I was also aware that other women who had had quite different experiences of physical activity may have had a different relationship with their bodies and with the world around them. My interest therefore began to centre around the relationship between physical and social power and whether involvement in physical activity had the potential to empower women.

When reading about 'power' I became increasingly uneasy about the difficulty I was having in placing myself, as a woman, within the power nexus. By this I mean that the theories seemed too 'grand' and often they were gender blind (see Knights and Willmott 1985). It was not that the theories did not make any sense, but rather that they did not help explain how power (and powerlessness) was produced and reproduced at, and through, the level of the embodied individual.

In reading literature on gender and power, the work of Connell (1987) and De Beauvoir (1979) initially captured my interest because they, more than most, touched on the connections between physical and social power and their impact on men's and women's lives:

The social definition of men as holders of power is translated not only into mental body-images and fantasies, but into muscle tensions, posture, the feel and texture of the body. This is one of the main ways in which the power of men becomes “naturalized”, i.e. seen as part of the order of nature (Connell 1987:85).

The other [adolescent girl] simply submits; the world is defined without reference to her, and its aspect is immutable as far as she is concerned. This lack of physical power leads to a more general timidity: she has no faith in a force she has not experienced in her body; she does not dare to be enterprising, to revolt, to invent; doomed to docility, to resignation, she can take in society only a place already made for her. She regards the existing state of affairs as something fixed (De Beauvoir 1979:355).

These quotations illustrate that the common-sense view of power as being ‘natural’ is a very strong one. De Beauvoir argues that the adolescent girl who has not been given an opportunity to explore the physical capacity of her body, in effect sees no alternative to filling the role allocated to her. Connell’s point is slightly different as he highlights that power (and powerlessness) conveyed by the body tends to be seen as natural and thus it masks the ways in which power (both physical and social) is socially constructed.

Connell’s and De Beauvoir’s work touched on some of the ideas I had been considering, but when I considered them in the light of my own experiences and other material that I had read they also raised some questions in my mind. The first major question centred around my unease with the seemingly universal categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’. Was this the case for all men and all women? Clearly whilst my own experiences of physical activity had resulted in my feeling powerful in my body and able to have some impact on the world around me, I suspected that this was not necessarily the case for many others. Being white, middle class and able-bodied had, I felt, put me at an advantage when compared to other women. The second question concerned the nature of the connection (or connections if any) between social and physical power. How could it (or they) be identified? To help answer these questions I

turned initially to work on women and leisure, and then onto more 'mainstream' feminist literature.

Researching Women's Leisure - an overview

Early writing on leisure (e.g. Smith et al. 1973) is characterised by its failure to address the way in which an individual's experience of leisure is mediated by gender. Although much of the research at this time was on men's leisure, even this was not understood as being something that was gendered. The 'sin' of neglecting women's leisure as being worthy of research, was therefore compounded by the fact that even the study of leisure that was being conducted (on men's leisure), neglected its gendered nature. This lack of empirical and theoretical vision was not, as Davies (1992) suggests, only a problem experienced by leisure researchers. He notes that social historians have also neglected women's leisure, and have therefore only been partially able to explore women's lifestyles.

Women were therefore rendered invisible owing to two inter-related factors: first, because the majority of those writing were male, and wrote about leisure from a predominantly male perspective; and second, because the theoretical perspectives adopted failed to pose critical questions about gender. Related to this was the fact that the identification of the main areas for inquiry and debate within any field was not necessarily a reflection of what was happening in the world, but rather it represented the preoccupations of those in gate-keeping positions within that field. It was their view of the world, and the problems therein, that set the tone for the rest. An example of this was the residual definition of leisure that was popular with leisure theorists in the 1960's. This definition of leisure claimed that leisure time was that which was left over after employment and other obligations have been fulfilled. As Green et al. (1987:9) point out, there have been problems with defining leisure in relation to employment:

This conceptual starting point led to a heavy concentration in both theoretical and empirical work on white male workers' class position, occupational cultures and associated leisure activities. Women, insofar as they featured at

all, appeared as the partners of the men studied, and yet the findings were presented as axioms of general relevance and applicability.

Associated with the dichotomous work/leisure definition was the notion that leisure activities were somehow freely chosen. As Featherstone (1987) points out such a view was later supplanted by one which saw leisure 'choices' as being limited and constrained by women's and men's position within the social structure. More recently these ideas have been developed within a theory of structuration which draws attention to the enabling aspects of power rather than focusing (as much modernist work did) on the constraining dimensions of power. The work of Giddens and others who have led the field in relation to structuration theory is not without its critics, for Wearing (1992) finds it over-deterministic and therefore problematic in terms of its usefulness to feminist theorising.

The more recent developments of postmodernism have been observed by Scraton (1994) as leading to leisure research becoming more focused on aspects of leisure consumption. As a result she argues that attention is diverted away from the everyday reality of women struggling over leisure. This perhaps goes some way to explaining the paucity of recent research on women's leisure, that she notes, since the mid-eighties when Deem (1986), Wimbush (1986) and Green et al (1987) conducted their large scale studies.⁴ A more favoured approach is one which draws on poststructuralist theory and focuses on the construction of diverse subjectivities within a fragmented and changing world. The focus on postmodernism and poststructuralism as possible ways of understanding women's leisure has drawn leisure research closer to 'mainstream' feminist work.

Feminist Theorising and Research on Sport and Leisure

Parallel to the research in leisure has been the growing field of 'mainstream' feminist research. Many aspects of women's lives were reviewed by the 'new' feminist writers of the 1970s, although the focus tended to be on housework, employment, the family and health, whilst sport and leisure were rarely considered. Much of this research (e.g.

Oakley 1976; Mitchell and Oakley 1976; Rowbotham 1979) served to reveal not only the suppression of accounts of women's lives, but also highlighted the oppressive conditions of many women's lives that many had previously viewed as being unproblematic. Despite the growing body of feminist writings in the early 1960s it was not until the mid-eighties that the women's movement, and feminist theory and writing, began to have a significant impact on the study of sport and leisure. As Rojek (1985, 1995) and others (Hargreaves 1986) have commented, academics began to realise that it was no longer acceptable to conceptualise about sport and leisure in a way which negated women's experiences of leisure. This later developed into a more widespread recognition that the myopia that had led to women being ignored had also produced a very incomplete understanding of the role that sport plays in the construction of masculinity (Kidd 1987; Messner and Sabo 1990). In general feminist literature has paid, and continues to pay, very little attention to leisure per se, because it is regarded as a tangential issue when set in the context of women's lives.⁵ The lack of material on leisure in feminist magazines such as *Trouble and Strife* and *Everywoman*,⁶ and journals such as *Feminist Review* supports this claim. Sport and leisure issues were, and to some extent still are, marginal to mainstream feminist concerns whilst other aspects of social and cultural life are regarded as being more important.

Despite such marginalisation, feminist theory and writing has clearly had a major impact on the study of leisure. It has prompted a rethink of what 'work' was and, in so doing, unshackled the constrained views not only of leisure, but also more widely of gender power relations. More recently the debates over postmodernism, poststructuralism and feminism have led to a re-evaluation of the ability of feminism(s) to explain women's lives. Central to this debate has been a discussion about the construction of gender power relations. The impact of research in leisure and sport on feminism has been marginal, yet this research seeks to draw these fields of leisure studies and feminist theorising closer together in order to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the connections between physicality, empowerment and gender power relations.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapters Two and Three explore and develop some of the theoretical issues raised in this introduction. Chapter Two examines theories of power, gender and the body and focuses on what are argued to be key sensitising concepts such as hegemony, agency, and empowerment. It argues for a theoretical approach which recognises the corporeal dimensions of agency. Building on the theoretical insights developed in Chapter Two, Chapter Three considers the interplay between women's lives in employment, the household, leisure and physical activity. The dominant discourses concerning women and the household are examined as well as those that centre on physical activity and sport. The chapter also discusses women's resistance to dominant discourses through physical activity and sport and concludes with a statement of the research questions. Chapter Four maps out the methodological underpinnings to the research, setting the scene for Chapter Five which describes how the research was conducted. Chapter Five also demonstrates how the research strategies and techniques adopted reflect the methodological debates discussed in Chapter Four.

The findings of the research are presented and discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, with Chapter Six specifically examining intra-household relations, dominant discourses re women and their impact on the women's subjectivities and leisure. Chapter Seven focuses on the women's experiences of physical activity and examines how the different women have constructed their particular subjectivities. By structuring the discussion in this way it is possible to develop an understanding of how household relations set the scene for understanding the women's experiences of physical activity. It also enables the development of a more holistic understanding of the women's diverse subjectivities. Chapter Seven reveals the often contradictory nature of the women's lives and concludes by considering the connections between involvement in physical activity, physicality and empowerment.

In Chapter Eight the value of the key sensitising concepts is assessed in the light of the previous discussion and an assessment is made of where the research has taken an understanding of the connections between women's leisure, involvement in physical activity and empowerment. Chapter Nine concludes with an evaluation of the extent to

which the aims of the research have been met, and also reflects critically upon the research. Finally, recommendations are made for future research that could further develop our understanding of leisure, physical activity, empowerment and gender power relations.

¹ The contribution of postmodernism and poststructuralism is discussed in the following two chapters.

² The term auto/biography is borrowed from the BSA's Auto/Biography Study Group who aim to explore the 'intertextuality between biography, autobiography, texts and lives' (Auto/Biography 1995:141).

³ See also Gilroy (1996 in press) for further discussion of this.

⁴ The merits of this research in the mid-eighties is evaluated quite differently by Scraton (1994) and Rojek (1995). Scraton, whilst recognising that the research is located within modernist theorising of the time still sees much value in the development these studies made to our understandings of women and leisure. Rojek on the other hand is much more dismissive and claims that such work describes women's leisure in terms of self-denial and self-mutilation whilst also omitting any sense that women might enjoy their leisure with men (1995:34).

⁵ Elizabeth Robert's (1984) study of working-class women (1890-1940) illustrates this point, with only four pages (pp. 68-72) being devoted to leisure. 'Leisure' does surface elsewhere in the book, although only in passing.

⁶ An exception to this is the July 1996 edition of *Everywoman* which unusually had five pages devoted to women and sport.

CHAPTER TWO

POWER, GENDER AND THE BODY

Introduction

This chapter begins to shape the theoretical framework used in the research. No one theoretical framework or meta-narrative is employed, for, as this chapter outlines, I am arguing that there is none that I have found sufficiently sensitive. Rather what I have done is to draw upon what Giddens (1991) calls 'sensitizing concepts', concepts which I feel have something to offer our understanding of power, gender, the body and the interconnections between. Having said this, it will be apparent from Chapter 1, that my own stance is rooted in a concern for the position of women in society, and that politically and theoretically I identify myself as a feminist. What 'sort' of feminist is something I develop later in this chapter, although I am reluctant to attach a particular label to my feminism because there are none which I believe encapsulate my stance at present.

Also, since the research was started, the theoretical terrain has altered, and so as a result has my conceptualisation of the interconnections between power, gender and the body. Poststructuralist and postmodernist feminist theories have drawn my attention to considering the diversity of women's subjectivities and how these are constructed. The work on empowerment, particularly in feminist work, has highlighted the political dimensions of power, as well as the importance of considering the social contexts within which women operate. This chapter therefore reflects these developments, although it must be noted that some of ideas discussed in this chapter were not generally understood at the time when I was planning, nor indeed at the time I was

gathering the data. I have, however, been able to draw upon these more recent insights when analysing the data.

Traditional Conceptualisations of Power

Discussions of power have been central to most analyses of modern capitalist societies. Both functionalist and marxist theorists have struggled to make sense of how power is produced and reproduced. Functionalists have for the most part understood the locus of power to be in bureaucratic structures, whilst for marxists the locus of power is firmly rooted in the relations and forces of production. The functionalist emphasis, of power as being linked to system needs, has been a major weakness which some marxist analyses have sought to avoid. However, although marxism is more sensitive to power as being both dispositional and relational, it in turn has been criticised for tying power to production and class relations. The problem with orthodox marxism has been that due to the emphasis on class location and relations, it becomes hard to envisage power as being something that an individual might exercise. Althusser's structural marxist stance illustrates this problem, as the power of the ideological and repressive state apparatus seems total. It becomes hard to see how an individual/agent can have any capacity to act back - to change. Before these problems can be addressed it is important to clarify what is meant by 'power'.

Traditionally power has been predominantly viewed as a dispositional concept, that is power is: '...the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others' (Wrong 1979:1). In viewing power in this way there is the danger of seeing power as having its location in the individual, rather than in the structure (of which the individual is a part). Often from this perspective power is seen in zero-sum terms, that is, the more power A has, the less B has. There are problems with this, however, for as Anyon (1983) suggests, even the apparently powerless can and do wield some power.

To take this one step further, we need to consider how power is manifested and what form(s) it takes.

Wrong (1979) argues for a typology of power which identifies four types of power: force, manipulation, persuasion, and authority. Although he argues that power is when influence is intended, he does not fall into the trap of identifying power only when there is something observable (see also Lukes 1980). Some of the early work on power focused on decision-making and, as such, proof of power was seen in particular decisions being made. What such an understanding of power failed to recognise is that power can also entail the containment of, or even the absence of, decisions and actions. As Lukes points out:

Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have - that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? (1980:23).

He continues, arguing that: 'the most insidious use of power is to prevent conflict from arising in the first place' (1980:23). Whilst this definition has some intuitive appeal, the problem then becomes one of being able to find empirical evidence that demonstrates that an individual would or could have responded differently if unconstrained. Power though is not just a matter of action or non-action: it is also about ideas and thought: e.g. ideas about what is or is not possible, what ought or ought not to be. This view of power implies that individuals have the capacity to exercise power. How individuals come to have power is, however, a matter of some debate.

Drawing on symbolic interaction, theorists such as Goffman, and Berger and Luckman see the interaction of individuals as the starting point for any analysis of power. The focus, particularly in Goffman's work, becomes one of how the 'actor' constructs presentations of the self depending on the social setting. There is a danger, however, that by focusing on the individual's ability to be powerful we lose sight of the

significance of the actor's social and cultural location, whereas a relational view of power, such as that held by Giddens (1993a), is more concerned with the relation between an individual and the social structure.¹

Seeing power, in relational terms, makes it possible to grasp the notion that often individuals have power not because of who they are, but because of their relation to a particular social group i.e. men, ethnic and religious majorities, or the middle class, and because of their economic and cultural location. It is through that group's ability to acquire and control the distribution of the necessary resources that the individual acquires power. It becomes important then to see power not as something which is located in particular structures or particular people, but as something that is possibly centred around key structures and groups, and diffused throughout all levels of society.²

Although not rejecting the 'fact' that power is located in the processes of production and reproduction (both biological and social), Giddens' (1979) reinterpretation of marxism sees as possible the capacity of individuals to act back, resist and change the structures they are part of. His theory of structuration is an attempt to grasp the impact of structure upon an individual's action as well as seeing the individual as having some agency, despite being part of that structure.³ By so doing, it moves towards dismantling any dualism of structure/agency.

In addition to this work there is an increasing wealth of theoretical analyses of the power structures which serve to oppress women (Barrett 1980; Kuhn and Wolpe 1980; Delphy 1984). Much of the feminist work has taken a relational view of power and considered women's power and powerlessness in the context of a patriarchal society. In criticising some feminist work for seeing women's subordination as being the product of a single power structure Connell (1987), identifies Mitchell's analysis as being more sensitive to the complexities of power. Mitchell identifies four main

structures through which male power is asserted: production, reproduction, socialization and sexuality. Connell makes an apt point here about the complexity of power and the way in which it is experienced, and therefore should be theorised. However, we still have to guard against an oversimplistic view of each of the four structures: they do not operate individually. Other writing, rooted in feminist theory and focusing on women and sport and leisure, has also challenged traditional marxist conceptions of power (Hall 1985; Bray 1984; Bryson 1987).

However, despite these developments, there is still the danger of what Crompton and Mann (1986) identify as 'depersonalizing the agent'. In other words, in the process of theorising there is a danger of losing sight of the individual. By so doing, the subsequent analysis remains undeveloped and most probably one-dimensional in nature. This lack of sensitivity to the individual's experience of the social structure, and how he/she makes sense of the day-to-day negotiations of power reflects a conceptual weakness in macro analyses.

Another problem with some analyses of power is the over-socialised view of men and women that is perpetuated by neglecting the fact that although we are social beings we are also physical beings. Both micro and macro theorists have had a tendency to 'write out the person'. This study seeks to 'write the person in', and in particular to write women and their bodies in, as part of an analysis of the production and reproduction of power, and not just as a tacked on part of the analysis.

The remainder of this chapter turns to focus on some of the specific issues raised in this overview of the main concerns about conceptualising power: the relationship between the individual and the social structure; the nature of power (its social and physical basis); the exercise of power and the body and power. The following key 'sensitizing' concepts and theories will be examined in relation to these concerns: hegemony; agency and structure; postmodern and poststructural feminist theories and

empowerment.

Hegemony

Following a rejection of orthodox functionalist and marxist approaches to the production and reproduction of power, the work of Antonio Gramsci offered new insights into the operation of power. Like Foucault, whose contribution will be discussed later, Gramsci was interested in the diffusion of power and the ways by which particular views or discourses come to predominate at any given time. Gramsci's (1986) theory of hegemony points to the connections between culture and ideology in explaining class domination. Gramsci saw both civil society and the state as being implicated in the hegemonic process. Hegemony was, he described, a process of struggle in which the dominant group or class strives to foresee problems and resistance, and contain them.

The formation of this class involved the gradual but continuous absorption, achieved by methods which varied in their effectiveness, of the active elements produced by allied groups - and even of those which came from antagonistic groups and seemed irreconcilably hostile (Gramsci 1986:58-59).

The subordinate group in the meantime would struggle to win some ground and retain control over some areas of their lives which they could call their own.

Central to Gramsci's (1986:57) concept of power is the way in which the dominant group wins over (temporarily at least) the subordinate group, thereby maintaining its domination. If such domination relied on force then it could be argued that hegemony had broken down and had been replaced by coercion. To persuade the subordinate group to perceive the dominant group's power and position as being legitimate, right and natural was the goal of hegemony. If such power was seen to be illegitimate then resistance would most probably be more vehement, and the stability of the social structure would be threatened. As Gruneau (1993:98) remarks:

Hegemony works best when it concedes to opposition on the margins in order to retain the core principles upon which particular forms of dominance are sustained.

Exactly how hegemony is to be achieved is less clear.

Gramsci's ideas however have found favour within the sociology of sport and leisure where attempts to explain power relations (in terms of class, gender and ethnicity) had previously centred around marxist or functionalist analyses.⁴ Messner and Sabo (1990) and Hargreaves (1986) argue that hegemony can go further than traditional Marxist theories in explaining the nature of accommodation and resistance between dominant and subordinate groups in sport and leisure. Clearly one of the attractions of the concept of hegemony is that it gives us one way of explaining why women at times seem to collude with men in their own oppression, and why men as a social group do not need to resort to force to win women's consent for maintaining discriminatory practices.

In discussing hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1987) emphasises the way in which hegemony is constructed in relation not only to women but also to subordinated masculinities. He also signals the role of the body in this process:

The social definition of men as holders of power is translated not only into mental body-images and fantasies, but into muscle tensions, posture, the feel and texture of the body (Connell 1987:85).

Physical prowess, he argues, is a way by which men judge their degree of masculinity, but it is not a simple process for:

The physical sense of maleness is not a simple thing. It involves size and shape, habits of posture and movement, particular physical skills and the lack of others, the image of one's own body, the way it is presented to other people and the ways they respond to it, the way it operates at work and in sexual relations (Connell 1987:84).

Bolstering hegemonic masculinity is what Connell calls 'emphasized femininity', a form of femininity which caters for men's needs and interests. Emphasized femininity also reflects the heterosexual nature of hegemonic masculinity and therefore acts to silence and contain alternatives that may develop in resistance. There is still much work to be done exploring how and why some people resist constructions of femininity or masculinity, but others do not. Whitson (1994:365) would welcome such enquiry for he argues that by focusing on strategies of incorporation there is a danger of down-playing the extent to which people have successfully challenged dominant constructions of their gender identity and displayed alternatives to the dominant body culture.

Although in Connell's work there is a sense of the corporeality of power⁵, Gramsci's (1986) work is like that of most other social theory in that it does not consider the body as being part of the power nexus. This limitation probably centres around Gramsci's focus on people as intellectuals thereby neglecting an understanding of them as being embodied (Gruneau 1993). What needs to be explored further are the limits and potential for resistance, both of a bodily and social/political nature, to hegemonic ideas. One theoretical area which may be useful in this regard is that of structuration.

Agency and Structure

The question of agency and its relationship with structure are issues which Giddens (1993a) has sought to tackle with his exposition of structuration theory.

In seeking to come to grips with problems of action and structure, structuration theory offers a conceptual scheme that allows one to understand both how actors are at the same time the creators of social systems yet created by them (Giddens 1991:204).

Part of Giddens' agenda is driven by a concern that structures have generally been conceptualised as putting constraints on people's agency and, that by so doing, the enabling dimensions of structures have been neglected. Gruneau (1993) supports this

view arguing that power has its purchase not because of its 'oppressive weight' but because it is the means by which things happen. This is not to say that Giddens argues that agency is unfettered, and in this sense his work connects with that of Marx and Gramsci when he states that:

The realm of human agency is bounded. Men (sic) produce society, but they do so as historically located actors, and not under conditions of their own choosing (1977:160).

In defining agency Giddens highlights two key points; firstly that it:

... concerns events of which an individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently (1993a:13).

and secondly, that:

Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but in their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency implies power...) (ibid).

It follows therefore that people may not be fully aware of the agency that they have and the power that they are able to exercise. Giddens (1993a) distinguishes between a lack of awareness and what actors know, but cannot describe (practical consciousness), and what actors are able to say about what they do (discursive consciousness). To illustrate both practical and discursive consciousness, Giddens (1993a) draws upon Willis' work on working class lads, and their accounts of schooling, which demonstrate their understanding of the power relations within the school, as expressed via their description of 'having a laff' and 'pisstakes'. This is an important point because it draws attention to the way in which actors communicate their awareness of their agency in a variety of ways, through not just what they say, but how they say it and also through what they do.

In seeking to come to terms with an understanding of human action and agency Giddens (1993a:297) argues that 'All social interaction is expressed at some point in and through the contextualities of bodily presence'. In this sense Giddens' work seems to be highlighting a hitherto neglected corporeal dimension of human action. Unfortunately it is not one that he develops himself, although he does in various

writings (1991, 1993a) point to the work of others such as Willis (1977) and Connell (1987) (respectively), who make reference to this. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, to find Giddens (1993a) being critical of Foucault for not seeing bodies as agents, because, certainly in his work on structuration, there is little evidence which develops the notion of agents being embodied.⁶ In engaging with Foucault's notion of disciplinary power, Giddens adopts the premise that: 'Discipline can proceed only via the manipulation of time and space.' (1993a:145) and in so doing seeks to move our understanding of it beyond a focus on disciplinary institutions such as prisons or mental asylums, to understand how the body is disciplined in the workplace and in school where individuals have to be 'won over' to carry out certain tasks. Although Giddens' discussion does not extend so far, I feel that these ideas of the partitioning of time and space have something to offer our understanding of power relations and spaces such as 'public' spaces: the street, the park, the gym, and more 'private' spaces such as the kitchen and the bedroom.

Similarly, another 'sensitizing' concept that Giddens draws on is that of contradiction. Giddens uses the term to refer to the:

Opposition of structural principles, such that each depends upon the other and yet negates the other; perverse consequences associated with such circumstances (1993a:373).

The concept could, I believe, also be used to refer to contradiction at an individual level, such as when a woman displays a discursive consciousness about not feeling that she has as much right as her male partner to have leisure time to herself, whilst at the same time feeling that in her role as housewife it is not appropriate to expect him to feed himself while she goes out to have some leisure. The discourse in which she operates in relation to her role as a housewife contradicts that relating to her leisure identity. Giddens (1993a) distinguishes between contradiction and conflict, arguing that the latter implies some antagonism between actors. He goes further to argue that:

Insight into the nature of contradictions may initiate action directed towards resolving or overcoming them. But it would be a specious argument that links such insight only to social change. Contradiction is a source of dynamism, but an understanding of this on the part of the lay actors can promote attempts to

stabilize a given state of affairs as much as to transform it (Giddens 1993a:318).

In support of this point, he refers to Marx's view that when the working classes became aware of the contradictory nature of capitalism they would seek to transform it. To continue my earlier example, the fact that some women may be conscious of the contradictions in their lives does not mean that they will then seek to change their lives to reduce or eradicate the contradictions. Some women may be aware of contradictions and choose to live with contradictions, and others may not necessarily see them as being problematic. Giddens' explanation of why groups (such as the working class, to follow his example of Marx's ideas) might choose to live with contradictions is that dominant groups might seek to stabilize the system and minimise conflicts that might appear. This understanding brings us back to the relationship between agency and structure and the dialectic of control, whereby '... the less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful in established power relationships' (1993a:374).

In assessing the contribution of Giddens' work on structure and agency to an understanding of gender power relations, it does seem that whilst most of his discussions stay at an abstract level he does offer, through his discussions on practical and discursive consciousness, a way of explaining why agents may not always feel that they are 'agents'. Similarly, in considering how discipline operates through time and space, he widens the parameters of Foucault's discussions and draws it in to the structure / agency debate. This being said, it is disappointing that Giddens does not develop his ideas with reference to more concrete examples, for in staying at the level of the abstract he fails to engage fully with the sense that agents are social and physical beings with subjectivities which position them differently in relation to one another. Gender, ethnicity and sexuality are pushed to the margins, although he does mention the work of Connell, whom he sees as drawing successfully on his theory of structuration to discuss power and gender. Ironically, Connell (1987) argues that Giddens' emphasis on structure has lead him to swing too far back to classical structuralism. He criticises Giddens for adopting a rather static view of structure which negates the fact that it might change over time, and for seeing structure as

something which is monolithic, as opposed to Mitchell's (1971) view of there being four structures which relate to gender relations. Whilst I share some of Connell's earlier concerns with Giddens' work, his latter point concerning a static view of structure is not supported by my reading of some of Giddens' (1993b) more recent work such as 'The Transformation of Intimacy' where the focus is very much on change.

Giddens' influence can be traced in the work of Connell (1987, 1994) and others (such as McDermott 1996) who have sought to develop an understanding of agency which recognises our bodily existence. Connell (1994:13) argues: '... for a stronger theoretical position, where bodies are seen as sharing in social agency, in generating and shaping courses of social conduct'. He proposes that we begin to think in terms of body-reflexive practices to bring to the fore the way in which bodies are both the objects and agents of practice. McDermott (1996:19) prefers to adopt the term physical agency to highlight the way in which women can, through their bodies, resist (or accommodate) dominant structural constraints. Despite the differences in terminology both Connell and McDermott are attempting to develop Giddens' ideas re structuration whilst not falling into the trap of mind/body dualism. In doing this they make valuable contributions to the debate re the body, agency and structure which are discussed later in this chapter.

In any critique of Giddens' work, it must be noted that he is not particularly concerned with understanding gender power relations as such: his focus is rather on developing a meta-framework about human social interaction. It is appropriate therefore to turn to writers whose express aim is to develop better ways of understanding gender power relations and more particularly, to understand the position(s) of women.

Foucault and Feminism

Foucault's conceptualisation of power has, like Gramsci's, offered some insights into the view of power as being something that is diffused throughout society and not

belonging to particular groups or individuals. In addition to this, his work has also been seen as appealing because of the attention he pays to how the body is disciplined and regulated and to the role that experts and institutions play in this. His work, for example, on punishment and sexuality (Foucault 1977, 1984) focuses less on class domination and more on the processes by which dominant discourses (e.g. particular views of sexuality, and how the body should be regulated) come to hold sway. For these very reasons his work has been popular within feminist theorising, although there is some debate as to whether it is possible or desirable to attempt to combine the two. One of the main attractions of Foucault's work for feminists was that, in line with postmodernist thinking he argued that the body⁷ was not 'natural', but that it was produced through power and therefore was a social and cultural product. To understand the body, it is essential to understand the discourses within which the body is constructed, and then operates. Weedon (1989) concisely outlines the importance of discourse in Foucault's work:

Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern. Neither the body nor thoughts and feelings have meaning outside their discursive articulation, but the ways in which discourse constitutes the minds and bodies of individuals is always part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases (p.108).

In conceptualising power as being something invested in, and constructed through, bodies, Foucault was also saying something different about how power was distributed, which moved beyond the traditional liberal or marxist view of power as being something which a group or individual did or did not have. In proposing this alternative, whereby power was seen as being dispersed among people, Foucault's work was seen as being potentially very useful to feminists trying to explain women's power as well as their powerlessness. However, this swing away from seeing power as

resting with groups is in itself problematic; as is his view that power does not rest with particular groups and is therefore, in a sense everywhere. As the cover to Ramazanoglu's (1993) recent book asks: if this is the case, why don't women exercise more of it (power)?

The focus on discipline, surveillance, the power of discourse and normalising strategies in Foucault's work is also a cause for concern for some because it diverts attention from the positive and creative aspects of power (Gruneau 1993). Yet despite this the emphasis on the importance of language (which Foucault shares with many poststructuralists) draws us to seeing the body within historically specific discourses. For some feminists this clear rejection of a biological essentialism was perceived to be particularly useful in terms of its ability to challenge theories which assumed a naturalised body. Taken to its logical conclusion, the focus on discourse leads us to seeing the body as solely discursive.

Although his emphasis on a corporeal notion of power whereby the body is seen as being: '... the point where power relations are manifest in their most concrete form' (McNay 1992:16) was unique, Foucault's ideas have been criticised by some feminist writers (Bartky 1990; Diprose 1994). This criticism has centred on the lack of agency he sees individuals as having and secondly, because his analysis did not move into considering the gendered nature of power.

... Foucault treats the body throughout as if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life. Where is the account of disciplinary practices that engender the 'docile bodies' of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men? (Bartky 1990:65).

The value of his work to this study centres on the notion of the discourses about the body, sexuality and femininity which serve to affect the way women relate to their bodies. Linked to this, his work on surveillance and disciplinary practices is of

potential value in understanding the concern many women have about their body shape and how they look and more broadly how this may connect with patriarchy. To develop a better appreciation of the contemporary appeal of Foucault's work to some feminist writers it is worth briefly considering earlier feminist perspectives.

Modernist Feminism

Feminist sociological theory and research in the seventies was characterised by approaches which explored women's oppression in a rather deterministic way (Deem 1990). Whilst such theorising led to explorations of the nature of women's oppression and the dynamics of patriarchy, the resultant understandings seem somewhat deficient because they portrayed women as largely passive recipients of patriarchal ideology. The key factor in marxist analyses of women's oppression is class. It is this, rather than their gender, that is deemed to be the determining factor. The problem, as Hartmann (1987) points out, is that patriarchal oppression preceded capitalism. So whilst such theoretical explorations (e.g. Barrett 1980) may go some way to understanding oppression, they clearly do not go far enough, for they give us little purchase on the differing experiences of men and women in the same socio-economic position. The gender-blindness combined with other factors, such as determinism, that are seen to be so problematic in marxism, led theorists to look elsewhere for suitable explanatory frameworks. A plethora of alternatives have been advocated, for example postmodernist feminism, poststructuralism, Gramsci's hegemony, and Foucault's discourse theory.

As a precursor to discussing postmodernist feminism, it is worth assessing the impact of 'modernist' feminism. Despite Barrett and Phillips' (1992) dismissal of taxonomies of feminism, such as that discussed by Jagger and Struhl (1978), they still give us a starting point from which to move forward. Marxist feminists see women's oppression as being rooted in the political, social and economic structures of capitalism. For

women to be free, capitalism would have to be overthrown, and only then would the oppression of women end. Socialist feminists place neither patriarchal forms of oppression nor class oppression above each other. Rather they are seen as dual sources of power, which both need changing. In this approach, class and patriarchy combine to create specific forms of oppression, which went some way to explaining how men and women in the same socio-economic position may have had quite different experiences of leisure. Radical feminists stressed that it was male power, not capital, that was the reason for women's oppression. They did not agree that the liberal approach to working for change within the current social and political system would have any real impact on women's oppression.⁸ They also contested the notion that eradicating class oppression would lead to the dismantling of women's oppression. Unlike liberal or marxist feminism their view of the way forward reflected a diversity of opinions. Jaggar and Struhl (1978) identified two main approaches within radical feminism, one which sees biology as being oppressive, and the other which sees compulsory heterosexuality as being oppressive. The respective solutions are, through medical science, to free women from the strictures of reproduction and to develop a women-oriented existence, which in practice often means separatism. Whilst to work towards freeing women from the constraints of reproduction can be seen to have both short and long term positive effects, the development of a women-centred existence seems to be more of a restricted solution for some women, yet runs the risk of leaving structures of dominance in the wider world largely unchallenged. It could be argued though, that the contestation of compulsory heterosexuality is beneficial to all women and all men. However, as Connell (1987) points out, the problem is by no means a simple one. It is not just a matter of theorising about power in heterosexuality and homosexuality, but about power in all kinds of gender relations, of which homosexuality and heterosexuality are just two forms.

Such modernist feminist theories have been criticised for negating the power that women have to fight their oppression. Wearing and Wearing (1988:120) argue that a

more fruitful analysis would entail:

... a shift from the 'squashed ant' model of women's position to one of women as resistant individuals holding back the weight of power is more productive.

In advocating this shift, Wearing and Wearing draw upon Foucault's work on power, rejecting Lukes (1980) and others as being too negative. The attraction of Foucault's work for them is that: 'He demonstrates that leisure should be conceptualised as, simultaneously, freedom and control' (1988:121). Foucault also sees power as something that is not held by some sections of society, but is distributed throughout society. This view, however, seems somewhat under-developed, for if we take his notion of the body as being the place where power relations become concrete, it would be logical to assume that, when powerful bodies come together in the pursuit of some common interest, they could become a powerful section in society. Although Wearing and Wearing (1988) find parts of Foucault's argument a problem, for example his view that power affects people more through social practices than beliefs, they, like Rojek (1985), find his analysis more optimistic in terms of the potential for change.⁹

This brief excursion into Wearing and Wearing's work illustrates both some of the problems that have been identified with 'modern' feminism, and some of the alternatives that have been explored. However, to develop a more complete understanding of the shifting theoretical sands we need to look more closely at the challenges being made to modernist feminist theory.

Postmodernist and Poststructuralist Feminism

The demise of what Gatens (1992) calls the 'convenient tripartite division'¹⁰ of feminist theories came as a result of several factors which cohered around the growing awareness that such a division was no longer sufficient to explain the realities of women's lives. Whilst, as Barrett and Phillips (1992) note, feminists had long criticised

'grand theory' and its attendant claims of universality (which in fact were particular and from a masculinist perspective)¹¹ it was also becoming clear that feminist theory, whilst eschewing malestream theories, had also unwittingly taken some of this universality on board. For although the existing theories seemed to be able to struggle with explaining class and gender, they were unable adequately to explain ethnic and other differences and inequalities. Fraser and Nicholson (1990) share some of the same concerns as Barrett and Phillips, but in my view they quite rightly see the problems as being even more wide-spread:

They [feminist theories] are insufficiently attentive to historical and cultural diversity, and they falsely universalize features of the theorist's own era, society, culture, class, sexual orientation, and ethnic or racial group (Fraser and Nicholson 1990:27).

This critique captures one of the key features of postmodernism, that is the need to be aware of how our ideas and theories are shaped by the culture in which we live. There are threads reminiscent of phenomenological 'bracketing' and of eclecticism in the postmodern concern with cultural specificity. As Flax (1990:41) notes:

Postmodern discourses are all deconstructive in that they seek to distance us from and make us skeptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted within and serve as legitimation for contemporary Western culture.

It seems then that feminism and postmodernism may share some concerns that pave the way for the development of a postmodern feminism. Di Stefano (1990), however, points out that there may be an irreconcilable tension between the two:

To the extent that feminist politics is bound up with a specific constituency or subject, namely, women, the postmodernist prohibition against subject-centered inquiry and theory undermines the legitimacy of a broad-based organized movement dedicated to articulating and implementing the goals of such a constituency (p.76).

She also points out that mainstream postmodernist theory (as represented, in her view, by the work of Derrida, Lyotard, Rorty and Foucault): ‘... has been remarkably blind and insensitive to questions of gender in its own purportedly politicized rereadings of history, politics, and culture’ (p.76).¹² It also seems possible that postmodernism, in pursuit of deconstruction, renders empirical research problematic, because of the scepticism with which knowledge, truth, meaning and language must be treated. For this reason we need to ask where postmodern feminist theory takes us in terms of political action. As Scraton (1994:257) reminds us:

Feminism is a political movement committed to ‘changing the world’, a world in which gender relations and inequalities continue to be real and significant at both an institutional and an individual level.

In addition to this, postmodernism has been criticised by some as being inherently conservative because it denies the legitimacy of concepts such as justice and equality - all of which undermines attempts to challenge the status quo (Bryson 1992). Scraton (1994) cautions against a too hasty association with postmodernism arguing that there is a gap between a postmodern reading of women’s and men’s lives and the material conditions of their lives. Clearly feminist work takes as its starting point a commitment to women; a commitment to improve their condition. To compromise this would be to forsake the ‘essence’ of feminism and to become something else. The question remains as to whether it is possible for feminism to incorporate some of the elements of postmodernism without compromising its political purpose.¹³ Alternatively, it could be asked to what extent feminism needs any of what postmodernism or poststructuralism purports to offer. As Nicholson (1990) has argued, feminism has long held similar views to those taken up by postmodernists, which raises the question of whether postmodernism has anything distinctive to offer feminism. It seems difficult to tell the difference between good ‘modernist’ feminist work and the type of post-modern feminist theory outlined by Fraser and Nicholson (1990:35) for:

In general, postmodern-feminist theory would be pragmatic and fallibilistic. It would tailor its methods and categories to the specific task at hand, using

multiple categories when appropriate and forswearing the metaphysical comfort of a single feminist method or epistemology. In short, this theory would look more like a tapestry composed of threads of many different hues than one woven in a single color.

This debate over what is and is not postmodernist or poststructuralist feminism is not only too wide-ranging to do justice to here, but it is also not central to the task at hand.¹⁴ Thus the label attached to the theory is not so important (except for external identification), as what the theory is saying. Whilst I would argue that there are many points of commonality between postmodern feminism and modern feminism, postmodernist thinking does highlight the importance of language, subjectivity, and discourse in the construction of subjectivities as well as reminding us of the need to recognise and comprehend diversity.

As such, this research is informed by elements of both postmodernism and poststructuralism which facilitates an understanding of how women are positioned in relation to discourses of their bodies and how this connects with their subjectivities. However, in taking this stance it is important not to lose sight of the political purpose of feminism and consider how women can exercise power. This review of literature therefore turns to focus on the more political question of empowerment.

Empowerment and the Nature of ‘Oppression’

Implicit in the debate over agency and structure, and over power as being dispersed, is the notion that it is possible for people (agents) to become more powerful, and in this sense we can talk of them becoming empowered, that is moving from a ‘state’ where they are unable to exercise their power, to one where they can exercise it. This reinforces the point that Giddens (1993a) makes with regard to power being enabling as well as constraining. The question then becomes one of what empowerment enables an agent to do. Gore (1992:54) addresses this question when she points to different meanings of empowerment which need to be seen within particular discourses. She

identifies three discourses as exemplars: conservative discourse which equates empowerment with professionalization which results in minimal change to power relations; liberal humanist discourse which focuses on empowerment of individual teachers and the alteration of power relations within the classroom; and finally, critical and feminist discourse which sees empowerment as being part of a political project aimed at creating changes in societal power relations.¹⁵ Implicit in this is the assumption that there is a hierarchy of empowerment, that is that change at societal level would not be possible without a degree of personal empowerment (Blinde et al. 1993). The question of what is meant by empowerment is therefore a complex one to answer, for there are different forms of empowerment, which have different agendas.¹⁶ The many definitions of empowerment have led to an ambiguity about what the concept means (Sheilds 1995).

A starting point for this discussion will be Gore's (1992) examination of the problematic nature of empowerment. The very word carries with it a set of presuppositions about what it means: firstly, that there is an agent of empowerment; secondly, that there is a notion of power as property; and finally, that there is some kind of vision or desirable end state. These issues relate to the discussion of what is meant by power: is it a property as in the 'zero-sum' view of power, or is it, as Foucault argues, not a commodity to be brokered, but something that exists only in action, something which is exercised? Whilst agreeing with this, Gore (1992) argues that the exercise of power needs to be contextualized, something which critical and feminist pedagogy has failed to do. Contextualizing the exercise of power would enable us to make sense of the complex and often contradictory nature of empowerment. That is it may help us to explain why one person may feel empowered but another might not. Gore asks to what extent is empowerment possible within '... the institutional and pedagogical exigencies of teaching?' (Gore 1992:61). Similarly we would need to ask to what extent the context of sport and physical activity, which is so heavily inscribed with maleness (see Hargreaves 1994; Whitson 1994) can lead to empowerment of women. Focusing on context is also conceptually enlightening as Gore (1992:61) argues:

More attention to contexts would help shift the problem of empowerment from

dualisms of power/powerlessness, and dominant/subordinate, that is, from purely oppositional stances, to a problem of multiplicity and contradiction. It may be helpful to think of social actors negotiating actions within particular contexts.

This stance has similarities to Giddens' in relation to the need to move beyond simple categorisations of social life to understand the complex and at times contradictory nature of people's actions.

It is difficult to move away from dualist notions, for empowerment presupposes an unempowered or oppressed position. Yet as Gore (1992) points out, such a usage is not always problematic for it signals a move away from seeing power as a constraint (a concern Giddens has) to seeing power as enabling for those who are able to exercise it. Quite how different women are oppressed and empowered is something that needs to be better understood as we move to develop a better understanding of the diversity of women's experience.

Whilst Gore's and Luke's work in education has been useful particularly in relation to exploring the context within which empowerment may take place, Sheilds' (1995) research in health has also been useful in pointing to how some women articulate their experiences of empowerment. The three themes that emerged from her research centred around: an internal sense of self; the ability to take action based on the internal sense of self; and a sense of connectedness. Underpinning these experiences, the women in Sheilds' research reaffirmed the importance of competence as being a central element of their empowerment. Competence was identified in a range of aspects of their lives: in communication skills, cognitive skills, self-care skills, community involvement skills and physical skills. The centrality of physical competence is supported by Blinde et al.'s (1993) research into the empowerment experiences of twenty-four intercollegiate female athletes. The three main areas they spoke of were bodily competence, perceptions of the competent self and a proactive approach to life. Whilst it is not surprising to find trained athletes stressing the competence of their bodies, when seen alongside Sheilds' work it raises the question of the centrality of physical competence to women's empowerment - whether women

are involved in relatively 'passive' physical activity or highly active physical activity. The key may be the extent to which women's bodies are engaged in action, and their perceptions of their competence, rather than the nature of the activity, that is whether being active is the end product. Care needs to be taken not to assume that being active in sport is more likely to lead to empowerment than being active in doing housework, gardening or putting shelves up. To date little research has explored the extent to which women's empowerment may be linked to a particular type of activity, or to the social and cultural context of the activity and how this may connect with their own subjectivity.

Whitson (1994:354), however, draws attention to the context of sport and raises some key questions that we need to ask.

Feminist and masculinist discourses of sport pose the questions of how and indeed whether empowerment, the confident sense of self that comes from being skilled in the use of one's body, can be detached from an emphasis on force and domination, which are integral to the body contact sports that compromise the 'major games' of male popular culture.

He cites research (by Granskog on triathlons and Birrell and Richter on baseball) which suggests that it is possible to be involved in competitive sports and experience empowerment without physically dominating others.

Empowerment, in this alternative discourse, means learning how to move in coordinated and increasingly skillful ways and often how to coordinate your own movements with those of others (Whitson 1994:360).

However more research is needed which focuses on other sport and recreation contexts and other women to explore this alternative discourse.

The work of Gore (1992,1993) and Luke and Gore (1992) and others (Ellsworth 1992; Lather 1992) writing within the field of critical and feminist pedagogy is illuminating because it explores the possibilities and problems of working with political notions of empowerment in education. Additionally, it offers along with the work of Blinde et al. (1993) and Whitson (1994), some purchase on empowerment in other contexts, and develops the agency/structure debate. Gore (1992:63), however, offers a

valuable cautionary note about empowerment, saying that we:

...need to acknowledge that our agency has limits, that we might 'get it wrong' in assuming we know what would be empowering for others, and that no matter what our aims or how we go about 'empowering', our efforts will be partial and inconsistent.

'Empowerment' as a concept allows us to see potential for agents to go beyond resisting 'oppressive' structures to exercising power in a productive capacity to change that which they are resisting. What is needed is further research which explores the bodily dimension to empowerment.

The Powerful Body

Reclaiming the body

The recognition of the corporeality of the body is something which, until recently, has been paid only scant attention in social theory. This is surprising given that the relation between the mind and the body has been for some time a major preoccupation of philosophy.¹⁷ In the philosophy of sport, early interest in the body was illustrated by the publication in 1972 of 'Sport and the Body'. Whilst containing a great range of material, it is Gerber's (1979) contribution which is of most relevance here as she points to the connection between physical activity and a sense of self. In rejecting Weiss's notion that men have to learn to master their bodies whilst women are at one with theirs, Gerber argues that men and women relate to their bodies in similar ways although the embodied female and the embodied male is perceived differently by others. By asserting that women and men relate to their bodies in similar ways, Gerber fails to take on board how discourses re femininity and masculinity may lead to people relating to their bodies in different ways. In discussing the importance of activity, Gerber claims that both men and women can equally benefit from physical activity:

Physical activities have the potential to provide opportunities for heightened experiences of the physical self and therefore provide an important dimension

of experience (Gerber 1979:186).

Whilst it is not clear just what she means by 'experience', it is clear that she sees it as being very beneficial for both women and men to have the opportunity to test themselves physically.

Despite this and other philosophical writing on the body, the marginalisation of the body from sociology does not seem so surprising when viewed within the context of early sociological theory, for as Turner (1996:60) points out:

The epistemological foundations of modern sociology are rooted in a rejection of nineteenth century positivism, especially biologism which held that human behaviour could be explained causally in terms of human biology [Parsons 1937].

So although some early social theorists did consider the body, this was not surprisingly tempered due to a rejection of biological essentialism. For Marx, the body was important insofar as people struggled to overcome nature and satisfy their needs. Engels' work on the family and reproduction raised the issue of control of desire and sexuality as being central to the development of capitalism. However, in general marxist theory focused on issues to do with labour and the mode of production, and the body was submerged. It surfaces again in Weber's (1958) work on the rise of capitalism and the Protestant work ethic when he considers the secularisation of asceticism. One of the central themes of Christian asceticism was (and to some extent still is) that sexual activity was incompatible with religious life. The control and regulation of sexual desire involved not only celibacy, but dietary control e.g. fasting and vegetarianism. In its secularised form asceticism led to other restraints on the body through the banning of dancing, singing, and eating exotic and spicy foods (Turner 1984:16). There are shortcomings with Weber's analysis, not least of which is the absence of any serious consideration of gender. Similarly, even in the work of Marcuse who, in drawing on the work of Marx and Freud, looks at the restraints on sexuality and the development of capitalism, there is a naiveté in relation to gendered power. As Turner (1984) points out, the liberation of desire that Marcuse favourably sees as

being a product of the development of capitalism is in fact the liberation of male desire. Pornography and the fetishisation of women is not seen, therefore, as being problematic. Sexual liberation, although welcomed by some as opening the door to new and exciting ways of satisfying (hetero)sexual desire, also turns out to be a double-edged sword.

As has been discussed previously the body has been given more serious attention in feminist studies but it is also increasingly surfacing in the sub-discipline fields of sociology (and outside the field altogether) e.g. medicine, leisure and sport, education, consumer culture, media and deviance.¹⁸ Central to much of the theory in these areas is Foucault's work on discourse, surveillance and sexuality. Useful as his ideas are, there still remains the problem of understanding the power structures that dictate which discourses or forms of surveillance predominate and also the extent to which people are able to act back against these structures. As for many mainstream theorists, gender was not of central concern to Foucault. The work of Bourdieu is noteworthy in this regard because his wide ranging discussion of the body as a site where class tastes manifest themselves, also explores gender. In *Distinction* (1992) he discusses the relationship people of different classes have to their bodies in terms of eating, drinking, domestic labour and physical activity. On the basis of data gathered in the 1960's he argues that the middle classes were particularly anxious about their bodies and how they appeared, whereas the working classes had a more instrumental approach. This relates to his conclusion that different classes get different 'profits' out of their 'investments' in sport. By 'profits' Bourdieu (1992:114) means capital:

The primary differences, those which distinguish the major classes of conditions of existence, derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers - economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital...

Cultural capital includes knowledge and ideas that for example parents or adults might transmit to children, either through the formal educational process or more informally

through the family or other social groupings such as a tennis club. The acquisition of particular forms of cultural capital facilitates or hinders the acquisition of other forms of capital, such as economic capital. Physical capital refers to the value for example that is associated with a certain form of body shape or size. The different forms of cultural, social (and possibly economic) capital to be gained by men and women from participation in sport is something which Shilling (1993) explores in his discussion of Bourdieu's work. Whilst acknowledging the contribution of Bourdieu's work to our understanding of the body, Shilling (1993:147) argues that Bourdieu does not fully explore the ways in which:

... women have far fewer opportunities than men to turn any participation that they may have in physical activities into social, cultural and economic capital.

Bourdieu (1993) himself admits that his explication of the conversion of one form of capital to another is underdeveloped, even to his own satisfaction. Connell (1987) on the other hand argues that in Bourdieu's work the production of history is lost: it just seems to happen, and that agents seem to have little impact on their world: they just reproduce it. Whilst I share some of Connell's concerns, Bourdieu's work does not close off the possibility that men and women may be active agents, and that they may be able to exercise power by converting one form of capital into another which has more currency.'

Feminist work on the body

Feminist writings have generally always regarded the body as being important (Rossi 1978). Women's powerlessness was seen as beginning with their bodies and their lack of control over their bodies and themselves. The lack of control ranged from being legally their father's or husband's property, to not having the freedom to use any form of birth control. Only when women have more control over their bodies could they begin to gain more social power. That these issues are still pertinent today illustrates how little ground has been gained over the past hundred years. It is interesting to note

that when some women have become 'politicised' they have often protested with their bodies¹⁹ because their voices are still not being heard using more conventional political tactics.

The rise of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s brought with it a recognition that the 'personal is political'. Confronting issues which had previously been kept within the private sphere enabled women to see that the very distinction between the public and the private was disabling and in fact served to keep them contained in the private sphere.

Most of the formal theorising in early feminist work particularly on female sexuality was psychoanalytic (see Feminist Review 1987). The main problem with early psychoanalytic work was that it was largely based on malestream theories which regarded female sexuality as essentially passive and assumed that women were in general successfully constructed as 'feminine' (Feminist Review 1987:196) More recent psychoanalytic writing has turned to focus on the construction of sexual identities and political change (Hollway 1984). Other feminist writing still reflects concerns about women's knowledge and control of their bodies (Hutter and Williams 1981); sexual harassment (Wise and Stanley 1987); violence against women (Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Hanmer and Maynard 1987; Abbott and Wallace 1990), and rape and pornography (Smart and Smart 1978). Increased awareness of the physical violence mainly against women by men has led feminists (and others) to look more closely at both the physical and social dimensions of violence (see Hanmer and Maynard 1987). The threat of violence may in some cases be enough to ensure compliance or limit women's freedom. As Griffin in Smart and Smart (1978:100) points out:

The threat of rape is used to deny women employment ... The fear of rape keeps women off the streets at night. Keeps women at home. Keeps women passive and modest for fear that they might be thought provocative.

Effectively, the threat of rape keeps women 'in their' place. As Griffin suggests it can limit women's employment, but it can also limit their leisure as well.²⁰ Dark evenings especially become a dangerous time for women to be out alone. The campaign in North America for women to 'Take Back The Night' touches on this very problem.²¹ It is the very threat of violence that serves to oppress women, to the extent that most men (and youths) are perceived to be a threat, despite the fact that statistically most of them do not pose a real threat. Women who feel confident in their ability to defend themselves feel less constrained by the potential threat of male violence (although arguably they are not necessarily less vulnerable to it). Self-defence classes for women have become increasingly popular, with schools even offering pupils the chance to take it up. As Connell (1987) argues, the ability to exercise physical power or the perceived ability to exercise it, endows men with a form of social power which enables them to not only dominate one woman, but to dominate all women and other men. It is not only men, but also boys who are able to exploit their physical power, as the increasing statistics on violent youth crime indicate. The connections between physicality and power are explored further in the following section.

Women and their bodies

Whilst documenting how women's bodies have been subject to external controls such as violence, or its threat, is part of the process of 'naming the problem', another dimension to this is exploring how women internalise ideas about their bodies. How do they view their own bodies, and how do they discipline themselves, as opposed to having others control them? Bordo (1990) explores some of these questions through considering the ways in which women's bodies have been represented in the media. Of particular interest to her is the way in which the current obsession with slenderness is represented and internalised by women. In her analysis she draws upon Foucault's notion of the 'intelligible' and 'useful' body to make sense of the way in which women are normalised through body management. In 'Discipline and Punish' (1977) Foucault

distinguishes between the submission and use of the body (cultural conceptions of 'useful' bodies), and the rules and regulations through which the body can be trained to become 'useful'. Foucault uses an example of how in the eighteenth century the army made soldiers out of peasants through methods of controlling and correcting their bodies; whilst Bordo utilises his work to focus on how discourses of beauty, health and slenderness have led women to dieting and exercising to achieve a 'useful' body. Bordo argues that the preoccupation with fat, diet and slenderness may be:

...one of the most powerful 'normalizing' strategies of our century, ensuring the production of the self-monitoring and self-disciplining 'docile bodies', sensitive to any departure from social norms and habituated to self improvement and transformation in the service of those norms (1990:85).

She highlights that what some women regard as power e.g. having a slender body which suggests good self-discipline and control of the body, is in fact a lack of power, in so far as these women occupy very little social space, which contrasts sharply with the amount of space men take up. She also notes that:

Increasingly, the size and shape of the body has come to operate as a marker of personal, internal order (or disorder) - as a symbol for the state of the soul (1990:94).

Whilst she contends that it is permissible for even women to have weight and bulk, so long as it is tightly managed, I would argue that the degree of acceptance of this is mediated by the predominant cultural discourse concerning the body and sexuality. In the West, the acceptable body for a female model is one that is thin, and one that over the past ten years seems to have got thinner. The recent controversy when the Omega watch company threatened to withdraw its advertising from Vogue magazine (July 1996) because of anorexic looking models highlights some of the current concerns re the body. As postmodernism warns us, there is real danger in assuming that all women have the same relation with their bodies regardless of ethnicity. In terms of class distinctions, Bordo does suggest that a well-muscled body no longer suggests working-class status, but rather it has become part of yuppie iconography (p.94).

In contrast to Bordo's work is that by Kissling (1991) who explores the connections between the body and social class in a more rigorous manner, arguing that:

Body size and physical fitness also provide an arena for the display of class position and status. The slender, aerobically toned body is a sign of social status, much as a suntan was in the not so distant past. Both represent the possession of leisure time and disposable income to spend working on one's appearance (p. 142).

In seeking to explore the reasons for the demise of the suntan as a sign of social status we are drawn to the increasingly convincing medical evidence on the risk of developing melanoma caused by overexposure to the sun. Whilst this has undoubtedly had an effect in changing attitudes, another reason may lie in the fact that due to the relatively low cost of foreign travel many people on low incomes have been able to get to the sun and get their suntans, thereby eroding the status specificity of the suntan. What we may have seen, therefore, is a status seeking shift from suntan to slenderness and the aerobically trained body. Just as with the suntan Kissling (1991:142) argues that:

Slenderness is an effective tool of class oppression precisely because it so (sic) hard to achieve, especially for poor women, while it *appears* so democratic.

Kissling's work, therefore, serves not only to raise some important points, but it also highlights some of the undeveloped areas of Bordo's analysis. This may be in part due to her reliance on Foucault's work, but there still remains a sense in which Bordo's work, whilst raising many useful points about the process of normalization, seems to be tied to only certain groups of women. The implication is that all women are locked into the normalizing grasp of slenderness. However we have to ask whether this is the case regardless of age, ethnicity, sexuality and social class. If some women are not gripped by the pursuit of slenderness, how have they resisted it, for as Bordo has so eloquently discussed, the media are infused with such messages.

Finally, what do women do to reclaim their bodies? Bordo calls for a female praxis to

be at the centre of feminist politics but offers little in terms of suggestions for action, other than saying we must resist:

I do not deny the benefits of diet, exercise, and other forms of body 'management'. Rather, I view our bodies as a site of struggle, where we must *work* to keep our daily practices in the service of resistance to gender domination, not in the service of 'docility' and gender normalization (1989:28).

One project which approaches female praxis, in a completely different way, is the work by Haug and her colleagues (1987) who wrote stories about how they saw themselves. They offer a fascinating account of how a group of women explored their relationships to their bodies and to the social world. They describe the role of the 'body project' in developing a greater awareness of how their bodies become part of a wider construction of power relations:

In the first instance, we developed a consciousness of the extent to which our attitudes to the world are at least partially moulded by our relation to our bodies. Until this point, it would have never occurred to us to claim that even explicitly political forms of behaviour, or rather their lack of productivity, might have been generated through our relationship to our bodies (Rathzel 1987:26).

In the process of the research, their subjectivities developed as they:

... learned to understand women as active agents who are not simply stamped with the imprint of their given social relations, but who acquiesce in them and unconsciously participate in their formation (Rathzel 1987:25).

Using the concept of 'slavegirl' Haug et al. explored how women can be seen to both participate in their own subordination by presenting themselves in particular ways and resist such subordination by presenting themselves in alternative ways.

What this highlights is the potential for women to regain control of their lives through reclaiming their bodies. However, setting these ideas in the context of agency and

structure, and empowerment raises some interesting questions about how women can reclaim their bodies, how successful these strategies are and whether these strategies would work for all, in all contexts. In addition, we need to remain open to the notion that there may be other ways by which women can become empowered, for example through physical activity, through an education programme, and through meeting with other women. Attempting to 'distil out' the role of the body from the social context may render any subsequent analysis of little value and be criticised for being reductionist and essentialist.

Sexuality

What also emerges from the work on power and the body is the centrality of both sexuality and physicality to gendered subjectivities. We need to understand the connections between discourses concerning sexuality and physicality, and how these lead to the construction of gendered subjectivities. The naturalisation of sexuality and physicality in popular culture constructs a discourse which sees all men as having an active sexuality and a muscular, space-dominating physical presence, and all women as having a passive sexuality and a constricted, restrained physicality (Connell 1995). Rejecting such a view, Connell (1987:111) argues for a social constructionist view of sexuality, claiming that sexuality's:

... bodily dimension does not exist before, or outside, the social practices in which relationships between people are formed and carried on. Sexuality is enacted or conducted, it is not 'expressed'.

MacKinnon (1982:515-516) adopts a similar view of sexuality, but argues that:

Sexuality is to feminism what work is to marxism: that which is most one's own, yet most taken away.... Sexuality is that social process which creates, organises, expresses, and directs desire, creating the social beings we know as women and men, as their relations create society.

From this perspective women's sexuality is therefore what men, as a social group,

want it to be. It is generally passive, available, submissive and strongly heterosexual. In adopting this stance, MacKinnon sees women as having little capacity to resist dominant discourses about sexuality. In this sense she can be seen to share the same view of women's limited potential to create change as that held by De Beauvoir (discussed in Chapter One). Coward (1987:229) has a similarly pessimistic view of women's agency arguing that:

Men's bodies and sexuality are taken for granted, exempted from scrutiny, whereas women's bodies are extensively defined and overexposed. Sexual and social meanings are imposed on *women's* bodies, not men's. Controlling the look, men have left themselves out of the picture because a body defined is a body controlled.

This view is somewhat problematic, for although I share some of Coward's concerns about the over-exposure and sexualization of women's bodies, recent work has begun to challenge the taken-for-grantedness of men's bodies and sexuality (see Hearn and Morgan 1990 and Connell 1995). Indeed it could be argued that it is not just women's (hetero)sexuality that is also controlled by men, men's is as well. Similarly, Coward's view of male power and female powerlessness is a deterministic one, with meanings being 'imposed' implying little in the way of challenge or reconstruction.

In defining sexuality Grosz (1995:213) argues that it refers to: '... sexual impulses, desires, wishes, hopes, bodies, pleasures, behaviors, and practices'. As such sexuality is closely related to discourses of femininity and masculinity in which women and men develop their gendered subjectivities. The texts of the discourses map out for women and men how they can achieve and maintain 'appropriate' gendered identities (Smith 1988).

In stressing the role of cultural 'texts' such as women's magazines and films, Smith (1988) does not portray women as passive recipients of dominant discourses re femininity, but sees women rather as being 'active' and capable of making choices. In

support of this she refers to Black resistances to white texts of femininity and masculinity and how Blacks have asserted Black identity through hair- and dress-styles. Smith (1988), Bartky (1990) and Grosz (1995) all reinforce the need to understand the diversity of sexualities, femininities and masculinities and that their construction is not straightforward or uncontested. Bartky (1990) particularly highlights the importance of an understanding of physicality to the construction of gendered subjectivities.

Physicality

Defining physicality is equally problematic, despite its wide use in academic literature. It is often employed in discussions about sport and physical activity, but rarely has there been any prolonged discussion about it.²² A commonsense understanding connects physicality with physical power. Physicality connotes strength, connotes muscles. It is male. The term female physicality is therefore a contradiction in terms. Men are assumed to be physically powerful/strong and women are assumed to be physically weak/frail. When people challenge these perceptions by not fitting these 'natural' norms they are assumed to be deviant in some way i.e. a physically weak man is regarded as a wimp (see Morgan 1988) or gay and a physically strong woman is thought to be butch and possibly a lesbian (Lenksyj 1986; Bartky 1990). A challenge to conventional women's physicality is seen as a threat to male physicality and therefore male sexuality that is strongly heterosexual. Hence, the reason why anything that is seen as challenging is usually derided, and what could be more insulting, in a heterosexist and homophobic world, than to be called homosexual. As MacKinnon (1987:122) asks:

What does it say about the relation between sexuality and physicality, what does it tell us in particular about the content of heterosexuality, that when a woman comes to own her own body, that makes her heterosexuality problematic?

The presumed connection between physicality, physical power and male sport has led McDermott (1996) to question whether physicality is an appropriate concept to use in relation to women's 'physically active bodily experiences'. In coming to her conclusion that the concept still has value for understanding women's experiences she makes several key points. The first is that we should recognise the plurality of people's experiences and talk of *physicalities* instead of women's or men's physicality. Second, that physicality: '...can be understood as the physical expression of agency' (1996:19), and finally, that it comprises a number of elements such as bodily self-possession, bodily self-respect, bodily satisfaction and physical presence. The centrality of agency in McDermott's reconceptualisation enables us to counter the determinism found in De Beauvoir's ideas about a woman's lack of power:

This lack of physical power leads to a more general timidity: she has no faith in a force she has not experienced in her body; she does not dare to be enterprising, to revolt, to invent; doomed to docility, to resignation, she can take in society only a place already made for her. She regards the existing state of affairs as something fixed (1979:355).

Whilst De Beauvoir's work may not reflect the degree of agency that others (including myself) would argue women have, she does highlight the subjectivity of women's experiences of the world. In this sense De Beauvoir shares much common ground with Young (1990) who, drawing upon Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, points to how women can be limited by their bodily subjectivities which invariably say 'I *cannot* have confidence in my body'. Men, she argues, are less inhibited and will invariably say 'I can'. Women's inhibition and lack of confidence in her body comes from her self-consciousness of others seeing her body as object. Whilst needing to guard against slipping into an essentialist view of men's and women's bodies, a phenomenological approach does draw our attention to the value of understanding how people view their bodies (and their capabilities).²³

Although McDermott (1996) argues that physicality finds expression in a variety of

ways (bodily self-possession, bodily self-respect, bodily satisfaction and physical presence) I would argue that an understanding of physical presence is the bedrock of the others. Our sense of our physical presence, for example, enables us (in association with social, cultural and political factors) to develop a sense of bodily satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). Like physicality, physical presence connotes men, in both academic and popular discourse (McDermott 1996). Physical presence centres around an individual's physical qualities: their size, shape, posture, how they move, stand, and sit. It is more than this however, because particular social and cultural discourses lead us to read physical presence in different, gendered ways.²⁴ Physical power for example is not just something which people may have to varying degrees, but it is also something which ascribed (or not) depending on how the body is read. Not only do we read the physical presence of others in certain ways, we also to varying degrees embody the gendered discourses (Bartky 1990). In Western culture, for example, young women are encouraged to sit with their legs together, rather than with their legs sprawled open. Much of the gendered discourse in the West leads to women operating within a relatively confined space, whilst men tend to move and occupy more physical space. Young (1990) develops these ideas in seeking to explain the different throwing patterns between girls and boys. Space is gendered not only in the way men and women move in it, but also in the amount of space that they occupy. Women who bodily occupy a large space are evaluated differently than men who occupy large spaces. The work of Chernin (cited in Bordo 1995) on the tyranny of slenderness in Western culture offers some support for this claim.

For the most part I share McDermott's interpretation of physicality as a concept which has value, but I would argue that we need to temper such a positive view of women's (and men's) agency with a recognition of the ways in which their agency may also be limited through their body practices (or through their lack of them). MacKinnon's (1987) observations about why some women have shunned involvement in sport illustrates the power of gendered discourses about physicality. Although her argument

that it is not just that men are trained to be strong and women are not, but that women are trained to be weak and passive: 'It's not *not* learned; it's very specifically learned' (1987:120),²⁵ seems overly deterministic.

Discourses of women's physicality are embedded with images about age and are connected to the discourses about sexuality. Featherstone and Hepworth's (1990) work on images of ageing draws attention to the stereotyped perceptions of what ageing means in terms of how people feel about themselves and their bodies. Negative stereotypes of ageing can not only stigmatise people but also constrain their activities and, according to Featherstone and Hepworth (1990:256) limit their power:

Women's power is based almost entirely on physical beauty and unlike the power of men, which is based on more enduring foundations such as wealth and occupation, it is bound to fade away.

Bartky (1990) shares this view and points to the increasing number of technologies of the body that are offered to women to delay the ageing process, including facial exercises, 'cellular treatment activators' which contain: "glycosphingolipids" that can "make older skin behave and look like younger skin" (Bartky 1990:70), and cosmetic surgery. Just as younger women are presented with texts which instruct on how to develop the 'appropriate' form of femininity, so too are older women who are cautioned against 'letting themselves go' and advised to lose weight or exercise more. However, as Bartky (1990:66) points out, since men are also subject to discourses concerning the body, so:

it is not always easy in the case of women to distinguish what is done for the sake of physical fitness from what is done in the obedience to the requirements of femininity.

Men, therefore, are also called to 'get a grip of their bodies', but as Bartky (1990) suggests whilst men are advised to get fitter, women are told how to reshape particular body parts: erase facial and chin lines, remove cellulite, tighten the breasts, reduce 'saddlebag thighs'. The message for women is that: 'A woman's skin must be

soft, supple, hairless, and smooth; ideally, it should betray no sign of wear, experience, age or deep thought' (Bartky 1990:69). The tyranny of the body is such that if women are to maintain their femininity they must avoid the effects of ageing.

This work brings a new dimension to the study of ageing, for most of the literature is concerned with material problems such as poverty and, whilst not underestimating such problems, Bartky (1990) and Featherstone and Hepworth's (1990) work touches on one of the other tangible changes: the ageing body. The decline of the body's capabilities and the effect this has on the individual leads Featherstone and Hepworth (1990:257) to liken the body to an 'iron cage':

The self becomes imprisoned in a body which is not longer physically able to express its true identity; the afflicted individual has lost his or her power of self-control: of being able to express the self-identity that others have come over the years to expect.

This is based on the assumption that dominant discourses of femininity lead many women to centre their identities around their bodies, and that when the body is not held in check by the various technologies of the body, and the ageing process takes effect, it then creates an identity problem. Whilst Featherstone and Hepworth (1991) offer some support for this, Bourdieu's work on capital (1992) offers another way of making sense of how ageing connects with gender power relations. The 'problems' of ageing would not necessarily be seen as one of solely identity, so much as a decline in the currency of particular forms of capital such as physical capital or in the ability to convert physical capital into other forms. The model who no longer had the desired 'look' would no longer be able to convert her or his physical capital into economic capital. The woman who no longer presents herself as slim and toned may feel that she is no longer as sexually attractive as she had once been.

Physicality and sexuality therefore connect in complex and varied ways to the construction of gendered subjectivities which research is only beginning to unravel. As

was argued earlier about research on women's leisure, the majority of the research on the physicality and sexuality focuses on the young, and neglects the process of ageing.

Conclusion

Whilst continuing to resist attaching a label to the feminist perspective adopted, I have explored the degree to which I have found particular concepts (as opposed to entire theoretical frameworks) of potential use in exploring the connections between power, gender and the body. In this concluding section of the chapter I now want to explore how I intend to use these concepts to help make sense of the complexities of power (Connell 1987). There are clearly some problems when drawing upon concepts from competing theoretical frameworks. How for example is it possible on the one hand to talk of power as being relational, whilst on the other hand to talk about power as being connected to physical bodies? In answer to this I would argue that just as social life can be contradictory so too can elements of theorising. We should be careful not to dismiss approaches which seem to be contradictory, rather we should seek to handle these contradictions and explore ways of coming to terms with them.

When considering power, I am arguing that we need to think of power not as a commodity, but as something which people to varying degrees are able to exercise. By arguing that power is relational I am in one sense rejecting Foucault's notion of power being everywhere (and equally accessible to all), but would argue that even those who seem powerless can and do exercise some power. The exercise of power is not by right: people who exercise power have to work at it, some maintaining their hegemonic position, others challenging that hegemony. The exercise of gender power does not operate freely, but within particular social and cultural contexts and discourses. However, it does seem possible that whilst power is predominantly relational it may also be invested in the body, and in this sense I would partially support Foucault's view of power as being everywhere. To understand the exercise of

power we need to understand these social and cultural contexts and discourses. Only by doing this can we begin to understand the complexities of power and powerlessness: why one individual may find an experience empowering, but another might not. Crucially, I am arguing that if we are to develop more sensitive conceptual tools to understand gender power relations we need to consider the role of the body, thereby considering the physical as well as social and political context of power.

To this end the concepts of agency and empowerment are utilised to explore the scope for individuals to create change. In using agency I am seeking to move beyond Giddens' usage, to consider the more corporeal or physical dimensions of agency that Haug et al. (1987) discuss. This connects with the concept of empowerment which may be enabled through the development of physical competence as well as through other social means. I am arguing that we need to consider the possibility that changes in gender power relations may come about through involvement in physical activity and that we need to develop better understandings of the inter-play between the two. This is not to fall back on to essentialist notions of the body and its physical capabilities, but rather to argue that agency has more than a social dimension: it also potentially has a corporeal one.

Finally, in speaking of 'the body' I am conscious of the need constantly to interrogate the diversity of women's experiences and remember that it is 'women's bodies' that exist, and that whilst there may be some similarities, there will also be some differences in bodily subjectivities. Building on these understandings of power, gender relations and the body, the next chapter focuses on current understandings about women's leisure and physical activity.

¹ Combining these two perspectives is advocated by Wearing (1992:325) who argues that micro-social perspectives such as interactionism, if placed within the structure based theories may open up avenues for challenging the constraints on women's leisure.

² This is not to deny the individualistic notion of charismatic power that Weber discusses.

³ Giddens' theory of structuration has been usefully developed in the context of sport by Gruneau (1983) and Whitson (1988) who both explore the interplay between sport, culture and social reproduction.

⁴ See Jarvie and Maguire (1994) for further discussion of how Gramsci's work has been used in the sociology of sport and leisure.

⁵ I use the term corporeality of power to refer to the way that power is connected to the material body, that is muscle, flesh etc..

⁶ In his more recent work on *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1993) Giddens does discuss the body and social change.

⁷ The body in this sense is the whole person, not just the physical being.

⁸ See Jagger and Struhl (1978) for a useful definition of both radical and socialist feminism.

⁹ There are several disappointing aspects of Wearing and Wearing's paper which relate mainly to their limited exploration of power and their neglect of postmodernist feminist theory. They make no reference to Gramsci's theory of hegemony, and although they do mention Foucault's work they fail to explore his work sufficiently critically nor even identify aspects of it in relation to the body and sexuality, which I would argue are centrally related to leisure. Subsequent work by B. Wearing (1992) however has made a useful contribution to understanding women's resistance in sport by utilising both poststructuralism and symbolic interactionism.

¹⁰ By this she means the division of feminism into Marxist feminism, liberal feminism and radical feminism.

¹¹ Nicholson (1990) observes that these are not the only points of overlap between feminism and post-modernism, because feminists have long questioned the claims of supposed neutrality and objectivity proffered by male theorists.

¹² In Di Stefano's notes on her work she comments on criticisms Iris Young made about her over generalised treatment of modernity and postmodernity, and acknowledges that: 'Theorists such as Gadamer, Foucault, Derrida, and Rorty are not interchangeable figures who inhabit a neatly singular discursive domain' (1990:78). In addition to this she does acknowledge that Foucault himself resisted being labelled as a 'structuralist', 'poststructuralist', or a 'postmodernist' (p.171).

¹³ Griffiths (1995b) identifies five feminist responses to postmodernism. The first typified by Hartsock, Braidotti and Skeggs is critical of the way male academics have sought to colonise the debate. The second warns against getting seduced by postmodernism which could lead to feminism being compromised. More positively, Flax and Butler argue that feminism has to be postmodernist otherwise it becomes essential and therefore self-defeating. A more cautious stance which Griffiths sees hooks and Bordo adopting is one where postmodernism is embraced, but is always subordinate to feminism. The final position Griffiths identifies is those who feel that whilst postmodernism may be useful at times, it is not always so.

¹⁴ See Weedon (1989) and Nicholson (1990) for a detailed discussion of postmodernism and poststructuralism.

¹⁵ This can be seen as a development of Nancy Hartsock's (1983) discussion re empowerment occurring at various levels: personal, group and institutional.

¹⁶ Within feminist discourse the agenda for change is often focused on gender power relations which moves us beyond the generalities of Giddens' dualist notions about agency and structure which make little reference to any political dimension to agency.

¹⁷ See for example the work of Sartre, Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty; these texts and others are considered more fully in Turner's (1984) review of the body and society.

¹⁸ Some of the work in these sub-discipline areas has broken new ground, in particular Scraton's (1992) work on girls' physical education, Hargreaves' (1986) work on 'schooling the body', and Shilling's (1991) work on physical capital. There is also extensive research on women's experiences of medical care (Thomas 1988 and Barrett and Roberts 1978).

¹⁹ Consider, for example, when women have gone on hunger strike, chained themselves to railings / fencing, and occupied factories and pits. This is also a tactic that men such as the IRA Maze prisoners have used to get their voices heard.

²⁰ Evidence from the work of Green et al. (1987, 1990), Deem (1986) and Dixey and Talbot (1982) all confirm the extent to which women limit their leisure outside the home because of their fear of attack, both day and night.

²¹ Lovell (1991) however argues that the 'Reclaim the Night Marches' through black areas of London in the early 80s '...perpetuated stereotypes of black male sexuality, reinforcing the idea that women are most threatened sexually by black men' (p.61).

²² A noteworthy exception to this is the recent work of Lisa McDermott (1996) in which she explores the efficacy of the concept in understanding the connections between physicality, agency and empowerment and the experiences of two groups of women involved in extended canoe tripping and aerobics.

²³ See Bartky (1990) for a phenomenological approach to femininity.

²⁴ See Connell's (1987:84) discussion on the physical sense of maleness.

²⁵ See also Young (1990).

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN'S LEISURE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Introduction

This chapter initially explores the nature of women's leisure, and then turns to focus on women's involvement in physical activity. In so doing it seeks to examine how the theoretical concepts discussed in the previous chapter can make sense of women's varied experiences of leisure and physical activity.

Prior to beginning this discussion it is worth expanding on remarks made in the introductory chapter about the nature of the research into women's leisure since the mid 1980's. The mid 1980's were significant because they saw the publication of three key works on women's leisure: Deem's (1986) study of women's leisure in Milton Keynes; Wimbush's (1986) study of the leisure of women with young children in Edinburgh; and Green et al.'s (1987) study of women's leisure in Sheffield. Individually and collectively these studies made a significant contribution to our stock of knowledge about women's leisure. Theoretically the three studies shared an approach which, whilst acknowledging the pleasure women gained from leisure, focused largely on the ways in which it was constrained. With the benefit of postmodern theorising such a focus has been cast as overly deterministic. Foremost in criticism of this (and other feminist) work has been Rojek (1995) who claims that these researchers were too reliant on the oppression of women through patriarchy and not sufficiently attentive to the ambiguity of gender relations. Whilst Rojek is rather sweeping in his criticisms, thereby neglecting the ways in which the studies did point

to women as active and creative agents as opposed to passive dupes of patriarchy, he is right to point to the way in which theoretical developments have led to a refocusing of more recent leisure research. Postmodern theorising has led to leisure (and other) researchers considering the importance of language, difference, discourse, and subjectivities. The postmodern world is one that is seen as an unstable, ever-changing place where gendered identities are constantly shifting ground.

Whilst being aware of the dangers of an overly deterministic theoretical model, this chapter critically examines current understandings of women's leisure. The chapter explores the nature of the power that women exercise, and examines how they exercise it within the context of their leisure and physical activity. In effect what is being examined is the extent of women's agency. In order to develop a more holistic understanding of women's leisure the chapter considers: women in the labour market; women within the family and the household; ideological constructions of woman and concludes with a discussion of women's involvement in physically activity. Clearly these areas are inter-related in the lived reality of women and although there is a certain falsity in trying to tease them apart, this is done in order to enable each of the elements to be subjected to close scrutiny and analysis.

Women and the Labour Market

Education for Labour

Any discussion of women and the labour market ought, at some point, to consider the role of education in preparing women for entry into the market place. Educational attainment is one of the determining factors as to who enters the labour force, when, in which ways, and at what level. This is particularly important in a discussion about women and the labour force given that historically women were largely excluded from education before the late nineteenth century, as it was not thought to be necessary,

considering their 'natural' role in life. Girls' education, for most of the twentieth century, has been differentiated from boys' education, although since the 1980's and the introduction of the National Curriculum most education is undifferentiated. Although education no longer openly educates young women for domesticity, both Lees (1986) and Scraton (1992) argue that girls' education is still riddled with ideologies of motherhood and domesticity. The expectations held by some teachers of their female students are that:

They'll all be married within a couple of years with a couple of kids to look after. In this day and age most of the girls will have kids quite soon. With unemployment there's little alternative really (cited in Scraton 1992:50-51).

Lees' research confirms that although many girls saw marriage as inevitable, they were also aware of the implications of 'getting involved' too early:

Boyfriends and marriage easily interfere with career intentions and disrupt girls' work - they see what happened to their mums and how little autonomy they have (Lees 1986:98).

These contradictions are important for they demonstrate that there is some scope for contesting dominant ideologies. Delaying 'getting involved' can therefore be seen as a form of resistance, even if they later marry and have children. As Westwood's (1984:157) research, mainly on Asian women, illustrates the ideology of marriage and romance can turn sour:

Most of the young women here are really keen on engagements and marriage - it's a way out, as they see it, from home, boredom, something new to try. So, they try it, and marry at 19 and they are in a trap.

As Westwood states (in her book chapter headings) 'You sink into his arms ... by arrangement ...And end up with your arms in the sink'. Clearly, for many of the women in Westwood's research, caste cultures structure and constrain their aspirations for education and employment just as class cultures do for the young women in Lees' research. The dreams held by many of the young women to work somewhere other than in a factory (for example, in Marks and Spencer's where there

is a good staff discount), are rarely realised, despite the official school policies on equal opportunities. With the increasingly high examination achievement of girls in comparison to boys it will be interesting to monitor the extent to which young women's (and young men's) dreams are realised.¹ Lees suggests that this is in large part due to the fact that the cultural and social life of the school is not insulated from that of the family and neighbourhood:

This means that the pressures towards marriage - the strong pull on girls regardless of their social class membership, towards domesticity as the main aim of life - which are daily enacted in social and family life of adolescents will also be powerfully reflected in the social life of the school. This makes the experience of school different for girls than for boys, irrespective of the commitment of teachers to formal equality (1986:119-120).

The picture Lees portrays is one which gives little indication of the extent to which the girls contest and challenge what is happening to them. It is hard in her research to see them as active agents instead of passive, compliant girls. Holly's (1989) work is more useful in this regard and gives some insights into the agency which young women have.

In considering women's labour, therefore, we need to understand it as being the product of complex social and cultural processes which have been in the making early in each woman's life. The work of Westwood (1984), Lees (1986) and Scraton (1987, 1992) illustrates agreement, in different ways, the role that schools and communities play in educating girls for womanhood. It is unfortunate, however, that Westwood's and Lees' studies contain no sustained discussion of young women's leisure. Griffiths' (1988) work is particularly relevant here, insofar as it explores ways by which young Asian women have challenged the cultural and religious values of their communities through their leisure. Her discussion of the importance of dancing for young women illustrates the liberating effect that dance can have for some, whilst at the same time acknowledging the constraints which limit the involvement of young Asian women.

Dance has enabled some of these women to experience a sense of agency, but as Griffiths argues it is an agency that is bounded. Scraton's focus on physical education is also relevant to a discussion of women's leisure because of what it reveals about the school's role in the development of gender appropriate behaviour and the socialisation of the body. It also highlights the way in which ideological work is embodied through the way in which the body is trained in what Goffman (1982) calls deference and demeanour.

Women and Employment

The extent of women's employment in the labour force has fluctuated over the past fifty to sixty years, not so much in response to the demand for labour per se, but more in response to changes in the structure of the labour market. There are of course other factors such as changes in child-rearing practices and attitudes towards married women working which have had an impact on the numbers of women in the labour market (Deem 1986). These changes are perhaps best illustrated by the following data from census returns which cover the period when most of the data were collected. In 1971 there were 9.3 million women in the labour force, which represented 37 per cent of the labour force. By 1988 this had grown to 11.8 million (43 per cent of the labour force).² During this time the proportion of women (aged 16 and over) in employment rose from 47 per cent to 63 per cent. (Central Statistical Office [CSO] 1990). In contrast to this, the male labour force grew by only 0.2 million, over the same period from 15.6 to 15.8 million. This increase was solely in the 16-19 year old age group, as the economic activity in all other age groups fell during this period. Superficially these data suggest that women are gaining employment when men are losing it. What the data however do not reveal is the changing structure of this employment, notably the 'increase in the availability of part time jobs and other social and economic changes encouraging women into the labour force' (CSO 1989:70). The increase in women's participation in the labour market was partly attributable to the relatively low birth

rates in the 1970s, a rise in the average age at which women had children, and women returning to work after childbirth earlier and coming back into part-time work which they found easier to fit in around childcare (CSO 1990). However, as the CSO state (1989), the data regarding both employment and unemployment are problematic. The data particularly for part time work most likely under-represents the actual levels of women's employment due to the extent of casual, part time and illegal work that goes unrecorded. Whilst many such employees would want to have the same employment rights as others, the fear of losing their job will keep them, where their employer wants them, often off the official lists. Such employers keep their costs down by not paying the 'going wage' and by not having to meet legal and safety standards within the workplace. Another factor which renders unemployment data problematic are the changes in government definitions of unemployment and benefit entitlement which have led to a 'decrease' in the unemployment figures which may not reflect the lived reality (CSO 1989:78).³ In addition to this as Deem (1986:101) points out it is often difficult to establish which women are unemployed:

For women with young children or women approaching retirement the self-definition of themselves as unemployed is likely to be most problematic, since it is on these women that there are the greatest structural and ideological pressures to perceive themselves as neither part of, nor wanting to be part of, the labour force.

It is worth bearing in mind that Deem's sample largely contained white women and therefore we need to acknowledge that such comments as these may not be relevant to ethnic minority women and their perceptions of unemployment. The rates of economic activity of men and women varied between ethnic groups, although there is a constant pattern of women being less economically active than men. Only 20 per cent of women from the Pakistani / Bangladeshi ethnic group were economically active as compared to 76 per cent of the men. Indian women were more active, with 57 per cent of them being economically active as compared to 83 per cent of the men. Sixty-nine per cent

of white women and 88 per cent of white men were economically active; as compared with 73 per cent of women and 85 per cent of men from the West Indian / Guyanese group.⁴ The low involvement of Pakistani / Bangladeshi women in the labour market is particularly marked, and is echoed, as we shall see, by their low involvement in other activities out of the home, such as leisure. The higher rate of economic activity for West Indian / Guyanese women is particularly interesting as it is four per cent higher than that for white women. This may reflect their involvement within particular segments of the labour force as well as different cultural expectations and values. Whilst there are marked variations between women's involvement in the labour force the general pattern for women of all ethnic minorities to be less economically active than men indicates that there are a variety of factors operating to limit women's involvement in employment.

The nature of the work women were doing in 1988 still reflected the stereotypical British pattern, with 67 per cent employed in non-manual occupations (as compared to 48 per cent of men). In all, 30 per cent of economically active women worked in clerical (or similar) occupations, compared to only 6 per cent of men. Not only has the substantive nature of the work men and women do not changed since 1981, but the wages differential has not decreased; it has increased, from being £46.2 in 1981 to £81.6 in 1988. In 1981 the average weekly earnings of full-time employees (both manual and non-manual) was £138.2 for males and £92 for females, by 1988 this had increased to £245.8 for males and £164.2 for females (CSO 1990).

The picture that emerges from such data is that although women (of all ethnic groups) are more active in the labour market than they ever have been, that involvement is tightly constrained and restricted in terms of responsibility, status, earnings and the employment sector. Part-time work and homeworking have become attractive alternatives to full-time work for employers, but for the workers, who are invariably women, these forms of work can at the same time be problematic and desirable. They

can be problematic due to the lack of employment protection and social benefits gained when working from the home, but they can be desirable to some women owing to the flexibility of the working day which means that it is easier to fit in with other commitments such as collecting children from school. Particular groups of women are more disadvantaged than others, for example women with young children, and some ethnic minority women. Although, as the title of Gannage's (1986) book on women garment workers implies, many women who work and have families and partners have a 'Double Day, Double Bind'. Women's labour does not end when they finish their paid employment, but the 'Second Shift'⁵ begins with their work as mothers and house-keepers.

The nature of women's paid labour, therefore, has major repercussions on all other aspects of their lives: the following discussion focuses on their position within the household and family, and their leisure opportunities. Employment structures how much time, if any, they have at their disposal for leisure, it determines how much money is available, if any, for their leisure, and it may affect the power they have within the household to influence leisure activities and expenditure.

Employment and Leisure

Findings from several studies (Deem 1986; Sharpe 1984; Green et al. 1990) have highlighted some of the benefits of paid employment for women, arguing that it:

... does provide women with an independent income, opportunities to develop social contacts at work, and some notional entitlement, at least, to autonomous leisure (Green et al. 1990:87).

These findings from a largely white sample of women are also supported to some extent by the work of Thorogood (1987) on Afro-Caribbean women, and by Westwood (1984), on Afro-Caribbean and Asian women. This research confirms the benefits of employment in giving women an independent income as well giving them

social contacts out of the household. Not all the women were able to keep control of the money they earned, as some, particularly some of the Asian women in Westwood's study, had to hand over their wages to their husband or mother in law, and make do with whatever they were given for housekeeping money (Pahl 1989, 1991). The benefits of employment may also vary according to the woman's social and household circumstances, and to the type of employment engaged in. Objectively, two women may have similar employment and domestic commitments, but culture and class, combined with intra-household relations may lead these two women to having different experiences of work (both paid and unpaid) and leisure. Le Feuvre's (1994) research on women's leisure in France offers some support for this when she argues that it is a woman's class and gender identity that explains her relationship to the labour market and her experience of leisure.

In terms of type of employment, there are some jobs which do not have the social benefits that Green et al. (1990) have identified, such as homeworking, which denies workers the social contact of working with others. For women it can further erode what leisure they may have because the work place is also the home. Having the workplace as the home may also increase the amount of housework that has to be done. Sometimes homework is expected, because of the partner's job, although it is not necessarily paid for. For example a church minister's wife is often expected to have a caring, helping role within a community, and indeed can have her leisure circumscribed by what is expected of 'a minister's wife' (see Finch 1983). The paradox of homework for women is that often women are attracted to it because it offers flexibility, but the problem of low pay and meeting deadlines can turn it into a double-edged sword which serves to constrain their leisure.

The social advantages of being in a job, or going back to a job after a period of non-employment, are such that as Sharpe (cited in Deem 1986:105) reports, women can gain in confidence, self-image and status, which:

... enables them to become more self-assertive over a number of aspects of their lives, including their male partners, household finances and their leisure time.

This stresses the need explore the workings of intra-household power relations, as women (and men, and children) seek to carve out time for themselves.

The benefits of being in paid employment for women's leisure has been documented by Green et al. (1987) who stress the social and financial independence gained. Deem (1986) also draws attention to the ways in which the compartmentalisation of time that paid employment forced on women led them to finding it easier to gain autonomous leisure time. Paid employment can also be constraining, with the time and energy expended, not just in 'doing the job', but also in getting to and from the workplace, leaving women with little chance of enjoying their leisure time. However, the constraint mentioned most frequently in the Sheffield study was that of financial resources. Childcare and restricted movement outside the home were also major constraints for women from low-income households, factors that will be discussed more fully in the following section. Middle-class women with older children and young single women were the groups of women least constrained by this whilst the other groups, particularly working-class women were the most constrained by lack of money.

The constraints of time and space were shared by most of the groups, although young single women experienced fewer time constraints and generally had most independence due to their lack of family commitments. Green et al. claim that:

...variables such as household composition, work profiles for women and men, and the leisure pursuits of children and male partners, may have different effects upon women's leisure, but the process of social control involved is remarkably consistent (1987:233-234).

It is not entirely clear, however, how social control operates, particularly within what they term 'the private sphere' and whether it (the process of social control) is consistent. Should we therefore be talking of *processes* of control rather than assuming there is just one? Green et al. identify the reproduction of ideologies of masculinity and femininity as being central to maintaining male control. They give examples of how expectations of being a good housewife were found to be oppressive by some women. However, their discussion of the 'private' sphere neglects any discussion of women being powerful, and by doing so they fall into the trap that Giddens identified of seeing power always as something that constrains, as opposed to something that can enable. Their understanding of gender power relations is such that women are seen as being controlled both in the private and public spheres. The separation of the 'public' and the 'private' is I think artificial, because it seems to negate the possibility of any power linkages between the two, as well as creating a false dichotomy. Indeed there is little empirical evidence of a clear separation between the 'public' and the 'private'. For example, controlling the household finances may contribute to women's power both within the household and outside of it (Pahl 1991), even though they may seem to be 'powerless' in other areas e.g. through not being able to renegotiate the division of domestic labour or not being able to refuse their partner's sexual advances.

We need therefore, to be able to appreciate the complexities of the power relations between men and women: they are not one-dimensional; they are in fact multi-faceted and at times contradictory. By this I mean that power relations operate across a range of issues e.g. decisions over employment, spending, leisure and sexual practices. Power is also based in the physical as well as the social and political and is constructed and reconstructed through a variety of strategies. The discussion in Green et al. (1987) therefore tends to be one-dimensional and uni-directional, leaving questions to be asked about the nature of male and female power, both in and out of the household. Exploring this area should facilitate a better understanding of why some women

subjugate themselves (and their leisure) to servicing the leisure of others such as children, partners and any others they are caring for. In addition to this it may also lead to a better understanding of the benefits that different women can gain from their leisure and how it relates to their gendered identities.

The contrast between the works of Deem (1986), Green et al. (1987) and Wimbush (1986), and that of Glyptis (1989), is particularly marked when considering what they reveal about gender, work and employment. For Glyptis, work is rather narrowly defined to paid work, and whilst she acknowledges that there are groups in society that work, but do not get paid for it, the crucial factor seems to be whether the groups have a negative or positive identity:

Employment refers to the specific job of work an individual performs for a specific reward from an employer. Put simply, it is paid work. Unemployment is the absence of paid work among members of the work-force.

Of course there are other groups without paid work, notably the retired, students and housewives. However, retired people, students and housewives have positive identities and recognized roles within society. They are not expected to work. The unemployed, by contrast, are the only non-working group who are expected to work. Significantly, therefore, they have only a negative identity (Glyptis 1989:4).

The problem with Glyptis's argument is that there is no evidence to support her claim that the retired, students and housewives have positive identities. The very fact that many people have problems in adjusting to retirement would suggest the contrary. In relation to housewives, Wimbush's study suggests that non-working mothers with pre-school age children do not necessarily have positive identities at all, but rather that their role as mother had led to a diminution of the sense of self-worth, she found that:

... some described the support received from female friends in terms of boosting their confidence and sense of individual worth - something which had ebbed since motherhood (Wimbush 1986:163).

That Glyptis does not seem to appreciate this 'crisis in confidence' is surprising given the following comment made about the psychological benefits of work:

We expect to work, by and large we want to work, and certainly we derive psychological as well as financial rewards from doing so. What work removes, leisure cannot replace (Glyptis 1989:158).

Also whilst clearly leisure cannot give the financial rewards of employment, it may well be that, contra Glyptis, leisure can give women a heightened sense of self-worth, confidence and well-being. These 'oversights' in Glyptis' study are perhaps partly due to the lack of any theoretical explanation of unemployment and gender identities. Whilst Glyptis does say that the effects of unemployment on young people, women and families are often overlooked in literature dominated by studies of male unemployment (1989:71), her own work and this book have done little to rectify matters. The omission of women from the book was also evident in a section discussing the impact of unemployment on the family. As the Milton Keynes (Deem 1986) and Sheffield (Green et al. 1987) studies have shown, unemployed men's wives spend less on leisure than other women, in addition to which couple-based leisure outside the home is also severely curtailed. To fully understand the dynamics behind women spending less on leisure we need, as Morris (1990) points out, to know more about the nature of the distribution of income within the household.

To understand the employment / leisure interface I would argue that we need to move away from seeing employment as determining leisure, to a stance advocated by Le Feuvre (1994), Gregson and Lowe (1993, 1994) and Morris (1990) which demotes employment to one of a range of factors that interact with others such as class and age.

The Impact of the Family and Household on Women's Leisure

It should be noted that whilst research on women's leisure by Deem (1986) and Green et al. (1987) considers the impact of employment on leisure, research on the household rarely considers the impact of employment or household relations upon the leisure of household members. Take for example the recently published edited collection by Anderson et al. (1994). It contains some publications from the Social Change and Economic Life Initiative (SCELI) research programme, and yet it contains little in the way of discussion about households and leisure. This is particularly disappointing given that the second part of the SCELI programme, the Household and Community Survey, involved interviewing respondents about their leisure activities. On the other hand, leisure research has for the most part failed to draw sufficiently upon the work of researchers such as Vogler and Pahl (1993) who have done much to unravel the relationship between household finances and power relations. In this section I am seeking to move beyond this position and draw work from both areas together to inform the discussion on women's leisure.

Depending on the amount of time and money available, employment and income are seen as enabling or constraining the leisure of household members in general, and women in particular. They are not the only influential factors however, and we need to be concerned with asking not just how much money or time is available for leisure, but how much access do women have to these resources, and why, and how, do some women seem to have more access to these resources than others? This shift in focus reflects the theoretical shift from modernist views on women's leisure as being constrained, to postmodernist theorising which is more concerned with the connection between leisure and the construction and reconstruction of gender identities. In so doing this section considers key aspects of household life, women's roles within the household, and women's leisure. Whilst some of this work was published prior to conducting the research much of it has come into the public domain since that time.

This more recent work has been particularly useful given the way in which these women foregrounded household issues as being central to understanding their identities and their involvement in physical activity.

Households are seen as being relatively dynamic, changing domestic contexts rather than stable, unchanging 'institutions'. As people join and leave the household, so relationships between household members and others change, and so the dynamics of the household will be reconstructed. This is particularly so when considering households as they move through different stages of the life cycle. Vogler and Pahl (1993) also draw attention to the need to consider the impact that changes within the labour market have on household relations.

Household Finances

The relationship between income generation and power within the household has come under scrutiny as the increasing economic activity of women raises the question of whether women are gaining more power within households. The key focus of research is now the nature of power within households, or largely within heterosexual marriages or relationships. As a result our attention has been drawn to the question of not only how the resources of money and time are allocated, but by whom, and on what grounds.

The distribution of household finances is a key factor in gender power relations (Pahl 1989, 1991; Burgoyne 1990). Who spends what on leisure, and when they spend it, in effect tells us as much, if not more, about intra-household power relations as it does about leisure interests. It may also reveal something of the ideologies of marriage/partnership that prevail in different cultural groups. Pahl's (1991) study of one hundred and two heterosexual couples investigated who controlled the money, who had power within the marriage and whether these had any relationship to different

ideologies of marriage. The couples who had at least one child under sixteen were interviewed both together and separately. Pahl (1991:45) sums up the analysis of forms of household finance control:

... where a wife controls finances she will usually also be responsible for money management; where the husband controls finances he will usually delegate parts of the money management to his wife.

A typical example of the latter, is where a husband gives his wife some housekeeping money. Pahl's study suggests that it is rare to find the reverse operating, where the wife is in control and delegates some financial management to her husband. This pattern of control also seemed related to income level and social class. Like Morris (1993), Vogler and Pahl (1993), Pahl found that wife-controlled finances were common in low-income households, particularly where neither partner had any qualifications. Also: 'The more the wife contributed to the household income the more likely it was that she would control household finances...' (Pahl 1991:44). In cases where one partner either had more qualifications, or was of a higher social class, he or she was more likely to control the finances.

Whilst acknowledging the problems of measuring power empirically, Pahl adopted the strategy of investigating it by asking who made decisions within the household. Husbands were found to be more dominant in decision-making than were wives. Power in decision-making also seemed to rest with the partner who earned more. For the most part, as has already been suggested, this meant that men had more power, although older wives were found to be more dominant in decision-making because they were more likely to still be in employment (Pahl 1991). This latter finding contrasts with Mason's (1988) study of older married women's leisure where she explored the issue of women's control, or lack of it, over finance. She concluded that:

The husbands were clearly generally viewed as the owners and ultimate controllers of money whatever the system of income or money management in the household (Mason 1987b). Thus even in the more affluent households, or

the minority where the women had a personal income somewhere near comparable to that of her husband, the men were the ones who 'treated' their wives to an evening out occasionally or who bought drinks for example (Mason 1988:78-79).

Mason's findings therefore led her to question the degree of importance that Pahl attaches to systems of money management. In addition to this Morris (1993:534) suggests that '... access to psm [personal spending money] is considerably higher among men than women, and particularly so when the woman is not employed.' This suggests that some women may be in the anomalous position of managing household finances (particularly in low income households), but having less personal spending money than men. It is only anomalous however, if the management of finances is equated with having power over them, then it would seem as if women were aiding their own oppression and we need to explore why. If management is seen as a relatively mechanical process of paying bills etc., as opposed to a more pro-active process of making decisions over what money should be spent on, then the position does not seem so anomalous. If women are making the decisions and are not giving themselves the same personal spending money as men, because they do not think they have a right to it, then they are arguably in part aiding their own oppression and reinforcing dominant ideologies about the value of paid labour as opposed to unpaid domestic labour.

Retirement for most people means a significant reduction in personal and household income. Walker (1990:230), citing DHSS statistics, reports that nearly two thirds of elderly people (5.5 million) live in or on the margins of poverty, as compared to one quarter of non-elderly people. Walker estimated that at 1988-89 benefit levels a pensioner receiving supplementary benefit, having paid for food, fuel and clothing would be left with £14.98 per week for 'non-essentials' (1990:231). It is clear that for the majority of pensioners, reducing their outgoings and cutting down on expenditure was a necessity, even for those who had planned for retirement.

Both the Long and Wimbush (1985) and Mason (1988) studies reported that the concomitant drop in income that retirement heralds had a major impact on spending on leisure for both women and men. Whilst both of the studies touch on changes in leisure and finance levels within households after retirement, we still know very little about the impact that retirement has on gender power relations within the household. Whilst some trends have emerged from previous research (Cliff 1993), the anomalies that appeared emphasised that to focus on a crude economic analysis of who has power within households is insufficient. So although finance is clearly part of the equation, the prevailing ideologies of family life, and the roles of the husband and wife all need closer scrutiny. Further research therefore needs to explore the extent to which male culture, male identity and in particular the role of 'being a husband' is bolstered by being in control of money.

There is also a need for an analysis of financial control within same sex partnerships and households. Morris (1990:114) cites an American study on couples which included some discussion of household finance systems adopted by homosexual couples but generally this is an under-researched area. If we are to develop our theoretical understanding of how gendered identities and power relations are worked out in the household, and how these affect leisure, we need to extend the research into these neglected, but crucially important areas.

Domestic Labour

Although it might be thought that women whose male partners are unemployed would not be spending so much time servicing their partner to enable him to work, and would therefore have more time for themselves, this rarely seems to be the case. As Morris (1990) reports the tendency was for unemployed males not to take on additional domestic work. She also cites work from Pahl's study (conducted in 1984) which found that the share of domestic work done by unemployed men is slightly lower than

the average for employed men in the sample. In addition to this Green et al. (1990) suggest that the presence of an unemployed male partner around the house can also create problems, as the enforced increase in time spent in each other's company can cause friction within the household, with women feeling that they and their housework are under close scrutiny. We, therefore, cannot easily separate the individual from their family or household context. The more close-knit the group, the more the actions of one influence, or are influenced by, the actions of the other(s). The demands that work (paid or unpaid) make on men and women, and the claims that men and women make, in terms of their leisure, affect those they live with, be they husband, wife, partner, parent or child. Wheelock (1990) claims for example that women's increasing involvement in the labour force is a key factor in the development of a more equitable division of labour. This claim is challenged though by Gregson and Lowe based on their research of dual career households.

Not only would it appear then that the form of domestic division of labour adopted within individual households is relatively independent from male and female employment, but it would seem too that social class is of minimal importance to an understanding of the ways in which partners organise domestic work within the household (1994:56).

The patterns of domestic labour therefore seem to be resistant to change and we need to explore why this is the case. What practices or ideas serve to maintain particular patterns of domestic labour within households? In asking this question I want to draw attention away from time being seen always as a constraint, (i.e. whether one partner has or does not have as much time as the other to do domestic chores) to the ideologies about labour in the domestic and public spheres. In other words, I want to focus on the exercise of power within households and how that impacts on what women and men both do within and outside of the household.

As Mason's (1988) work illustrates, as women move through the life course rather than shed work, they may take on additional roles and tasks as they become the carers

for relatives. Also the retirement of a male partner, rather than leading to an extra pair of hands to help around the house, can often lead to more work being created. This is supported by Long and Wimbush's (1985) research on men's leisure around the time when they retire. For the majority of their sample there was no real change in their domestic roles when they retired, regardless of whether their female partner was still employed or not. One such respondent was clearly resistant to change, as if change were evidence of losing his manliness:

But I don't like seeing these men trotting about with their little plastic bags doing shopping, becoming cooks (Long and Wimbush 1985:70).

As this quotation illustrates the division of domestic labour is heavily inscribed with ideologies of hegemonic masculinity (and emphasized femininity). Building on Morris's (1990) work which suggests that social networks may be more influential, Gregson and Lowe (1993) stress the importance of gender identities in the way in which men and women come to define themselves and therefore their roles within households.

Getting Out of the House

Home-based leisure, because of its location and its nature, is relatively easy for women to negotiate time for, although as Le Feuvre (1994) points out many women use this leisure to service family needs. Often because of its very nature home-based leisure is possible to stop and start it should any 'emergency' arise. Out-of-home leisure, however, is more problematic, for whilst it might still be subject to the same limitations of money, there are other factors which impinge on what women do, whom they do it with, and where they do it. The findings of the Sheffield study (Green et al. 1987) concur with Dixey and Talbot's (1982) earlier research that bingo is seen as a safe place for men to 'let' 'their' women go to. However not all places are safe to go to, for as the work of Hey (1987) and Hunt and Satterlee (1987) illustrate the pub is

not seen to be a safe place for women to go to on their own. This is reinforced by Dixey's (1988:97) findings:

'Safety' and feeling 'safe' ... has to do with feeling comfortable, but importantly for women, with feeling safe from the unwanted contact with men, which could not be guaranteed in a pub.

The other side of this notion of 'safety' is that men can safely let their women out, whilst being assured that at bingo their women are unlikely to have the opportunity to form relationships with other men.

Perhaps above all, as participants in our discussion groups indicated, bingo is seen as a 'safe' activity for women. It is mainly a women's activity, and the consumption of alcohol and opportunities for assignations with members of the opposite sex looms very small in participants' minds (Green et al. 1987:140).

Other related factors in men's control of women's leisure that arise out of the Sheffield study are women's access to money and their use of and access to transport, and in particular a car. Mason's (1988) work also raises the issue of access to a car as being a key element of social control of women's leisure. The fact that, over the age of fifty more men than women have driving licences and access to a car suggests that men and women as they grow older have increasingly to rely on others for transport, which in turn further acts to constrain their leisure.

Mobility and personal safety are key issues, but for women with children there is the additional problem of ensuring childcare if they want to enjoy some leisure, without the children there. As Horrell et al. (1994:100) point out:

Individuals not only have to accommodate their working-time patterns to their own domestic and leisure activities but also have to accommodate to the working-time patterns of other household members.

Getting out of the house therefore can often involve considerable negotiation within the household as well as considering factors of mobility and safety.

Women with Young Children

As Wimbush's (1986) study confirms, this independence is at its lowest for women who do not have paid work, who have restricted mobility, who have family commitments i.e. pre-school age children, and have a low household income. For these women their leisure is severely curtailed by the burden of childcare responsibilities, lack of free time and lack of finance. Leisure, like any employment they have, has to be fitted round the needs of their children and partners. Crucially:

Where there are conflicts between the demands or needs of family members and the mother's outside commitments or interests, it is the woman's outside activities that are pared down or dropped. Unlike male partners, mothers seldom regarded themselves as having a right to personal leisure, whether in the sense of having private time or personal spending money (Wimbush 1986:183).

Other less material constraints such as lack of confidence and feelings of isolation were experienced by lone parents and women with unemployed partners. Whilst large-scale surveys (e.g. Green et al. 1987) are very useful at helping to identify patterns of leisure participation across a broad sample, more focused studies are also of value in that they can explore issues, such as leisure and well-being, that sometimes get lost in larger studies. Wimbush focused on a group of women whom research has shown have restricted leisure opportunities: women with pre-school age children (Deem 1982). The study sought: '... to evaluate the role and meaning of leisure in the daily lives of non-working women in families with regard to their general health and well-being' (1986:15). The focus was on non-working women with pre-school age children because:

... it is a period in the female life-cycle that is distinctive in terms of women's withdrawal from the labour force. The curtailment of employment, whether in part or in full, is significant for the consequent reduction in household and personal income, as well as for the greater vulnerability to ill-health through

social isolation and becoming more confined within the home (Wimbush 1986:15-16).

The study, although restricted in terms of sample (as Wimbush herself acknowledges in terms of the lack of representation of ethnic minority women and the small sample size), breaks new ground in its exploration of the links between work, leisure and health. As with the Milton Keynes and Sheffield studies, Wimbush found that mothers' leisure had to be fitted around what their children and partners were doing. The majority of the mothers did not feel that they had a right to leisure, to do what they wanted, or to buy what they wanted. Those who did regard leisure as being something that they should have invariably developed strategies to ensure they achieved it. These strategies often necessitated either shutting themselves away, either physically (e.g. in the toilet) or mentally (e.g. switching off) or getting husbands 'out of the way'. Even in the most equitable households Wimbush still found women responsible for organising childcare. Ironically, although many of the mothers in the sample felt that being physically fit was a very important contributor to their having a sense of well-being, the majority of them felt that they did not have enough energy left from their work commitments and most had given up their own sports interests. Fitness, as Wimbush indicates, was more of a by-product than an activity in its own right:

The escalation of labour on the domestic front, combined with its unequal division within the household, means that physical fitness, like leisure generally becomes for [sic] mother a derivative of this work more than a consequence of sports or physical recreations (1986:79).

One of the key benefits of recreation which Wimbush's study identified was the regained sense of their identities which many women experienced. This was particularly important for non-working mothers as it gave them status and self-confidence by enabling them to get out of the house and interact with others. These findings point to the potential for women to become empowered through their involvement in leisure. The study also highlights the connections between the

construction of gendered identity, work and leisure. It raises the question of the importance of the social context of the leisure, in addition to the role of the actual activity itself. Those who were able to benefit most from recreation were those who were able to take part with minimal disruption to the rest of the household. They were able to fit their leisure round the time hierarchies and demands of others (Le Feuvre 1994). Recreation was therefore often taken in the day-time, at places where it was free or cheap and where there was some child-care provision. Wimbush's study provides evidence of the contribution that leisure can make to the well being of a group of women who live their lives under a host of constraints. In so doing it points to the extent to which agency is possible, even though it may be bounded.

Negotiation around Leisure

The concept of negotiation implies a particular view of power relations; one which, like hegemony, sees power as lying with different people or groups. Finch and Mason (1993:60) define negotiation as meaning: '... the course of action which a person takes emerges out of his or her interaction with other people', whilst Cliff (1993) sees negotiation as a process of mutual influence. What seems to be missing from these definitions is the element of gain or loss that is more clearly evident if talking about the negotiation over salary levels. I would therefore go further than Finch and Mason (1993) and Cliff (1993) and add that negotiation results in a mutually agreeable conclusion whereby parties may seem to have made losses, but they can also be seen as having made gains. The extent of the gain and loss in this instance is measured in relation to the starting points of each party. The notion of accommodation, on the other hand suggests that the balance does not level out: it connotes an element of giving in, at least momentarily. In this sense the outcome may be seen as more transient in so far as the next time 'conflict' arises there will be no guarantee that the same result will ensue, because there has been no negotiated settlement. Perhaps it is also important at this juncture to talk about the notion of a 'trade-off'. It may also be

the case, that, as in industrial relations, both parties can be seen as winning. Negotiation can therefore be used here to describe the process by which people reach a temporary or permanent agreement or compromise about matters which affect them both. In this sense it can be seen to share some similarities with industrial negotiations, but there are major differences as Connell (1987:105) reminds us: 'There is limited scope to extract material advantages from the labour of just one other person.' Also within the one to one relationship of a couple, or members of a household, the negotiation process may be implicit as well as explicit, unlike the more formal process in industry.⁶ As in industry, though there may be a sense that one party invariably seems to gain the most, the fact that the outcome is not a forgone conclusion and that sometimes the workers or women do win is, as Connell (1987:105) notes, an important political and, I would add, theoretical, point.

Although the concept of negotiation has largely been used within the context of research on the domestic division of labour in households and families (Morris 1990; Gregson and Lowe 1993; Cliff 1993) I would argue that we need to explore its value to our understanding of decision making on the issue of household members' leisure. Potentially it offers new ways to understand the 'give and take' in households, as well as enabling us to see women as exercising power, as opposed to being oppressed by their structural position within the household.

Ideological Pressures on Women and their Leisure

Material and tangible constraints, such as access to finance and transport, are by their nature relatively easy to identify, and therefore address. Ideological pressures, whilst having a material (social and cultural) base have an opacity which makes identification and contestation problematic. The power of ideology is demonstrated, for example, by the lack of women getting involved in sport, despite the fact that many of the barriers have been removed e.g. governing body rules, such as those which excluded

women from boxing. One of the problems is that many women do not see involvement in sport as being appropriate for them, for their subjectivities, as women. This section explores the nature of ideological pressures on women and how they operate in different ways to affect women's leisure.

This is not to deny the many ways by which women (and men) may challenge dominant hegemonic ideas. The sense of agency that is implicit in Gramsci's hegemony and that Giddens discusses goes some way to explaining the variations in the extent to which men and women accommodate to, or resist dominant ideologies.

But ideologies are not fixed - they are the result of struggles over meaning and of constant reassessments. In sports, as in other areas of life, conventional and stereotyped representations of femaleness coexist alongside progressive and oppositional ones: there are those which are part of a broad ideological structure of power which severely limits female autonomy, and those which are expressions of an active redefinition of the female sporting body (Hargreaves 1994:145).

In this sense people are seen as actively responding differentially to ideological constraints. Green and Hebron (1988:38) point out the irony in the fact that: 'Many of the ideological 'messages' are carried through texts which we read in our leisure time: television, magazines, films, newspapers.' It could be argued that as a vehicle for ideological messages, leisure is particularly apt, because it presents itself as being 'natural' and untainted, and something that we 'choose' to do.

The ideologies of motherhood, sexuality and femininity prevalent in popular culture (Ballaster et al. 1991; Bartky 1990) map out the dominant image of what it is to be a 'normal woman' when at work, at home and at play. To step outside the limits of these ideological prescriptions is to risk sanctions being imposed by both men and other women, who in effect 'police' the ideological status quo. Foucault's (1977) work on surveillance is particularly useful in understanding what is happening in this 'policing' process. Although there are cultural variations, regardless of ethnicity or

sexuality men and women 'police' women's (and men's) practice in all areas of life, to limit deviation from the prevailing ideologies. As Woodward and Green (1988) point out, policing by men (and occasionally by women) can involve the threat or actual use of violence. The tabloid press regularly remind readers of what is deemed unacceptable in our patriarchal and homophobic society.

Ideologies of motherhood, femininity and (hetero)sexuality present a powerful ideological block which some women may not see as a problem. For those who do, few may feel able to challenge them (Lees 1986; Griffiths 1988; Scraton 1992; Clarke 1996). Fear of being excluded, rejected or of being ridiculed makes it problematic for individual women to challenge dominant ideologies of what they should be doing and how they should feel. Being a 'good mother' means being someone who devotes her own time, energy and resources to attending to the needs and welfare of her family and household. Bourdieu (1992) provides an example of this in a discussion of eating habits when he describes situations where women will eat less than the men, because they do not want to eat '... what others might need, especially the men...' (Bourdieu 1992:192). For these women their subjectivities are firmly located in particular constructions of what it is to be a 'good' mother.

Ideological work begins early, with girls being exposed at home and at school to gender stereotyped ideas about the role of girls and women (McRobbie 1978; Scraton 1987,1989,1992). Models of domesticity and motherhood also continue to be reinforced through particular sections of the press such as women's magazines (Bartky 1990; Ballaster et al. 1991; Tinkler 1995). These models are not constant however, as they become reconstructed through social interaction and human agency, but often the pervasiveness of ideologies is such that whilst they may change slightly they manage to remain as the dominant ideologies despite the fact that some young girls and women challenge and contest them.

The ideological baggage, mediated by class location, which attaches itself to being 'a good wife' relates to servicing men, that is washing, cooking, cleaning and shopping, and also being available to satisfy their sexual desires (Seiter cited in Green et al. 1990: 119). Failure to service 'their' man adequately can lead women to feel guilty over not having done their job properly. The wife is often publicly judged on how well turned out 'her' husband / partner is, on how clean the house is, on how good her cooking is.

Further to this:

The condition of the house is one of the few tangible examples of the physical manifestations of those roles, which makes it a source of continuing anxiety for women who feel they lack the time and energy to maintain it to an acceptable level (Green et al. 1990:117).

It can therefore be seen how these ideologies relate not only to what the woman should do, but also how she should behave and where she should go. As Green et al. (1990:115) remind us: 'The concept of respectability constitutes a key element in the construction and representation of women'. The power of such ideologies is evidenced by where women either chose to go, or are allowed to go by their male partners, or conversely not to go. They therefore have a major influence on women's leisure both in and out of the home. Deem (1986:148) highlights the ways in which even women who are normally thought to be freer to do what they want with their leisure time, are in fact still constrained:

... a woman who successfully negotiates and bargains her way out of the house (or gets her male partner out of the house with her children so she can have some time to herself) is still constrained by having to conduct those negotiations in order to obtain leisure which men take for granted... .

So even though many of the women in Deem's sample were more able to take advantage of the 'public' world, they were not always able to take up these opportunities 'freely'. As Deem points out, even when women are able to have leisure it invariably:

...reflects patriarchal ideologies about the roles of women...and the provision itself is frequently based on stereotyped notions of femininity. The stereotypes tend to classify women into either young sex-objects who need discotheques and wine bars, or mothers who require sewing classes and romantic novels (1986:144).⁷

Women who choose to challenge these stereotypes by going to a pub on their own, going to a class on plumbing or playing rugby run the risk of being sanctioned through a variety of techniques ranging from being the subject of jokes to hostile behaviour and sexual harassment.⁸ In taking part in such leisure activities women are not only challenging patriarchal ideology about what is appropriate for them to do, but they are also asserting their right to leisure, their right to the leisure that they want to do, when they want to do it and where they want to do it. In addition to this, Wimbush (1988) points out that women can challenge ideology by transforming what they do and putting forward alternative ideologies:

By reinterpreting leisure activities, and imbuing them with alternative values, women (consciously or unconsciously) generate competing ideologies. By rejecting or adapting the rules and norms of these activities to suit themselves, women are also challenging the structural determinism inherent in the expectations that social life should continue in its present form (p.87).

Although challenge and resistance does seem to be possible for some women, many either do not see the need for it, or chose to leave the struggle to others. This aspect of resistance and women's agency is an aspect of women's leisure that Shaw (1994) and others have begun to focus on. Modernist perspectives would view women's leisure as being so tightly circumscribed by male control of the labour market and the family / household, underpinned by patriarchal ideologies that few attempt to resist. One area where women's resistance and challenge to hegemonic discourses is gaining public attention is in physical activity and sport. The discussion, turns therefore to focus on women's involvement in physical activity (including sport) and explores

whether it poses any different problems for women, or indeed, whether it offers different potentialities.

Physical Activity and Sport

Theorising about the Action

Without doubt, men possess greater cultural power than women. In leisure activities in general, and in sport in particular, men spend more time and have access to a wider range of opportunities than women, and sport is a unique feature of cultural life in which women are seriously disadvantaged and where sexism is fostered (Hargreaves 1989:130).

This quotation from Hargreaves draws our attention to the fact that women's experiences of leisure and sport are inextricably linked with men's and so, as Theberge (1984:12) argues: '... to understand women's experiences we must understand the experiences of both men and women.' It also raises the issue that sport as an aspect of cultural life is particularly imbued with 'maleness'.

The previous section on women and leisure illustrated (through a variety of studies), a range of the possible constraints on, and opportunities for, women's leisure. It therefore follows logically that similar conditions are likely to apply in women's sport and physical activity. However as Theberge (1984) implies, the context of physical activity and sport may lead to the constraints and possibilities operating differently. Young (1979) suggests that there are differences insofar as some cultures exclude women from the concept of sport and therefore from the idea and reality of sport, and so from 'full participation in humanity itself' (1979:44).

Hall's (1987) paper on 'Masculinity as culture: the discourse of gender and sport' provides an excellent summary of the development of writing on women and sport and obviates the need for prolonged discussion on it here. Suffice to say that Hall documents the shift from seeking to understand women's experiences by focusing on women, to also examining men's experiences and the inter-relations between them:

Slowly but surely, the discourse of gender and sport is finally moving away from an exclusive and restrictive focus on women and femininity to the nature of gendered social behaviour and the impact of gendered social structures on both sexes (Hall 1987:12).

Moving the debate onto the ground that Hall and others advocate has implications for the theoretical tools that we use. Hargreaves (1989) suggests that the often-used theoretical tools of liberalism and marxism are not sensitive enough to get to grips with: '... the complexities and contradictions of gender relations in sport' (p.130).

Whilst she and other feminists would reject the additive model where:

... there is a tendency to 'insert' women in previously constructed pictures of male leisure and sport and there is a general failure to examine gender issues (Hargreaves 1989:131).

Hargreaves finds hegemony as a much more useful basis upon which to conduct an analysis. Hegemony:

... proposes a dialectical relationship between individuals and society, a relationship that is both determined and determining, and it allows for cultural experiences such as leisure and sport to be both exploitative and creative (1987:133).

In the previous chapter I argued that these originally malestream theories are not sufficient on their own and need to be considered along with feminist theories drawing upon postmodernism and poststructuralism, as well as structuration, to expose the precise ways by which leisure and physical activity are implicated in the reproduction of gender power and powerlessness.

Defining The Action

Having discussed the broad context of women's leisure the discussion now turns to explore the nature of women's experiences in physical activity and sport. A starting point is to define what is meant by physical activity and sport in the context of this study. Sport is seen to be those activities which are organised and highly competitive (e.g. athletics or playing in a squash league) whilst, physical activity is seen to relate to activities which are not necessarily pursued in a competitive way, but which none the less may be physically demanding e.g. aerobics. The same activity may for different people fall into different categories, at different times. So whilst all sports are forms of physical activity, I am arguing that contrary to the General Household Survey (GHS) which tends to call physical activities sports, not all physical activities are competitive sports.

What The Action Is⁹

From the 1987 GHS data the rank order for the top ten activities for men and women is shown in Table 1, on the following page.

Table 1 'Top Ten' Sports For Men and Women.

(a) Rank order for the 4 weeks before interview in the most popular quarter for each activity by sex

(b) Rank order for the 12 months before interview

Persons aged 16 or over

Great Britain: 1987

(a) Rank order for the 'top ten' activities in the 4 weeks before interview (most popular quarter).

Activities	Men	Women
1. Walking	1	1
2. Snooker/billiards/pool	2	5
3. Swimming (indoor & outdoor)	3	2
4. Darts	4	6
5. Cycling	5	4
6. Keep Fit / yoga	..	3
7. Golf	6	..
8. Football	7	..
9. Running (excluding track, including jogging)	8	7
10. Weightlifting/ weight training	9	8
	10 Fishing	9 Tennis 10 Badminton

..Not in top ten

(b) Rank order for the 'top ten' activities in the 12 months before interview

Activities	Men	Women
1. Walking	1	1
2. Snooker/billiards/pool	2	5
3. Swimming (indoor & outdoor)	3	2
4. Darts	4	6
5. Cycling	5	4
6. Keep Fit/ yoga	..	3
7. Running (excluding track, including jogging)	8	8
8. Football	6	..
9. Golf	7	..
10. Weightlifting/ weight training	9	9
	10 Fishing	7 Badminton 10 Tennis

.. Not in top ten

(Source: GHS 1987 cited in Matheson 1991:16)

Whilst there were some changes in the rank order of sports participation for men and women between 1986 and 1987, these may have been due more to the methodological changes than to changes in people's participation.¹⁰ Nevertheless what can be deduced

from the data is the relative popularity of these sports. It is also noteworthy what sports do not appear on each list i.e. keep fit/yoga did not appear in the men's data and golf and football did not appear in the women's data. So far as age was concerned the pattern was the same as that of previous years with 54 per cent of 20-24 year old women having done at least one activity (excluding walking), 26 per cent of 45-59 year olds, and 5 per cent of those 70 and over. In terms of socio-economic group, the pattern was again the same with professional women being more active than those who were classified as unskilled manual workers.

Sporting Bodies

To move beyond these descriptive statistics to find a more detailed picture of women's experiences of sport we need to move to other studies. Scraton's (1987, 1989, 1992) work on physical education and girls' cultures points to the material constraints of finance, opportunity, access to private transport and the ideological constraints of the ideology of domesticity and sub-cultural values. These factors combine to varying degrees, depending on the socio-economic and ethnic background of the young women, to militate against many of them becoming active participants in sport.

Through the formal and informal structures of the school, ideological messages can be transmitted, consciously and unconsciously. Many physical education teachers believe it to be important for girls, particularly, to be smartly turned out and to act like 'young ladies'. It is a 'desirable', socially sanctioned female sexuality that is being produced through both the teacher's practices and the activities being taught. Scraton argues that although physical exercise and sport have the potential:

... to encourage a wider and explorative use of space, the activities offered and the attitudes held by many teachers reinforce a limited extension of this bodily use (1992:54).

Despite a wider range of activities and sports being now open to girls, Scraton argues that traditional attitudes about female sexuality still limit girls' involvement. It is not the activities and sports that are inherently male, but the way in which these activities are socially constructed within particular discourses. The opprobrium surrounding girls' and women's involvement in contact sport highlights one of the dominant ideologies concerning female sexuality which is heterosexual in nature and values passivity, vulnerability and subordination (Scraton 1992; Hargreaves 1994). The power of these ideological messages is not only that they are not class specific, but that they saturate adolescent culture, particularly in the commercial fields (McRobbie 1978, 1991). Furthermore, Hargreaves (1994) discusses the sexualization of the female body in young women's magazines where exercise, when it is promoted, is part of a regime of body enhancement to promote heterosexual allure.

As Scraton notes activities such as keep fit or aerobics are often encouraged but in doing so:

The message being reinforced in these situations is that young women should not be interested and involved in activity in order to develop strength and fitness but should be concerned in enhancing their appearance, in making themselves more 'attractive', particularly to the opposite sex (1987:175).

Whilst recognising what Scraton is saying, Whitson (1994) argues that we should still recognise that there are many women now taking part in physical activity that would not have done so (had they lived in a previous era) and that those women are now choosing to take part in a wider range of activities than before. He also points to the ways in which these changes are also enabling men's participation to broaden and by so doing challenge hegemonic masculinity. There is the conundrum: young girls and women may becoming increasingly active (and potentially healthier as a result), but may also be reinforcing emphasised femininity and hegemonic masculinity.

Scraton's work also highlights some of the conflicts that can exist between the culture of PE and the sub-culture of young women. The prevalence of team games (in the PE curriculum¹¹) which are synonymous with sport is problematic, for sport is often synonymous with the culture of masculinity. As Scraton points out:

Sport is seen primarily as a male pursuit bound up with masculine values. Young women spectate, support and admire; they do not expect to participate (1987:176).

As a result of this and other factors, many girls develop negative attitudes towards physical education. The problem then becomes one of developing a form of PE which is seen to be rewarding and worthwhile and at the same time contesting the patriarchal ideologies that have limited its potential to empower to date. One of the keys to this that Scraton identifies is through the use of the body:

They (the girls) must be encouraged to enjoy physical movement; to develop strength and muscular potential; to work together to discover body awareness and confidence. It will be only when young women collectively become confident and assertive with control both physically and mentally over their own bodies that they will move towards redefining their position (1987:183).¹²

These views are similar to those of Young (1979) and MacKinnon (1982) discussed in the previous chapter. They see the body as a key to women regaining power, not just over their bodies, but also over the rest of their lives as well. There are two particularly interesting points in Scraton's comments: firstly, that the *first* step towards empowerment, and a redefinition of their social position, is through becoming more confident in their own bodies; and second, that this needs to be a *collective* action. This clearly sets some limits on what young girls and women may find empowering.

The social processes Scraton identifies that work to construct appropriate behaviour and ideas in young women, continues into later life. Peer groups, families, and the media collectively reinforce stereotypical notions of femininity, and thereby maintain the status quo, which ensures the continued servicing of men and their leisure by

women. Small wonder then that the women in the leisure studies discussed earlier, rarely participated in sport. In the Sheffield study (Green et al. 1987) only 23 per cent of the 707 sample played any sport whilst Deem reported the following from her Milton Keynes study: 'The views they express though, are typical of many women; leisure is something they don't have much of; sport isn't even in the reckoning' (1987c:1). To some extent these findings are borne out by Lovell's (1991) research into ethnic minority women's participation in sport. Certainly for Southern Asian women their activity seemed to be focused into activities deemed to be culturally acceptable for them i.e. badminton and dance. Such activities did not pose as great a threat to the traditional values of womanhood, that sports like hockey or swimming might have. For Afro/Caribbean women the cultural constraints were seen to be fewer, and so their participation bore greater similarity to that of white women. However, as Lovell (1991) points out, the racism that Afro/Caribbean women experience is double-edged in that it is partly responsible for their being channelled into sport, but it also constrains their progress through to holding positions of power within the sports organisations. She also cites instances where Afro/Caribbean women playing netball felt they were being discriminated against by some white officials who saw them as being too aggressive. Lovell's work raises some questions regarding the culture of femininity, which prompts us to ask whether there is just one culture of femininity, as her work implies, or whether there are others operating in different ways but having a similar effect. Further to this, Lovell acknowledges the potential for sport to be a liberating force, but it is unclear from her study what sport is seen as offering to Southern Asian women. To appreciate the liberating potential of physical activity and sport we need first to understand more about Southern Asian women's place within the family / household structure. We therefore need to get beyond the modernist, 'squashed ant' approach, and explore the nature of the power that Southern Asian women and others may have.

Even though the numbers of women participating in sport might be increasing, Kane and Snyder (1989) drawing upon MacKinnon's work, bring attention to the stereotyped nature of the activities that women participate in. So long as the activities remain stereotyped along the lines that Metheny (1979) outlined in her pioneering work in 1968, women will continue to be confined to those activities that are deemed to be 'appropriate', and will not be able to experience their bodies as instruments of power and aggression. It has to be asked, however, whether it is so desirable to experience the body in such ways, for the world of male sport is littered with broken bodies as a result of such forms of embodiment.

Although it can be argued that boys' achievements are also limited as a result of this type of socialization, Bray (1987) argues that for girls the effect severely curtails their freedom to develop themselves through involvement in physical activity. For boys, as Hargreaves (1986) suggests, involvement in sport equals manliness; it makes a man out of a boy. For girls, the commonsense view holds that, if they are not careful, it will also make men, or lesbians, out of them (Lenskyj 1986).

Socio-historical studies have illustrated quite clearly the role that education and physical education have played in making men out of boys. An equivalent history of girls and women is gradually being constructed,¹³ with the work of Fletcher (1984) and McCrone (1988) being of particular relevance to our understanding of women's experiences of sport and physical education in Britain.¹⁴

Resistance and Transformation in and through Sport

Whilst modernist interpretations of women's leisure and physical activity have not necessarily portrayed women as passive dupes, they have been perceived as having little scope for resistance. Scraton and others warn of being lulled into a false sense of

progress and resistance by considering an increase in participation numbers alone, particularly when the biggest rise has been in indoor sports, fitness and commercially linked activities. Whitson (1994) cautions against seeing the expansion of participation in the commercial sector, with its association of activities which emphasise improving appearance and body shape, as not challenging the definition of sport as male. Similarly, Dewar (1991) reminds us that we should not romanticise resistance, but instead need to scrutinise the evidence we have of accommodation, resistance and transformation.

It is not just the evidence that needs to be scrutinised but also the usage of the terms. Anyon (1983) drawing on Genovese's work on 'accommodation while resisting' and 'resistance whilst accommodating' to slavery usefully demonstrates how situations cannot be simply read as being examples of resistance or accommodation. Things are not always as they appear. Furthermore it is important not to construct accommodation and resistance as polar opposites. Accommodation may superficially be seen as giving way to a more powerful individual or group, whilst it may be part of a larger strategy of resistance.

The terms resistance and transformation are often used as a couplet which implies a necessary connection between the two. This I would argue is not always the case, for whilst it can be said that transformation only occurs as a result of resistance, resistance does not always lead to transformation. Dewar's earlier comments centre around this latter assumption, that resistance is often read as meaning more than 'just' resistance. Birrell and Theberge (1994:363) usefully outline how one relates to the other:

A change in a person's or group's understanding of its relationship to power and its attempts to contest that positioning may be recognised as resistant, but those acts are not transformative unless there is a change in the structure of power manifested in real lived experiences.

This discussion links directly to the earlier one concerning a hierarchy of empowerment and whether it impacts on the agent's immediate social world, institutions or leads to changes in broader social relations.

Whilst much has been documented about the constraints on women's physical activity and sport, there is relatively little evidence in the public domain of women resisting and transforming the dominance of hegemonic masculinity in sport, as well as women transforming themselves through sport. Theberge's (1987) early work points to examples of personal empowerment where involvement in physical activity led to women developing a more positive sense of self and physical well being.

One area of work which not only points to the possibilities, but also to the contradictory nature of women's experiences in sport is that of body building and weight training. In contrast to Klein's (1986) work on men downplaying the posing side of bodybuilding, seeing the work needed to shape the body for competition as being more important, Miller and Penz's (1991) study found that female bodybuilders celebrated the posing side of the sport, with some of the women seeing bodybuilding as being all about appearance. Whilst this difference is in itself of note, what is more interesting is the explanation of such attitudes offered by Miller and Penz. Drawing upon Foucault's work to help explore how the women make a place for themselves in such a male dominated sport, they argue, that:

By giving voice to the suppressed meaning of bodybuilding, women are able to reclaim its female possibilities and hence establish their right to participate in it (1991:153).

The picture that emerges is of men reaffirming that bodybuilding is all about work and discipline, whilst women fight to have 'their' definition of the sport heard. There are indeed echoes of this struggle in terms of the criteria used to judge men's and women's competitions. Different criteria are used, with women's competitions still favouring those who have a 'feminine' look to them. This has worked against

bodybuilders like Bev Francis who has shaped and worked her body to meet the criteria that male judges would use in male competitions, and lost out by therefore failing to meet the criteria of the mostly male judges of female competitions.

Miller and Penz regard women's colonization of the pose side of the sport as a poaching of territory from the men. Women are therefore seen as powerful because they are challenging the legitimacy of men's claims to the sport of bodybuilding. An alternative reading of this script would suggest that women's focus on the pose side of the sport is a form of an apologetic, rather than resistance.¹⁵ The pose side of the sport is the more aesthetic and hence the most stereotypically female-appropriate aspect of the sport. Postmodernist feminism would question the implication from Miller and Penz's work that there is some essential 'women's' definition of sport. Such a stance negates the diversity of women's lives.

It would be wrong however, to imply that the women Miller and Penz studied participated in bodybuilding just for the pose value: on the contrary they saw the gym as a place of work. This was illustrated by their use of the mirrors, which was 'rational', rather than 'contemplative'.¹⁶ As one of the women said: "The mirrors are there to help you keep your form ... They're not there for vanity.'(B___)"(1991:156). The men on the other hand were seen to use the mirrors for the wrong reasons. Such data present a polarised view of the uses that (all) men and (all) women make of the gym. Although clearly, as Miller and Penz point out, the women were giving *their* thoughts on why men bodybuild, these may or may not have been accurate. If none of the women see their bodies through a contemplative gaze, it perhaps suggests that bodybuilding is a particularly potent place for women to reclaim their bodies. However, the fact that the women stated that they were there to work does not necessarily mean that they were resisting and asserting their power. They could after all have been there to work and shape their bodies to as Bordo says 'bolt them down' and make them tight, thereby fulfilling the pattern of gender normalization, and in

effect becoming 'docile' bodies. What the women in the Miller and Penz study have said is revealing. However, the analysis of their talk does not reflect an understanding of class, ethnicity or life beyond the gym (as does Bordo's research). Indeed, little is known about the women who talk.

Theberge (1991) also considers the extent to which involvement in bodybuilding can challenge dominant images and interests. To do this she uses the work of Schulze who explores the discourse of bodybuilding in popular accounts as well as through the experience of lesbian bodybuilders. In the media accounts, Schulze (cited in Theberge 1991) argues that the potential for female bodybuilders to challenge conventions about gender categories is subverted by the translation of muscle into 'flex appeal'. Similarly, the challenges that the lesbian bodybuilders perceived they made, by shaping their bodies in ways women are not supposed to, was equally regarded by Schulze as being '... a slippery sort of purchase ...' (cited in Theberge 1991:130). As Theberge comments:

The confusion of images and meanings - maleness, emphasized femininity, heterosexism, and appeals to conventional notions of fashion - renders the readings problematic (1991:130).

This point is further highlighted by Butler (1987) when she suggests that although on the face of it it seems as if the commonsense view of women and their bodies is changing, and that there is 'a new prototype of the body beautiful',¹⁷ this may not actually be the case for the new prototype seems to reject the fact that muscular strength and beauty are mutually exclusive. As Butler points out, this implies freedom and liberation allowing women both to look and be strong. Referring to a book of photographs of the body-builder Lisa Lyon as an example, she suggests that the new prototype may not be an indication of liberation at all:

...a new imperative may arise from this, for the cataloguing of Lyon in an exhaustive variety of glamorous guises seems to add a corollary message to women, 'You can only have permission to be this strong if you can look this

beautiful'. Such an ideal may be even more impossible and intractable than the usual one which simply emphasises beauty and glamour per se (Butler 1987:122).

These studies illustrate the contradictory nature of women's relations to their sporting bodies, but we also have to ask whether the nature of the activity, that is a largely individual activity, bears any relation to the type of empowerment experienced. Theberge (1987) raised the question of whether team sports contain a particular potential for feminist transformation of power because of their emphasis on cooperation and group support. Some insights into attempts to transform sport through feminist practice in teams sports come in Birrell and Richter's (1987) work on women's softball. These women's teams, committed to feminism, sought to reconstruct their sporting practice by challenging what they saw as being key elements of male sport: the over-emphasis on winning; the hierarchy of authority (particularly between coach and team); the elitism of skill; social exclusion because of race, class, size, age or sexual preference; the disparagement of opponents; and the need or desire for physical danger. By doing this the women subverted the meanings traditionally embedded in sports and replaced them with feminist alternatives which celebrated support, valuing participation, sharing responsibility for team management and being inclusive rather than exclusive. Similar strategies to transform sport and recreate it into something *for* women are described in Zipter's (1988) book about lesbian softball teams. In addition to this work about forms of resistance is other evidence concerning the benefits some women have experienced from participating in sport. Talbot's (1988) study of forty women in Yorkshire revealed that it was not just purely physical benefits that they derived, but also more social ones, such as becoming more assured about their own abilities to organise teams.

Whilst celebrating what the women in their study had achieved, Birrell and Richter (1987) are also aware that feminist praxis which is isolated from mainstream

communities and sport may have limited scope for the transformation of wider social relations. Despite this, these studies highlight the potential for physical activity to be empowering, and also help operationalise what transformation means and what social conditions enhance its possibility.

The following aspects have been identified as promoting empowerment the transformation of power relations in and through sport and physical activity: collective action (Haug 1987; Scraton 1987; Blinde et al. 1993; Birrell and Theberge 1994); involving physical activity (Whitson 1994; Guthrie and Castelnovo 1994); which is visible and public (Birrell and Theberge 1994; Lloyd 1996); and informed by political / feminist consciousness (Birrell and Richter 1987; Birrell and Theberge 1994; Guthrie and Castelnovo 1994). The importance of collective action is highlighted by Birrell and Theberge (1994:363) who argue that although individual acts may be useful personally: ‘... these actions alone will never be enough to transform gender relations in sport or in society at large.’ Whilst a central part of challenging the dominant hegemony of male sport has been to de-emphasise skill elitism, Whitson (1994) suggests that developing some level of skill is a necessary foundation of enjoyment in any physical activity. In this sense learning new skills and developing competence may increase feelings of self-esteem. People operating in collectivities likely gain much support from one another and potentially can become more visible in the public domain which Lloyd, in her discussion of aerobics, sees as being particularly important for:

... any participation which does not visibly and publicly challenge its conventions is too easily recuperated into the strategy of heteronormativity which undergirds gender identity (1996:94).

Challenging in ‘private’ may have an impact on the individuals and those around her, but it would have little impact on others. Finally, to increase the chances of action being transformative Birrell and Theberge (1994) amongst others argue that it should be underpinned by feminist consciousness. Birrell and Richter’s (1987) work illustrates

clearly how feminism influenced the discussions that took place in the softball teams (in different ways) about how they should be run and what they were seeking to do.

Conclusion and Clarification of Research Questions

The connection between involvement in physical activity and empowerment is not new: such ideas helped shape the experience of young men in the public schools in the late nineteenth century. Yet an examination of the empowering potential of physical activity and sport for women has long been neglected. Whilst De Beauvoir (1979) and Young (1990) have pointed to the connections between embodiment and gender, it is only relatively recently (mid 1980's) that this area has been paid closer attention. There has, however, been little research on this area in the last fifteen years and, as Hall (1993) and others (Hargreaves 1994; Scraton 1994) have argued, we still need to know more about the empowering potential of physical activity, sport and leisure for women. This is particularly pertinent given Whitson's (1994) questions about the extent to which empowerment through the body and physically active leisure is possible when sport and the media portrayal of women and their bodies is so heavily imbued with ideologies of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. This raises questions about whether some activities or social contexts might be more conducive to empowerment than others and indeed whether physically active leisure has something unique to offer that other forms of leisure such as do-it-yourself or car maintenance do not. The points of similarity and departure between women's experiences of such activities need to be explored to answer these questions and to identify the contribution that physical activity and sport can make to women's empowerment. To phrase this in another way, and drawing upon Bourdieu, to what extent is it possible for women to convert their physical capital into any other form of capital (for example social, cultural, political or economic)? To answer this question leads on to a consideration of the processes by which girls and women come to develop particular forms of physical capital.

To develop a better understanding of these issues I would argue that we need not only to explore women's participation (and non-participation) in physical activity and sport - but also to consider this within the context of intra-household gender power relations. The challenge is, therefore, on the one hand to grasp the significance of the life course on women's leisure in general, and on the other to investigate the potential for physical activity to empower women. In doing this we need to remain aware of the interplay between ethnicity, class, sexuality, age and gender in the reproduction of power relations.

Theoretically, as I have outlined in this and the previous chapters, there is a variety of conceptual tools which may be of value in this enterprise. I have drawn on these tools because they demonstrate in whole or part the following characteristics: 1) they are sensitive to the structural constraints on women's action; 2) they have a view of power which acknowledges agency and the potential for the oppressed not only to resist, but also to challenge and transform oppressive structures and practices; 3) they are able to consider the role of the body within the power nexus; and finally 4) they are able to recognise the diversity of women's experiences. Whilst I am not in pursuit of a meta-narrative or grand theory, such theoretical tools may enable us not only to understand how women come to exercise power and what place the body has in this, but also to outline a programme of action to promote women's empowerment. For as Ramazanoglu (1993:23) argues:

There are many situations where women need to struggle with men against external threats or oppression, as well as many situations in which women need to struggle against men. The production of feminist knowledge should provide specific and accurate accounts of these situations which can be used as effective guides to liberation.

¹ Results from GCSE performances indicate that boys' performance in English, humanities, arts, modern language and technology has fallen behind that of girls', and that girls are catching up the boys in mathematics and science (Evans 1996). One explanation for this trend comes from research

which suggests that a 'laddish' culture militates against boys working hard at school and spending time on homework (Dean 1996).

² These data relate only to civilians aged 16 and over. Statistics from 1988 have been presented as they relate to the period when the data were collected.

³ Phillipson (1990) discusses the inadequacies of employment data in more detail, as well as exploring employment trends and government policy in general.

⁴ These data represent the combined results from 1986, 1987 and 1988 Labour Force Surveys, and provide a large enough sample to reveal interesting and important variations in economic activity between and within ethnic groups.

⁵ The 'Second Shift' is the title of Hochschild's (1989) book on working parents and changes in the household.

⁶ It is, however, also recognised that in industry there are often hidden agendas at work which mean that not all negotiation is explicit.

⁷ Deem (1986) also comments that although public leisure provision might be expected to be better (than commercial provision) in terms of responding to women's leisure needs, there was little evidence from her research to support that notion.

⁸ See Green et al. (1990) for a more prolonged discussion of male social control of public spaces.

⁹ The data presented here come from the data set nearest to the time when the research was conducted, that is 1987 - 1988.

¹⁰ Definitions can be problematic for large scale surveys like the GHS because they have no control over how people interpret their questions. As a result of a change in the wording of the questions between 1986 and 1987 quite dramatic shifts in participation seem to have occurred, but in actual fact quite a substantial amount of the difference is probably due to the different interpretation of the new wording (Matheson 1991). Open ended questions used until 1986 were narrowed to specific activities and as a result participation figures increased.

'The methodological changes tended to have the greatest impact on activities which many people, unless prompted, may not regard as "sports"' (Matheson 1991:1). The 1987 data are more useful because not only are more specific questions asked, but questions are also included about participation in the twelve months prior to interview as well as the traditional four weeks prior to interview. However, as the sample was responding to a pre-determined list on a prompt card, it makes comparisons of the 1987 data with that of previous years impossible.

¹¹ This is a particular concern expressed by some with the Government's launch of 'Sport: Raising the Game' (DNH 1995), which proposes a new framework for sport in Britain, and advocates a return to 'traditional team games' (see Gilroy 1995; Clarke and Gilroy 1996 and Hargreaves 1995).

¹² Shilling (1991) has also explored the construction of physical capital in physical education in relation to both boys and girls.

¹³ Ann Hall discusses some of the recent socio-historical work completed in North America, and calls for more feminist sport history which can help us better understand the present.

¹⁴ Work by Lenskyj (1986) and Mangan and Park (1987) offers us insights into the North American social history of women's sports.

¹⁵ Jan Felshin (1974) discusses how women apologise for their participation in an 'inappropriate' activity such as sport by wearing jewellery and make up to emphasise their (heterosexual) femininity.

¹⁶ This is a reference to Foucault's 'contemplative' and 'rational' gazes that Miller and Penz use to describe how the body in bodybuilding is viewed. The is seen as an object of beauty in the former, and as a site of work and personal achievement in the latter.

¹⁷ The use of the term 'prototype' here is significant, with its connotations of the body as a machine, something to be manipulated.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the ideas which underpinned the methodological approach that I adopted in the study. The next chapter discusses how the methods selected were employed and maps out in detail the research process. To separate methodology from method in this way is of course to misrepresent what actually happens when engaging in research, but I do so here in order to highlight the importance of each. Additionally, this chapter explores key debates about feminist research and discusses how these have informed this research.

In scrutinising any piece of social research we now mostly expect to find explanations of why particular approaches and methods were used, but some feminists would argue that this is even more important for feminist research¹ which seeks to be open (Stanley and Wise 1993)² and transparent. By being open about the research process, some feminists are not only rejecting the often sanitised positivist style of research³ but are also making an epistemological point regarding the construction of knowledge, that is, that all knowledge is interpreted, and is not detached from the social relations in which it was constructed.⁴ In feminist research, women researchers are simultaneously both researcher and the researched: we are part of the world we are researching.⁵ Thus, in researching the relationship between empowerment and women's involvement in physical activity, I am also exploring my own experiences as a physically active woman.

Such an approach, whilst demonstrating the rigorous nature of the research, can also

put the researcher in a vulnerable position, as it reveals the research as it happened, with all its strengths and weaknesses. Also, in the case of this study it reveals how my understandings as a researcher (and woman) changed over the period of the research. Reflecting on what might have been, had I known then what I know now, did not always help me progress with making sense of what data I collected.

Feminist Research

In making claims for this study being an example of feminist research, it is important to highlight some of the key features of what I mean by 'feminist research' and what it means to engage in feminist research. This raises the question of how different feminist research is from any other sort of research e.g. masculinist research or qualitative research in general. The preferred use of qualitative methods such as in-depth interviewing in much feminist research (e.g. Roberts 1993) may lead some to think of the existence of feminist methods, but Harding (1987) argues that pursuing the question of whether there is a feminist method is a red herring as it diverts our attention from issues of methodology and epistemology. Harding prefers to consider the characteristics of feminist research or what Cook and Fonow (1986) call feminist principles of research. Harding (1987) identifies three characteristics, although she points out that they are not to be seen as being exhaustive. The first concerns the recognition of the importance of women's diverse experiences of political struggles. In highlighting the diversity of women's experiences, Harding is cautioning against the universalisation of 'woman', and indeed she comments: 'Not only do our gender experiences vary across the cultural categories; they also are often in conflict in any one individual's experience' (p. 7). Secondly, she argues that feminist research should be *for* women, that is providing women with information they want and need as opposed to information others might find useful e.g. employers, the state. Finally, Harding argues for a form of reflexivity in the research process whereby 'the beliefs and behaviors of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of the research' (p.9). Cook and Fonow's (1986:5) principles are very similar to Harding's although they also highlight the centrality of

consciousness-raising and emphasise 'the empowerment of women and the transformation of patriarchal social institutions' through the research.

These principles were ones which, for the most part, I felt (and still feel) committed to. Harding's principles fitted with my own feminist politics, but I was not sure that I necessarily intended my research to be consciousness-raising, nor did I expect women to become empowered as a result of participating in the research. I could see how this might be possible for some types of feminist research, and it may well have been so for some of the women in my research (although I have no way of knowing), but it was not part of my express intention.

Research *for* Women

It is one thing to hold certain principles, but it is another to translate principle into practice. Although diversity of women's experiences and reflexivity are explored later in the chapter, I want to begin with a discussion of the extent to which it can be argued that this research was *for* women. Kelly et al. (1994:28) regard the aim of feminist research as being the creation of: 'useful knowledge, knowledge which can be used by ourselves and others to "make a difference"'. However, despite such claims, there is little evidence of researchers following up their work to reflect on whether the research has made any 'difference' to the women's lives. Whilst evidence of the use value of knowledge to other researchers could unfold in a variety of ways, the most obvious is the extent to which others are seen to draw on it. The 'use value' to women involved in research is not so clearly identified and has rarely been explored, despite the fact that claims have been made as to the benefits for 'woman'. One of the few examples of such work comes from Brannen (1993) who went back to the women in her study and researched the effects of the research. Half of the women in Brannen's sample reported that they valued the way the research prompted them to reflect on aspects of their lives. Some reported that it led them to see themselves as part of a wider collectivity, whilst others found the interviews to be therapeutic. Skeggs (1994) also reports how some of the young women she spoke to felt important as a result of

being involved in the research, so much so that they felt upset when their own names were replaced by pseudonyms in the text. We have to question though whether feeling important as a result of being involved in the research equates with 'using useful knowledge' generated through the research.

Someone exploring participants' / women's experiences of the research process is faced with the problem of deciding at what point(s) following (or even during) the research should the participants be asked their views. For research which seeks to be consciousness-raising, this would be particularly so, for the effects of the research may come to the 'surface' in unplanned ways, at unanticipated times. Similarly, there has been little discussion in research literature about possible strategies for asking women about the effects of their involvement in research. The choice of methods, and the timing of the follow-up are not straightforward.

Although recognising that it is not possible to be fully aware of the impact of research on participants, I did not set out specifically to conduct consciousness-raising research. I had no set notion of what forms of useful knowledge would be created and who would find them useful. I hoped, however, that its 'use value' would extend beyond my own career and the interests of a limited number of academics so that a wider range of people might understand more about women's involvement in leisure in general, and physical activity in particular.

Critical Reflection

Whilst reflecting critically upon research is not something that is unique to feminist research, it is a particularly important aspect of it because of the focus on the subjectivity of the researcher.⁶ It is a process of constant engagement as a researcher with those we are working with, and with the understandings that are emerging from the research. Cook and Fonow (1991:2) argue that feminist epistemology moves beyond reflexivity as being the tendency to: 'reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process', to questioning assumptions

about gender relations underpinning the research - '... including the researcher's reactions to doing the research' (1991:2).

What I find missing from Cook and Fonow's (1991) account is the extent to which being reflexive as a sole researcher is quite different from being part of a research team where the members question and challenge each other from different standpoints. The accounts of the WRAP (Women, Risk and AIDS Project) work conducted by Holland et al. (1991) illustrate how as a group they sought to be reflexive, even though it was by no means unproblematic (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994). Whilst it is possible as a sole researcher to discuss aspects of the research with others, it is not quite the same as having at least one other person who is also actively engaged in the research. The strategies I adopted involved constantly reassessing how I was conducting the research, how I was gathering the data and where my conceptual understandings were shifting. Not having some of the benefits of working as part of a research team I felt it was important not to become intellectually isolated, but to explore emerging issues and problems with colleagues, friends and my supervisor. I came to realise that being reflexive is a constant challenge: it is not a skill that is simply acquired; it is reworked as each piece of research is engaged with, because engaging in research is about engaging with other people. I began thinking I knew 'how to do it' and soon realised that my previous research experiences, because of their different focuses, were not going to give me the kind of starting block I thought I had. As Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994:13) point out, feminists can aim at reflexivity, but they might not realise it as they wish. Finally, I find the following comment, also from Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994:13), a very salutary one: 'As systematic self-knowledge is not readily available, we cannot break out of the social constraints on our ways of knowing simply by wanting to'. Being reflexive is about finding ways of breaking out of these constraints, but it is also about remaining aware of the potential limitations of reflexivity itself.

I am reminded here of Gore's (1992) discussion of Foucault's 'regimes of truth' and would propose that we need to guard against falling into the trap of thinking that feminist reflexivity is somehow a 'better' way of conducting ourselves and our

research. It is where we are at, at the moment, and perhaps in a few years time we will come to see it as being no more than yet another 'regime of truth'. Indeed it could be argued that postmodernist and poststructuralist feminisms have already led to a redefinition of what feminist reflexivity is and whether it is 'special' given that reflexivity is argued to be part of all identities in post modernity.

Trustworthy Analyses - a question of validity

Being reflexive about the process of research links closely with concerns about the validity of the research. Whilst the positivist versus anti-positivist debate led to an entrenchment of ideas, with qualitative researchers claiming that validity as defined by positivists was irrelevant for their work, and positivists arguing that qualitative work lacked rigour, more recent debates have moved on from fighting the positivist paper tiger to considering how as researchers we can demonstrate the trustworthiness and significance of our research. My approach in this study draws from the more recent debates which attempt to move away from polarising qualitative and quantitative methods and valorising one at the expense of the other.

Bosk (cited in Maxwell 1992:279) states the following: 'All fieldwork done by a single field-worker invites the question: Why should we believe it?' While Bosk poses a legitimate question, we must guard against assuming that team or group research is necessarily more trustworthy just because more than one person is involved. Perhaps it is better, as an individual researcher (whether working as part of a team or not), to take Bosk's question, rephrase it and ask ourselves, 'Why should anyone believe my account of the research?'

The problems of validity are faced by all, but the strategies dealing with it are not clear-cut, since the research process itself is complex, as Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994:125) remind us:

More baldly, we can be questioned about what sort of truth we can attribute to our conclusions. Coming to conclusions is not just a process of following rules of method to the end point of a research project, but a very active and complex process of social construction that raises questions about what we mean when we claim that feminist knowledge should be believed.

Although there is still debate about how validity is conceptualised within qualitative research (see Maxwell 1992), I want to begin from a position which sees the provision of assurances about the trustworthiness of our interpretations as being essential. Lather (1986:6/7) discusses the extent to which issues of validity have become more important in what she calls new paradigm research in a post-positivist era:

The development of data credibility checks to protect our research and theory construction from our enthusiasms, however is essential in our efforts to create a self-reflexive human science.

Maxwell's (1992) discussion of the types of validity that concern qualitative research has proved a useful reference point against which to test my own processes in the research. Maxwell's typology is not a particularly unique one and it connects with the work of others such as Lather (1988).⁷ Maxwell identifies several types of validity: descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, and evaluative validity. In using this typology, Maxwell is at pains to point out that this does not mean that validity can be guaranteed by following a set of procedures (unlike much positivist research). The process of research can be threatened at a variety of stages and it is not always possible, given the nature of much qualitative research, to foresee the problems and take appropriate action. Finally, in defence of his 'realist' stance on validity which could be criticised for assuming that there is 'a' reality 'out there' waiting to be discovered by the researcher, Maxwell argues that it is the meanings and constructions of the subjects against which the researcher's interpretations are tested. The researcher's interpretation is therefore not held up as being what others (Haraway 1991) have called a 'God's eye-view'. With these points in mind, the discussion now turns to focus on Maxwell's typology.

Descriptive validity is what Maxwell considers the bedrock of research. If there is no descriptive validity, other forms of validity will be jeopardised. The factual accuracy of what subjects reveal about their lives is contingent not only on what the subjects want to reveal, but also on what the researcher probes. People may reveal only partial accounts to the researcher, not because they consciously seek to conceal aspects (although this may be the case), but because they may not believe other aspects to be of interest to the researcher. Descriptive validity, as Maxwell argues, refers to omission as well as commission. What we ask and see, and what we are told, are relative to the research setting, and are invariably partial. Of key concern must be the extent to which we are satisfied that as accurate a picture as is possible is built up. This also relates to how information is recorded, for example how and when field notes are recorded, how taped interviews are transcribed. The tone, hesitancy, fluency with which people speak conveys a sub-text to be 'read' along side the formal text - but it needs to be logged in some way, otherwise it is lost when analysing the printed, 'cleansed' text. Triangulating the methods of data collection is one way through which Lather (1988) suggests we can guard against researcher bias. It would be wrong to assume, however, that, by mixing methods, researchers (feminist or otherwise) are arguing that their research increases in validity. To do so would be assuming that there are 'truths' that can be pursued, and that using a combination of methods enables us to get closer to these truths.⁸ Rather, as Maynard and Purvis (1994:4) point out, the value of using different methods is that differences may be revealed which would prove as 'useful' as similarities. In addition to this, researchers are claiming that different techniques and data are appropriate for different research questions. To enable the researcher to have more confidence in the accuracy of the data, Lather (1988) advocates what she calls 'member checks', whereby data gathered and analyses made are submitted to the participants for comment and alteration. This strategy is becoming increasingly popular in feminist⁹ (and other) research, but it is fraught with problems concerning the power relations within the research setting. Who decides, and at what point is the decision made, that there has been sufficient opportunity for participants to comment on or alter accounts or interpretations? There are also the problems associated with the way accounts and analyses have been written, as Skeggs (1994) discovered when she tried to make her research accountable by giving the

young women in her study some of her work to read. The most common response was: “Can’t understand a bloody word it says” (p. 86).

Interpretive validity relates to the accuracy of the interpretations that the researcher makes, based on the meanings that she thinks the subjects attach to their actions. The key factor here is the researcher’s role, as Maxwell (1992:290) states:

Accounts of participants’ meanings are never a matter of direct access, but are always *constructed* by the researcher(s) on the basis of participants’ accounts and other evidence.

Scrutinising the research accounts can enable the researcher to build up a picture of what events meant to the subjects. Maxwell cautions against regarding subjects’ accounts as always being accurate, for they may not be aware of how they feel, they may not want to reveal their views, or they may recall events inaccurately.

Closely linked to interpretive validity is the extent to which appropriate concepts are used by the researcher to make sense of the subject’s experiences. Whilst the previous forms of validity related to the accuracy of the accounts generated, this form of validity is concerned primarily with the type of abstractions made about the subjects’ experiences. Whilst Maxwell (1992:285) argues that not ‘... every instance of a validity concern falls neatly into one and only one category’, there is a danger through adopting such a typology of seeing these different types of validity as being of a procedural concern, for example, that our first concern as researchers is to ensure descriptive validity, then interpretive, and theoretical etcetera. The danger of this is that it falls into the trap of implying an ordering to our concerns as researchers. Whilst I accept Maxwell’s comments regarding the lack of distinction between these three types of validity, what seems to be lacking in his discussion is the sense in which our concerns as researchers with these forms of validity are often in practice concurrent. The types of links explored between concepts (theoretical validity) may lead us to look differently at the meanings we read from the subjects accounts (interpretive validity).

Maxwell's final concerns are with evaluative validity and generalizability (both within the 'group' and external to it). Evaluative validity is something which Maxwell feels, like external validity, is not central to the concerns of many qualitative researchers. It is not, he argues, directly related to the type of methods used, although evaluative judgements are based on description and interpretation. Whilst acknowledging that qualitative studies given their nature are often less concerned with external generalizability, he argues that internal generalizability is a crucial issue in the interpretation of interviews because of the focused nature of the interviews which neglects other aspects of the subjects' lives. Any generalization is, therefore, based on inferences (which may be inaccurate) concerning other parts of the subjects' lives.

Consciousness-raising, Empowering and Emancipatory Research

As the discussion on *who* feminist research is *for* illustrated, various claims have been made about what women can gain from feminist research. These claims, however, go beyond arguing that it can prompt women to reflect on their lives in a different way from previously, but that it can in some way(s) be liberatory (Opie 1992; Lather 1988; Kelly 1994). In particular it is argued that emancipatory social science is empowering (Lather 1986, 1988), and that research can enable women to transcend power relations (Brannen 1993), to become empowered (Opie 1992), and to have their consciousnesses raised (Stanley and Wise 1979).¹⁰ Despite the different terminology being used by these authors, there seems to be little conceptual difference between what they are saying in so far as they all point towards the emancipatory effect of the research.

Whilst debates concerning emancipatory research and the social relations of research inform this research there was another dimension to this area that related directly to the substantive focus of my research: the process of empowerment. Although I do not wish to revisit the discussion of empowerment in Chapter Two, it is important to restate my support for Gore's (1992) view that we need to pay more attention to the contexts of empowerment. Women may become empowered through their

involvement in the research whether that is one of the intended consequences of it or not. Finally, it is worth bearing in mind Holland and Ramazanoglu's (1994) comment that there is nothing inherently liberatory about feminist research: it is how the research operates in practice that may lead it to be experienced as liberating. The issue of power and the research process is therefore crucial.

Power of the Researcher(s)

And what did you get out of it?

Discussions of feminist research highlight the power of the researcher and discuss strategies for seeking to avoid the researcher dominating the research and the researched (Reinharz 1983; Finch 1984; Eichler 1988; Brannen 1988). The starting point for these discussions is what and who the research is for; what does the researcher get out of the research (as compared to what the participants get out of it), how much is it directed and controlled by her, and how are the data interpreted and used. Much research is carried out for the express purpose of meeting some utilitarian purpose, that is, in my case the pursuit of a PhD, improving a publications profile for the Research Assessment Exercise,¹¹ or as in the case of Holland et al. and the Women Risk and AIDS Project, the maintenance of a sufficient level of income generation through research that would keep them in employment. As Scanlon (1993) argues, the researcher inevitably has much more in the short term, and probably long term, to gain than the participants. In attempting to redress this imbalance, she suggests that the researched should gain something tangible out of the research, for example, money, time or resources. The 'pay backs' need not necessarily be material, or indeed direct, as Scanlon demonstrated in her own work by doing voluntary work to 'give something back' to the community of women she had gained from. The individual women in her research may not have gained anything, but other women in the community would have. Oakley (1993) also reports that she helped the women in her research when, for example, the interview arrangements clashed with the demands of housework or motherhood. The 'pay back' therefore may not always be something that the researcher anticipated or planned. In Brannen's (1993) discussion of the effects of

research on participants, the women reported that they found the interviews therapeutic and that the research enabled them to appreciate that they were part of a wider collectivity. Whilst I share Scanlon's ethical concerns about participants being 'used', I did feel that the notion of 'paying women back' in resource terms was fraught with problems, not least of which was my limited resources to engage in such a bargain. I was concerned though to try to ensure that my participants did not have to go to any expenditure to be involved with the research. In reflecting on how wide spread this practice is within leisure research in Britain, I have found little evidence in the published accounts of such 'pay backs'¹². This does not of course mean that this has not happened - this may be an element of what happens in research, but gets omitted from the formal reports.

Working together

To minimise the power of the researcher, and to maximise the power of the participants, Reinharz (1983) and Cotterill (1992) advocate participatory research. By drawing the researched into the research process and developing '... non-hierarchical, non-manipulative research relationships...' Cotterill (1992:594) suggests it is possible to avoid the separation of researcher from the researched and thereby limit the power imbalance. A key question remains though: at what point does the research become participatory - at the outset when considering what would be worth researching, or when considering how the research should be carried out? It seems problematic to claim that research is fully participatory if the participants have not been involved from the start. I knew my research would not be fully participatory because I recognised that the issues I was raising with the women were not ones that they would necessarily have wanted to engage in had I not been asking questions. The extent to which my work could therefore be described as a collaborative project with the women and myself was limited. I did, however, want to explore ways in which the women could collaborate with me, although I did not plan the collaboration in advance. As will be discussed more fully in the next chapter which focuses on how the methods were used, one key feature of collaboration that developed came with one participant suggesting having a group meeting / interview.

What would you like to tell me?

Even in the case of studies such as mine where the research question had already been mapped out I felt it was important not to close any doors to information that my participants wanted to discuss. The literature reviewed and discussed in the previous chapter had alerted me to what some of the key areas to explore might be but, because of the limited research in the area, I felt strongly that it was important to remain open to issues that the women might raise as being important or significant for them (either individually or collectively). The problem with this notion is that in practice you may have a participant spending a high proportion of the interview time on issues that may in the end contribute very little to your understanding of the research question. However, Cotterill (1992) argues that we need to move beyond thinking of just what is useful for us as researchers, to think of what is of benefit for the participant. She feels very strongly that the interviewer has a moral obligation to listen, particularly if it concerns sensitive issues that the participant wants to talk about with someone. She continues, arguing that: ‘... if a woman wants to use the interview as a means of ‘talk therapy’ to work through her feelings, it is indefensible for the researcher to try and direct her to other less painful topics’ (1992:598). Although I did not expect my research to touch on necessarily sensitive topics, I did expect there to be times when the participants might, for whatever reason, want to talk about things other than the areas I would be raising. On such occasions I felt it would be best to judge such situations as and when they arose and respond accordingly, be that listening, or ‘guiding’ the interview back to more ‘relevant’ issues. I was aware of the danger that what I regarded as ‘relevant’ might not coincide with the participants’ view, and so if I truly wanted to remain open to their comments I knew that I would have to guard against intervening too readily.

Developing Rapport

A recurring theme in feminist research methods texts is that of the importance of the researcher developing trust, friendship or rapport with her interviewees (Roberts 1993; Reinharz 1992). Whilst it would be possible to define each of these terms, in practice

their inter-relationship makes it problematic to explore them in isolation. For the purpose of this discussion I have therefore chosen to centre the discussion on 'rapport', but in doing so I do not want to imply that I see rapport as being necessarily any more important than trust or friendship. Oakley's (1981) early critique of procedures for interviewing women argued very strongly against 'hygienic' research and for developing rapport, but in so doing she recognised: '... that personal involvement is more than dangerous bias - it is the pre-condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others to their lives' (p.58). Finch (1984) echoed Oakley's views on the benefits of a rapport developing between interviewer and interviewee and argued that women's shared structural position facilitated the interview. To argue in these terms only, however, underestimates the degree to which ethnicity, class, sexuality, age and able-bodiedness and so on may impact on the way we relate to other women because of our own social location (see also Lee 1993). Brannen's (1988) experience leads her to conclude that middle-class women will respond in a more interactive way with researchers because they will sense a shared status position with researchers.

Unlike Oakley (1981) and Finch (1984), Cotterill (1992) does not see it as being important for women researchers to be socially close to the women they are researching. Indeed she goes further to suggest that friendship is problematic because of the power that the researcher might be able to exert over the women she has befriended. Cotterill therefore advocates that a more detached stance be adopted by the researcher, which in her view limits the exercise of control:

'The friendly stranger', unlike a friend, does not exercise social control over respondents because the relationship exists for the purpose of the research and is terminated when the interviews are complete. Indeed, respondents may feel more comfortable talking to a 'friendly stranger' because it allows them to exercise some control over the relationship' (1992:596).

Whilst it may be that some women find it easier to talk to a 'friendly stranger', I find it difficult to accept Cotterill's view that the 'friendly stranger' does not exercise any

control over the respondents because the relationship 'terminates' when the interviews are over. Regarding 'friendship' as being something that can be turned on and off as the researcher decides, is akin to the early guidelines on interviewing offered by Goode and Hatt (1952 cited in Oakley 1981). Far from demonstrating the absence of power this seems to illustrate where it should lie in Cotterill's view. Ethically I think Cotterill's stance is problematic as she seems to be advocating the building up of a relationship to enable data collection, with little regard for the women who have been interviewed.

The model I adopted for this study drew on Oakley's and Finch's views about rapport, without, I believe, falling into the trap of assuming that just because I was a woman I was going to be able to interview from a shared social position. Like Maynard (1994), I was also rejecting the instrumental rapport that Cotterill seemed to advocate, and aimed instead for something more 'genuine' and 'non-exploitative'. Nevertheless, I think it is important to be aware of the extent to which we can come to think of our actions as being 'genuine' when perhaps they are not as 'genuine' as we might hope.

I was also aware of the extent to which in some contexts, where different friendship groups exist, it could be problematic to be identified as a particular friend of one group as opposed to another (Hammersley 1993). I would have to ensure that I treated the groups equally, so far as this was possible.

Reciprocity in the Interview

Oakley (1981), in her reflective account of interviewing women discusses how she found it unhelpful to avoid giving feedback or answering questions her subjects asked her. It became clear to her that there would be '... no intimacy without reciprocity...' (1981:49). The type of reciprocity Oakley talks of is not that which is calculated to encourage the researched to reveal more details of themselves; rather it is the

reciprocity that comes of being interested in other people, of wanting to find out more about the person who is interviewing you. Cotterill (1992) argues that research participants might not always want to hear 'private information' or views on the research material from the researcher. Although in saying this she seems to doubt the researcher's ability to judge how much they should talk about themselves, I would argue that reciprocity (and rapport) are built on trust: each party needs to trust that the other is not going to reveal what they have said. Similarly, there needs to be openness between the researcher and the researched, and in this regard I would once again take issue with Cotterill (1992:601) who argues that:

...whatever the circumstances, the researcher is expected to inspire confidence in her respondents. She cannot betray her nervousness for the other woman may sense it, becoming nervous herself, or worse, judging the researcher incompetent. Consequently, whatever her inner feelings, outwardly at least, the researcher must appear relaxed, unworried and capable.

Although, this stance is very much in line with Cotterill's views on friendship, I find the conscious putting on of a 'front' problematic. Perhaps being honest about being nervous about an interview may open the way for reducing the anxiety that is probably also felt by the interviewee. In saying this, I am not saying that we do not often try to create a particular impression of ourselves to others. For example, I felt it was going to be important in this research to make sure that I dressed in an 'appropriate' manner when meeting the women and gathering data for my research. I was not, however, going to pretend to be something that I was not, nor indeed conceal my emotions.¹³

Lee (1993:109) warns of how reciprocity can be used unethically in research to generate 'useful' data, arguing that:

...reciprocity and self-revelation can be deployed strategically in social relationships. They may be used, for example, as ingratiation tactics, or as a means of increasing the social indebtedness of the other.

The sharing of some information may therefore lead the interviewees to feel that they

have to share 'talk' of a similar nature, or to feel that the interviewer has been so frank and honest that they should be as well. In such cases there is a danger that the interviewee is exploited. Rather than adopt these strategies, I think we need to endeavour to create an environment where the interviewees feel able to say, or not to say, what they want. It needs to be acknowledged though that this is not as easy as it sounds, for as Ribbens and Edwards (1995) found in their research some women who spoke of aspects of family life found that their male partners were not happy that they had done so.¹⁴

Woman to Woman

When discussing the importance of building up rapport with women, I questioned Finch's (1984) assumption that women researching women have a shared structural position which facilitates the interview. I want now to expand this discussion, by focusing on the question of language, for as Ribbens (1989:579) points out: '... social differences have major implications for *how* people talk to each other and *what* they say to each other as a result'. DeVault (1990:97) expands upon this by saying the following:

Women who are positioned differently learn to speak and hear quite different versions of 'woman talk', adapting to distinctive blends of power and oppression. Failures of understanding abound.

The implications of this for everyday life, but particularly for feminist researchers are profound, given that most of us probably assume that (in both those contexts) that we are able to communicate effectively, even if we do not manage to achieve shared understandings. When this problem is added to a more basic one, raised by Smith (1987) and DeVault (1990), that our language '... reflects male experiences, and that its categories are often incongruent with women's lives' (DeVault 1990:96), we are faced with a major linguistic barrier. DeVault's examples of male centred concepts is particularly useful for this discussion since they are 'work and leisure' and 'public and private'. By claiming they are male centred she is arguing that they have derived from male experience, and are used as a framework to make sense of everyone's experience

- including women, even though women's lives do not always easily fit with these concepts. As a result the concepts fail to illuminate adequately how women lead their lives. It needs to be recognised that DeVault's (1992) point is not only that our language is thoroughly gendered, but that it is also embedded with other forms of oppression (see hooks 1992, 1994).

DeVault (1990) and Smith (1987) whilst highlighting the problem, provide little guidance on how to overcome it when researching women's lives. One strategy they point to is asking women very specific detailed questions about their lives, to get a better sense of their day-to-day lives, and how they make sense of them. Another is to preserve women's speech and to be attentive to how we as researchers can misrepresent views by how we record, transcribe and use excerpts of interviews.

Issues of Interpretation and Representation

Generating descriptions of people's accounts is fraught with problems, but it is only part of the research process. Alongside developing 'good' description, the processes of interpretation and representation are crucial when considering what is done with the data as they are analysed and 'made sense of'. The problem of the limits of language appear again:

The making visible of a different system of subjectivity can be rendered difficult by the inadequacy of the language available, both for women articulating their domestic everyday lives and concerns, and for researchers who attempt to represent them (Ribbens and Edwards 1995:252).

DeVault (1990) argues that within feminist analyses there is always a tension between working within a disciplinary tradition (such as sociology) and yet trying to engage in a practice which is seeking to transform and / or transcend that very discipline. Smith (1987) cautions against the tendency of disciplines to distort women's experiences, through the use of male-centred concepts. The predominant masculinist discourse has made women's voices hard to hear, so we need, according to Ribbens and Edwards (1995), to pay close attention to how we listen. Smith (1987) maps out one method

that she and her colleagues used, which was to explore the social organisation of the women's day. The value of this is clarified by DeVault (1990:101): 'This kind of interviewing, which does not begin from topics established in the discipline, will be more like everyday 'woman talk' than like survey research'. In the everyday talk of women, clues are sought as to the nature of social relations. What is being advocated by Smith (1987) and DeVault (1990) are approaches which stay close to what women say.

The problem comes in working out ways of staying close to what women say when interpreting what they have said. This process is made even more difficult because, as Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994:126) point out:

... no researcher can gain more than a glimpse of other people's lives through accounts given in an interview, much of the 'skill' of interview-based research lies in what sense we make of the interview after the subject has gone - how we interpret our interview texts.

In reality we make our interpretations based on incomplete data which in turn creates its own problems of ensuring that our interpretations are valid. We can never, as Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994:145) claim, ever be sure that we have got it right. The best we can do is to be openly reflexive in our interpretations and leave the reader to judge the trustworthiness and significance of our conclusions.

A Question of Method

Whilst I began this chapter by diverting the discussion about feminist research away from method (with the help of Harding), it is timely to return to such questions and explain the choice of methods for this study. The process of selecting methods for research is, as Brannen (1992) suggests, not always quite as orderly, or disinterested as the research methods textbooks advocate. We might be led to expect theory, and / or epistemology, to be our starting point, but Brannen (1992:3/4) claims this is not always the case:

The cart often comes before the horse, with the researcher already committed

to a particular methods before he or she has taken due time to consider the repertoire of methods suited to exploring the particular research issues.

This seems a legitimate point, although there is little evidence of researchers 'owning up' to this in their research accounts. Research training about what we *ought* to do, probably leads to most people 'writing in' the methodological and theoretical rationale, and 'writing out' some of the more pragmatic reasonings, such as preference (and expertise) for particular methods.

The decision over methods to be used in this research was undoubtedly influenced by my previous experiences of conducting empirical research, which have largely utilised qualitative methods of data collection. However, I suspect that this prior experience has also had an impact on the types of research questions that interest me, and led me to favouring ones that are most suitably addressed through engaging qualitative research. The following chapter explores the choice of methods in more detail and demonstrates how the ideas discussed in this chapter have informed the research strategies and techniques adopted.

¹ By using the expression 'feminist research' I do not want to convey the impression that there is some unitary understanding of 'feminist research'. Rather, as I hope to illustrate through this chapter, it is characterised by an increasing diversity. The debate over using mixed methods, i.e. both qualitative and quantitative in feminist research is one example of the divergence.

² A commitment to being open about the process of research is not something that is unique to feminists, nor is it particularly new, as the work of both classical ethnographers such as Whyte (1970) and more contemporary researchers such as Plummer (1990) illustrates.

³ Positivism, as derived from the ideas of Auguste Comte, is usually characterised as being an approach to the pursuit of knowledge which is based on the natural sciences. It assumes that the world 'out there' can be known through utilising particular methods which enable us, as researchers, to gather data about the world, without tainting it. From our detached standpoint, and armed with supposedly unimpeachable data, we are able to comment authoritatively on and make law-like predictions about the social world (Cohen and Manion 1994 and Holmwood 1995).

⁴ The debate on whether post modern feminism is possible or desirable is one which needs to be mapped on to the connection between knowledge and social relations. Postmodernism argues that all knowledge is partial and fragmented and that there is no unitary standpoint, which creates problems for the like of Harding (1990) and Di Stephano (1990) because this stance therefore renders the political project of feminism defunct.

⁵ Clearly feminist research is not unique in this regard.

⁶ The subjectivity of the researcher is seen to be multi-faceted, given that there is no one female subjectivity.

⁷ Lather (1988:67) identifies the following as being important in order to develop credible data: triangulation of data sources, methods and theories; construct validity; face validity and catalytic validity. Like Maxwell's typology, these elements encompass the research process from data collection to the analysis.

⁸ See also Julia Brannen's (1992) discussion of triangulation in the introduction to her book on mixing methods of research.

⁹ Using member checks is a central feature of Gill Clarke's recent work (1994) on the lives of lesbian physical education students and teachers.

¹⁰ The emancipatory nature of research is not a claim only made by feminists: the early work of Freire (1978[1972]) on emancipatory pedagogies stimulated the growth of research in education which was explicitly aimed at being emancipatory.

¹¹ The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) offers Higher Education Institutions an opportunity to submit evidence of research-related activity in a wide range of subject categories. As a result of the ranking gained as a result of the assessment, Institutions can gain hundreds of thousands pounds. Researchers within Higher Education are therefore under pressure to produce material which will contribute towards a strong research submission.

¹² I could not find any evidence of 'paybacks' in some of the main studies conducted on women's leisure in this country e.g. Green et al. 1987 and Deem 1986.

¹³ For other types of research a different strategy may have been adopted.

¹⁴ This is a problem which is also experienced in life history and autobiography research.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODS AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research strategies and techniques employed in the research and in so doing demonstrates how the research process was informed by the methodological concerns discussed in the previous chapter. To put this discussion in context it is important to make some prefatory remarks about the time phasing of the research.

The research was planned in 1986 with the data being gathered in the latter half of 1987 and the whole of 1988. The decisions that were taken not only about what to research and but also how to research it were therefore made in the light of information and understandings available at that time. The analysis of the data, however, has been subject to a different time frame in so far as it has been spread over a longer period of time during which the conceptual and methodological terrain has seen many changes. Such changes have enabled the analysis to grow and develop in the light of 'new' ways of conceptualising and making sense of the women's experiences. So whilst the data are products of that period around 1986 to 1988, the subsequent analyses have been able to move beyond that time period. This chapter begins by setting the scene for the research both in terms of geography and of methods used. It then proceeds to describe the process of sampling, making contact with the women, gathering and analysing the data.

The Location of the Research

The study was based in Upton,¹ an expanding market town, some sixty miles from London. There were several reasons for selecting Upton as a location, not least of which was its convenience and the fact that I was familiar with it. In addition to this it contrasted with the location of previous research,² (discussed in Chapter Three) and offered the potential of including a wider variety of women. The importance of drawing upon a variety of women's experiences, if the reality of women's lives is to adequately represented, is reiterated by Abbott and Wallace (1990). Unlike Edinburgh (where Wimbush conducted her study) and Milton Keynes (where Deem conducted her research) Upton was a more multicultural community, with large Italian and West Indian communities. I therefore hoped that I would be able to include ethnic minority women (amongst others) in the research and render them more visible than they had hitherto been in leisure research. Also unlike Sheffield, where Green et al.'s study was based, Upton was relatively small with a population of approximately 78,000,³ whilst still offering a range of leisure and community facilities in the immediate area. Finally, I also felt that choosing to research sections of 'my own'⁴ community might enable access because I was a 'local'.

The Methods of Research

In order to explore the connections between women's involvement in physical activity and empowerment, I decided to use what Brannen (1992) and others (Denzin 1978, Bryman 1992) have called a mixed method approach. By using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods I would be able to gather data that would enable me to explore both the place of physical activity in women's lives as well as its potential to contribute to their empowerment. I decided that I could use, as Bryman (1992) puts it, quantitative research to facilitate qualitative research.⁵

The choice of methods as was discussed in the conclusion to the previous chapter is never quite as simple or orderly as it looks, and that at times researchers may be

committed to particular methods before others have been fully considered (Brannen 1992). Whilst not committed to any research method as such, I did have a preference for interviewing based on previous research experiences which had led me to feel that I had some aptitude for it. However, whilst I was aware that I knew what I wanted to try and explore, I was not sure what was going to be the best way of catching the phenomena. The methods and myself, as the researcher, therefore needed to be sensitive to what might have been expected, as well as to what might *not* have been expected. In considering what I wanted to explore I felt that whilst some form of interview might generate insights into how women experienced physical activity I also wanted to make contact with a wide range of women who were involved in a range of leisure activities. One way of doing this was to administer a questionnaire to a 'large' sample and then interview a sample of those women. This would serve several purposes, firstly it would generate a sample of women willing to be interviewed about their leisure and physical activity; secondly the questionnaire would provide useful information background information about the women interviewed and finally, the interviews could be used to clarify responses to the questionnaire. The administering of the questionnaires was therefore largely to facilitate generating a sample of women to interview for the main part of the research.

Having decided to use interviews, I felt I needed to consider some of the different ways in which they could be used. I therefore conducted pilot interviews. Recognising the importance of household dynamics led me to consider interviewing women and their partners (possibly together and or separately) in order to gain a better grasp of household and interpersonal dynamics and their impact on women's involvement on physical activity. Three interviews were conducted with heterosexual couples, one of which was conducted with the couple together, another with each partner separately, and the third with each partner separately and then with the couple together. I also interviewed two women individually, one of whom was married and the other was separated from her husband. Both had young children. The interviews with the couples proved to be very useful in generating an understanding of how each household operated, but I found that by including the woman's male partner in the research the focus moved off her involvement in physical activity and on to the household in

general and what the partner did. As a result of these interviews I decided to focus on interviewing women on their own and not to involve partners or other household members in the research. In addition to clarifying who the interviews would focus on, the pilot interviews were also useful in developing my questioning and listening skills as well as clarifying which areas might be most appropriate to explore. Following the pilot interviews an interview guide was drawn up which covered the key areas that I hoped to explore in the interviews (see Appendix 1).

Although I felt that the questionnaires and interviews would enable me to explore the specific areas of research, I hoped that I would also have other opportunities to gather data as I established contacts and spoke to women I was hoping to involve in the research. As I explained in the previous chapter, I was also conscious of not wanting to appear as a distanced researcher and so I endeavoured to spend some time with the women who might become involved in the research, in order to develop a wider perspective of their lives. I also wanted to spend time with women in each phase of the research, rather than use what could have been perceived as 'hit and run' tactics. Whilst at the back of my mind I was aware that spending time getting to know people might well have a positive impact on the return rate for the questionnaires, I was acutely aware in some circumstances of the differences between my life experiences and those of some of the women I was meeting, and felt that spending time with them could help broaden my understandings of their lives. To record this informal participant observation I kept a field work log to record comments and things that happened during the gathering of the questionnaire and interview data.

The Sample - Questionnaire Phase

Having noted (in Chapter Three) that particular 'groups' of women (ethnic minorities and the elderly) have been neglected in leisure research I therefore wanted to try and include them, along with others in the research. The Wimbush (1986) and Green et al. (1987) studies gathered some rich data on women with pre-school age children so, although, such women were not excluded from the study, they were not actively

sought. In addition to this, women from a range of income levels were sought in order to develop a broad view of women's leisure experiences.

Women who were physically active were sought, as well as those who were not (at that time) active. Although Theberge (1987) reported the potential for women's involvement in team sport to empower them, there was little evidence relating to whether any particular activities might be more conducive to empowerment than others so attempts were made to try and encapsulate a broad range of women's involvement. Given the rise in participation figures for indoor and keep-fit type of activities, I was particularly interested in women who were involved in these activities, as opposed to team sports.

The categories of women that I wanted to include were women who seemed to be either underrepresented in previous studies on women and leisure, or women who represented a cross-section of those involved in physical activity. The groups that I therefore sought were the young (18 years and above); the post 40 year olds; ethnic minority women; working- and middle-class women; employed and unemployed women; women involved in activities commonly regarded as being gender appropriate i.e. keep fit, aerobics and badminton, and in those regarded as being less appropriate i.e. weight training; and women not necessarily involved in any physical activity.⁶

The identification of particular 'groups' of women that I wanted to include in the sample meant that I was not seeking a representative sample, and that using the electoral roll to make contact would be an unnecessarily cumbersome method. I therefore needed to find an alternative way of contacting both the active and non-active women. 'Active' women I decided to contact primarily through their leisure activities, whilst the 'non-active' women I contacted through either their non-active leisure pursuits, or through their paid employment.⁷ In total there were nine points of contact established with various groups of women.

Making Contact

To get a range of women from different ethnic and socio-economic groups I decided to target particular areas of the town which census data revealed as having a higher density of these groups. In addition to census data, other sources were used to find out what leisure activities and opportunities there were in the town and to explore what might be the best ways of making contact. Several sources of information were used: Small Area Statistics generated from the 1981 census, local newspapers, and information at local community facilities. These sources revealed that there were areas of the town that were regarded as traditionally 'working-class', for example, Fir Hill and Hazel Bank (where I lived) and others, for example, Meadows and Riverside that were seen as being more 'middle-class'.⁸ In addition to this, local knowledge of the area confirmed that Fir Hill and Hazel Bank had a higher proportion of ethnic minorities than either Meadows or Riverside.⁹ The contrast between these two types of areas seemed to be a useful starting point for trying to include a variety of women within the sample.

I decided to concentrate on these four areas: two working-class and two middle-class, and to target places within those areas that would enable me to build up a varied sample of women which would include working-class and middle-class of a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Having rejected conventional ways of generating a sample, for example through the electoral roll or random selection, in favour of Glaser and Strauss's (1979) theoretical sampling,¹⁰ I had constantly to monitor who was 'falling into' the sample and who was not, and take steps to remedy the situation.

Having targeted areas of the town, the next stage was to identify a way of meeting women from these areas. Whilst one way of doing this was to approach women in the street, or to call at their homes, I decided that this approach would not allow me the opportunity to spend time with them so that they could get to know me. It would also have been very time-consuming, so I decided to approach the women through their paid employment or an out-of-home leisure activity.

It soon became clear that I was unlikely to be able to make contact with the variety of women that I wanted to solely through their leisure. Therefore I widened the net to include two large employers (Cable Co. and Fitco) in the town and the Special Adult Learning Programme (SALP). The employers had a largely female workforce the majority of which was doing relatively unskilled work. Fitco's workforce mainly comprised Asian women, whilst Cable Co.'s represented a greater ethnic mix.

The SALP programmes were heavily subsidised and were offered to men and women on low income levels. Although only one of the centres was in one of the four designated areas, I decided to include another two because I needed to include more women who were at the lower end of the income bracket, particularly as Cable Co. had by this time refused to allow me in to meet any of their female employees.

Developing and Distributing the Questionnaires

As well as identifying ways of contacting the 'groups' of women I wanted to include, I was also developing a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) which would generate not only some general demographic information about the respondents, but was also constructed to generate a personal leisure profile. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with eleven women as similar to the proposed sample as possible. The women were asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on any problems they had in completing it and to say how long it took them to complete. The questionnaire underwent several revisions before the final version was ready. Although the study was primarily concerned with women and physical activity there was a need to be able to set any activity and non-activity in the wider context of women's lives. Therefore only one question was specifically concerned with physical activity. The final question asked whether the respondent would be interested in helping me further with the study, and if they were could they give details of how I could best contact them. Each questionnaire was numbered on the reverse so that a tally could be kept of how many questionnaires went out, to which group. In addition to this, a prepaid envelope was given out with each questionnaire, so that if I was unable to collect it in person, it could be sent back, at no cost to the respondent. No set figure was established as an

ideal target number (although 400 questionnaires had been printed): rather I intended to give out as many questionnaires as I could to people in the groups I had identified.

Gaining Access

Having opted to make contact with women through their association with particular groups (i.e. work, clubs, adult education) I had mixed success in gaining permission from the gatekeepers to distribute questionnaires to these women. Cable Co.'s Personnel Services Manager replied saying he was unable to agree to my visiting them. Fitco proved much more fruitful and I had a meeting with both the Head and Assistant Personnel Manager.¹¹ Fitco had also had some discussions with colleagues of mine regarding consultancy, so relations were already on a good footing before I appeared. Following a tour of the factory by the Assistant Personnel Manager I was allowed to return whenever I wanted to talk to the women during their lunch break. As I later discovered my tour with the Assistant Personnel Manager had been noticed, and it possibly compromised my position vis-a-vis the shop floor workers (Hammersley 1993). Getting past the gatekeepers therefore did not necessarily guarantee the type of access I ideally wanted.

I gave out most of the questionnaires during the lunch break: the shopfloor workers tended to be in the canteen between 12 and 1pm., whilst the office staff were there between 1 and 2pm. Hopes of building up much of a rapport with these women was limited, largely due to the fact that they had such little rest time during the day, and therefore the lunch break was valuable time. The physiotherapist who conducted a health screen on anyone using the factory gym introduced me to three Asian and one Italian woman, who were regular gym users at that time.¹²

Access to women through the SALP classes was eased considerably through existing contacts I had in the Community Arts Association. The SALP organiser arranged for me to meet all seven of the teaching staff of the SALP team and in addition to this, she sent a letter to all the other staff asking if they would assist me in any way they could. Following this letter I contacted staff individually to arrange visits to meet the women

in their classes and distribute questionnaires. In addition to the staff working on the SALP programme, another adult education tutor was contacted because of the work she did on 'Keep Fit to Music' for the elderly, in one of the target areas.

Seeing their advertisement in a local paper to attract new members, I contacted a women's badminton club (again in one of the target areas) and spoke to their secretary about their involvement in the research. She sounded supportive from a personal point of view but reported that it would have to go to the club's committee for approval. This done, I was allowed to attend the club on Tuesday afternoons and talk with the women and distribute my questionnaires. Prior to going along, I gave my contact, the secretary, some flyers to distribute to club members in which I introduced myself and outlined what I was researching. When I went along to the club I tried to blend in with setting, and so went in jogging bottoms and took my badminton racket to make up numbers if they were short. 'Blending in' was not easy, as firstly the average age of those attending appeared to be 45 - 50 years, and also the standard of play was of a recreational level, which contrasted with the competitive badminton I was playing at the time. I therefore only played when a group was short, and then I tailored my play to those I was on court with. Some groups of women did try to pull me into playing more, but I resisted this as my main purpose in being there was to chat to the women whilst they waited to get on court and during their tea break. Whilst officially I had been approved, there was some resistance from one or two members of the club who seemed rather suspicious about what I was doing. One woman asked me: 'What are you trying to prove?'. Generally, though as I became more familiar such suspicions seemed to fade away, and members would greet me saying 'Hello, Sarah' as I arrived.

I also contacted The Vale Women's Group following their advertisement in the local paper. This was a more formal gathering of women, who met once a month for talks or demonstrations. Their secretary arranged access for me and allowed me about ten minutes at the beginning of one session to explain what I was doing, and how they could be involved with the research.

In addition to these contacts I decided to approach one of the biggest bingo halls in one of the target areas to get their agreement to meet and talk to women who were playing bingo. Some knowledge of the bingo hall and who to contact there, came from one of the women who I had met through one of the SALP classes. She had worked at the hall but had had to give up owing to childcare problems. Her advice, however, proved to be very useful in terms of, not only whom to contact, but also when would be the best times of the day to go and talk to the manager, and what time the sessions start. The manager gave me permission to talk to women and hand out questionnaires, so long as I did not interrupt them during a session. My admission was also waived, and I came and went as it suited me. Having been several times to the bingo to familiarise myself with it I decided that it would be best to catch people between sessions, even though they tended to be quite 'busy' either getting refreshments, reading books and magazines, knitting or chatting. My presence was likely to be disruptive to them in some way, and invariably my first line of introduction was: 'Sorry to interrupt you, but...'. The opportunity to develop rapport with these women was therefore very limited, as it had been with the women at Fitco. However I hoped that the brief conversations I did have would generate sufficient interest in the research to encourage the women to return the questionnaires. As with some of the other women I gave questionnaires out to, I had to rely on them being returned to me via the Reply Paid envelope which I had given to them with the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Response Rate

Of the 334 questionnaires which were distributed 172 were returned. The following table illustrates the variations in return rate between each of the 'groups' of women.

Table 2: Questionnaire Response Rate by Target Group

Place of Distribution	Number Distributed	Number Returned	% Response Rate
Edward St. Keep Fit	43	34	79.07%
Hartley Keep Fit	20	14	70%
Redhill Rd. SALP	29	20	68.96%
Badminton Club	31	21	67.74%
Meadow Keep Fit	22	14	63.63%
Health & Fitness Club	60	33	55%
Vale Women's Group	22	9	40.9%
Bingo	51	13	25.49%
Fitco	56	14	25%
TOTAL	334	172	51.49%

The nine 'groups' targeted (see Table 2) had widely varying response rates from a low of 25 per cent at the Fitco factory to a high of just over 79 per cent at the Keep Fit classes at Edward St.. The reasons for the varied responses seem mainly to lie in the timing and methods of distribution and return. For example at Fitco I distributed the questionnaires to women during their lunch times and although each had a reply-paid envelope in which to send it back I had the feeling that I was trespassing into not only their space but also their precious free time. In addition to this to them I was just a face from the outside, someone who must have got permission from the management to be there. Perhaps the anonymity on the one hand, and identification with the management on the other was enough to lower motivation levels to fail to complete and / or return the questionnaire. The topic of the questionnaire clearly also had an impact, for example one Asian woman laughed when I told her what the questionnaire was about. In essence her reply was 'Leisure, what leisure?'. She then went on to tell me about her average day where she got up early, prepared breakfast, got the kids ready for school, came to work at the factory, finished at 5.30pm., went home, got the supper and then went out to her second job cleaning offices at night. In this case the questionnaire was dismissed because it was about something that she could not relate to on a day to day basis. Attempts to convince her that her response about the lack of

leisure she had would still be very useful, were to no avail.

The better return rates (i.e. 55 per cent and above) all came from groups or places where people met on a regular, non-work basis, and where I made several return trips to talk, to get involved with the group or just collect questionnaire returns. The return rates of 70 per cent and above from two of the Keep Fit classes perhaps also had something to do with the fact that the woman taking these sessions kept on reminding everyone to return their completed questionnaires to me. In addition to this I knew several members of one of these groups, the Hartley group, through some previous work at that community centre and that contact may have helped increase the return rate. Also, the higher response rate came from women who were involved in physical activity and perhaps this indicates more of an interest on their part, in the research in general.

The return rate therefore seems to have been influenced by a combination of factors:

- i) the degree of contact I was able to have with the group i.e. the more contact, the better the return rate;
- ii) the context in which the questionnaires were distributed i.e. questionnaires distributed in a group context yielded a higher return rate than those not. (With the exception of the Health and Fitness Club, see the next note.);
- iii) the interest in the content of the questionnaire i.e. those involved in physical activity tended to have a higher return rate than those not.

An additional factor may have been a language barrier, although many of the younger ethnic minority women at Fitco spoke English and helped some of the older women, who were not so fluent, to fill in their questionnaires. Quite a few of the older Asian women however, when asked (through another woman who interpreted for me) to be involved in the research just shook their heads.

An analysis of returns by the four areas originally identified earlier in this chapter was not as useful as I initially thought it might have been, for questionnaire returns suggested that the composition of the groups was not made up entirely of women

from those immediate areas. The intention then of targeting groups in 'working-class' and 'middle-class' areas of the town to produce a sample of 'working' and 'middle-class' women was not particularly successful. As has been found elsewhere, 'middle-class' women tended to travel to wherever the opportunities were. In addition to this the conventional categorisations of social class (based on income, education and occupation) did not seem to lend themselves to what I regarded as valid categorisations based on my subjective understandings of the lives of some of the women in the sample. For example, one woman who was interviewed would have, by objective indicators e.g. income, education, and occupation, been classified as working class and yet her aspirations were more middle class i.e. get a degree and write novels.

So whilst not denying the potential influence of socio-economic factors on a woman's leisure experience, I decided that the categorisation of the respondents into social class groups would probably mask the complexities of their lives rather than illuminate the impact of social class. I do feel however that the initial identification of the four areas of the town, along social class and ethnic lines was of value. It raised my awareness of the importance of making contact with a variety of women with a range of different life experiences, and it also demonstrated that there can be as many differences within supposedly distinct social class groups as there is between them.

The Sample - Interviewing Phase

Fifty-one of the women who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they would be willing to talk to me further. As some of them lived outside of the town and travelled in to work, or to use the leisure facilities, I decided to focus on just those women who lived in the town, thereby reducing the group to a more manageable number for interviewing. Of the remaining group some of the women, when contacted by telephone, were either no longer able or willing to take part in the second phase and so I was initially left with twenty-four women who were prepared to be interviewed. This number grew after one of the women I interviewed (Carol) suggested getting a group of women together to talk to me about their experiences of weight training at

the Health and Fitness Club. Of this group of six women that gathered, I had already interviewed Carol, and was due to interview another. In total therefore, twenty-eight women were interviewed.

The Interviews

The interviews took place between the middle of April and the beginning of December 1988. All of them were tape-recorded and they lasted on average between an hour, and an hour and a half. Most of the interviews took place in the respondent's home having been arranged at their convenience. Whilst I tried to stress the importance of not being distracted during the interview, this rarely happened. Visitors, phone calls, children, family members and animals all played their part in the interviews. Indeed three interviews were carried out with adult family members present for all or part of the interview. On one such occasion, as one woman spoke of her husband and his golf I began to wonder if I knew him, and then when he did come home early we recognised each other. At times it was clear that what the participant was saying was influenced by others present, but it is hard to assess whether this was necessarily a negative or a positive impact. I certainly felt that the interview situation was different because I felt there was an audience listening to the questions and answers, and invariably the other party (on one occasion the woman's mother, and on the other two it was the woman's male partner) joined in. I also felt that the type of rapport that could be built up between myself and the participant was different and not so close owing to others being there. Children's presence, whilst often leading to slight pauses in the interviews, did not detract in any way from the rapport built up: on the contrary, at times it probably helped ease any tension following 'small talk' about the children.

The aim of the interviews was to develop an understanding of the place of physical activity in the context of each woman's life and to explore the extent to which any empowerment had been experienced. An interview guide was used, but I tried not to impose a set pattern to each interview although for the most part the beginning of the interviews began with a chronological reflection on their lives since school. At times I was aware of an interview dwelling on areas I did not feel were going to be particularly fruitful for me, but as Cotterill (1992) points out we need to be aware of

what the participant is getting out of the interview. At times I felt that some of the women were so glad to have someone who wanted to spend time talking to them that they wanted to tell me everything about particular events that were important to them. On the few occasions when this occurred I tried to steer the discussion back, closer to issues relating to the research. Material from the questionnaire completed by each woman acted as another discussion point for the interviews. I was concerned, however, not to get locked into a set pattern of questions or areas that had to be covered. Rather, I wanted to allow sufficient space for each participant to talk about issues that were important to her.

When reflecting on how the interviews were going and whether they were opening up areas for discussion that I felt would be fruitful, I had a sense that whilst the women seemed relatively comfortable to talk about their leisure in the context of the household it seemed much harder to open up discussion about their bodies. I tried to find ways round this by asking questions differently, but I still felt some dissatisfaction with my skills as an interviewer in enabling women to discuss their bodies. Whilst I felt that my 'stranger' status was problematic in terms of developing the trust of the women in a relatively short time,¹³ this problem was partially eased as my reading around the area continued. In the summer of 1988 I began to read Haug's (1987) work on the body project, in which she and the collective she worked with wrote about their bodies, and how they felt about particular parts of their bodies, for example their legs and breasts. Although this work was focused on women writing about themselves I found it useful insofar as it gave me some ideas about the type of questions I could ask women about themselves and their bodies that would be 'non-threatening' yet open up the discussion. For example, Haug and the others spoke of specific parts of their bodies such as 'legs that were too long', or pieces of clothing such as 'knickers', and then explored why they felt as they did about themselves. I drew upon this and directed questions about how satisfied women were with their bodies and what others thought about their bodies.

Although not planned as part of the research, there was one group interview with six women, two of whom were also interviewed separately. This interview came about

following an interview with one of the women from the Health and Fitness Club. She felt that some of the women might like the opportunity to meet up and talk with me as part of a group and offered to arrange something if the others wanted to. Subsequently I was invited round to meet them at Carol's house where several of the women had brought wine and 'nibbles' to eat. It was the first time they had gathered as a group socially and it also gave them an opportunity to ask more about me and also about the research. This interview centred more directly around the women's involvement in weight training at the gym, how they felt about their bodies and how others responded to them doing weight training. Unlike the individual interviews I did not use an interview guide, but rather let the women lead the way with what they wanted to talk about with me asking questions as and when they seemed appropriate.

Informal Observation

Informal observation was conducted throughout the research process when meeting any of the women involved in the research. This was not only to try to develop more of a rapport with them, but also to develop a slightly more holistic view of their lives and their leisure. During the research, as I described earlier, I took my badminton racket along and made up numbers at the club, I learnt more about cooking meat loaves through talking to women at the SALP cookery class, listened to concerns about public transport etc. and helped clean up after coffee breaks. The fieldwork log was inevitably a reflection of what I thought were going to be 'useful' data. My selectivity of focus drew me to comments made about leisure, work, and relationships that affected what the women did with their time. The log proved to be invaluable, not only as an aide memoire when writing up the research, but also as a tool for reflecting on how the research was progressing. I recorded how I felt the interviews went, and how they might have been improved. I also noted down points of interest and ideas that had developed as a result of making new connections between what I had been reading and what I was discovering in the field work. Documents relating to some of the activities done by the women and some of the groups they were members of were

also gathered.

Making Sense of the Data

Despite the questionnaires fulfilling a largely facilitating role I decided that given the volume of data gathered it would be worth using SPSS to analyse the data generated to enable a general picture to emerge of the women's leisure. Owing to the method of sample selection, the only statistical tests conducted on the data were descriptive ones, that is, frequencies and cross-tabulations. These measures enabled easy summarisation of the data and also helped to examine the potential relationships between variables, for example, income and out-of-home leisure. So that the data produced by the cross-tabulations made sense, some of the data were recoded (from both the original response and that used to generate the frequencies) to ensure that the cells of the cross-tabulations contained reasonable numbers.¹⁴

The main data set came from the interview tapes which were fully transcribed to facilitate their analysis. Following Maxwell's (1992) concerns about the descriptive validity of data, I endeavoured to keep the text as close to the spoken word as possible and so included the 'em', 'um', 'er' in order to retain a sense of how speech was constructed. When there was any laughter this was also shown in the transcript. There were however other elements of communication between myself and the participants that were not represented in the transcripts such as the length of pauses, hesitancy or uncertainty in the speech.

In setting out to make sense of the wealth of data that the interviews generated I turned to Turner's (1981) elaboration of the stages of grounded theory suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1979). Nine stages of the analysis process were identified as being: 1. The development of categories related to the data; 2. The saturation of these categories; 3. The construction of a definition of the category; 4. The use of these definitions to promote further theoretical reflection; 5. The development of the categories to yield as much information as possible; 6. The development of linkages

between the categories; 7. The further investigation of linkages and relationships between categories; 8. The building of bridges between the emerging relationships and existing theories in the area; 9. The utilisation of extreme comparisons to test the strength of emerging theoretical relationships (Turner 1981:231). Whilst Turner's work was useful as a guide to how I could proceed, in reality the process was not as linear as these stages seem to indicate. New linkages between categories led to other categories being created, which led to material being re-analysed. What in effect looks like a neat process, turned into a rather messy bundle of category cards with associated sheets of paper with other categories being developed.¹⁵

The processes which Turner identifies, however, are I feel very useful, and they were instrumental in leading me to look at the data in a different way from that which I had anticipated. My initial categories closely reflected the interview guide e.g. influence of the family upon early leisure experiences and experiences of physical education. Later on however, and influenced by 'new' literature on households (Gregson and Lowe 1993), empowerment (Gore 1992) and the body (Bordo 1990,1995), I began to look at the data and these categories in a different light, and as Turner suggests began to 'build bridges' between existing concepts and what emerged from the data. The changing theoretical terrain therefore led me to review and revise some of the early connections I had made between concepts and how they informed my interpretation of the women's accounts. Whilst it could be argued that the shift in interpretation suggests a weakness in the interpretive validity of my earlier analyses, it is probably more appropriate to see those analyses as being products of the theorising at that time. As Lather (1988) suggests, one way to seek reassurance about the interpretive validity of one's work is to involve the research participants in 'checking' the data and how it has been used. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this strategy is not without its problems, and I felt that it would not be particularly beneficial for this research. Instead, whilst bearing in mind Bosk's caution (cited in Maxwell 1992) about why should anyone believe one lone researcher's account and interpretation, I opted for the strategy which involves trying to be as explicit as possible about the process of interpretation engaged in throughout the research. It is partly for this reason that I have drawn where possible from the interview transcripts to open up for scrutiny my

interpretation of what the participants have said. In saying this I recognise that the very process of selecting one extract as opposed to another is a part of the interpretive process which the reader cannot gain easy access to. This also raises the issue of internal generalisability, in so far as it would be possible to select one part of an interview which, treated in isolation could lead to a misinterpretation of the rest of their lives. To counteract this I have tried to ensure that the extracts that are used and the discussion of them reflects holistically the participant's life. Several of the women for example spoke at one stage in their interview about how they got frustrated with their husbands' assumption that they (the husbands) had a right to their leisure, whilst later in the interview the women spoke of how they could not expect their husbands to come home from work and do housework, while they went off to enjoy their leisure. Where there were such contradictions appearing I sought to reveal them in order to facilitate a more holistic view of the women's lives. I have also included brief biographies of the women interviewed in Appendix 4, to enable the reader to develop a sense of who the women are.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the research was conducted and tells something of those involved with the study. It has also demonstrated how the research strategies and techniques employed in the research reflect the ideas discussed in the methodology. In this chapter I have also tried to illustrate the way in which the research process does not follow a simple linear path, but rather takes twists and turns as problems appear or new ideas inform the research and lead to a change in approach. To lay bare the research process can as Stanley and Wise (1993) suggest be a risky process as it exposes the strengths and weaknesses of the researcher to public scrutiny, but I feel this is essential, particularly in research which has been conducted by one person.

¹ The names used to describe locations and people involved with the research are fictitious.

² Such as Milton Keynes, Sheffield and Edinburgh.

³ Based on population figures quoted for 1979 - 1991 produced by Uptonshire County Council in 1992.

⁴ Whilst saying 'my own' I am well aware that as a white middle-class female, my sense of 'my own' community may well have been different from that of women from other socio-economic and cultural groups.

⁵ Bryman (1992) also talks of the way in which qualitative research can facilitate quantitative work.

⁶ Further research could usefully explore the contribution that involvement in team games makes to women's empowerment (see Scraton 1996 in press).

⁷ The terms 'active' and 'non-active' only refer to involvement in activity at the time I contacted the women, many of them had been active previously.

⁸ Whilst I talk of 'working-class' and 'middle-class' areas these are not ecologically valid in so far as it would be wrong to assume that all people and all women in those areas were 'working-class' or 'middle-class'. The very fact that I lived in Hazel Bank, but am white and middle-class, partially supports this.

⁹ This reflects a trend, evident in major conurbations, for ethnic minority communities to be located in 'working-class' areas.

¹⁰ Theoretical sampling refers to a process whereby decisions are made during the data collection about whether the procedures are adequate for generating the sample that the study requires (Glaser and Strauss 1979).

¹¹ One of the reasons that Fitco were probably quite happy to have me in was that they saw it as an opportunity for me to do something for them. The previous year the Managing Director had had a heart attack, and on his return to work he set up a gym in the factory, so that during meal breaks and after work, people could go and work-out. In addition to this, he hired a part-time physiotherapist who gave everyone wanting to use the gym a fitness check before they started. This fitness check then acted as a base for future monitoring of fitness levels. Initially there had been quite a lot of interest from men and women, shop floor and management, but latterly there had been a drop off, and they said that if I came up with any idea of why would I let them know.

¹² Unfortunately, only one of these women returned the questionnaire.

¹³ Had I made more time to get to know the women, I might have asked them to write about themselves and their bodies, but as I met with the women between two and five times (depending on how I made contact with them) I did not feel I could build up sufficient rapport to ask them to do this.

¹⁴ Details of this are in the Appendix 3.

¹⁵ Since the time the research was begun, the use of computer packages such as Ethnograph and Nudist to analyse qualitative material has expanded.

CHAPTER SIX

INTRA-HOUSEHOLD POWER RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON WOMEN'S LEISURE

Introduction

This chapter explores the potential for an understanding of household dynamics to make sense of women's access to, and experience of, leisure. In so doing it draws on the sensitising theories and concepts (discussed in Chapters Two and Three) and interrogates their value in developing our understanding of women's involvement in leisure in the broader context of their lives and, in particular, as members of households. The chapter forms the first part of the discussion, setting the scene for a more focused examination in Chapter Seven of women's involvement in physical activity and the potential for such activity to be empowering.

Whilst clearly the nature of employment (for both women and their partners) has a major impact on women's leisure, it is not, I will argue (with Le Feuvre 1994 and Gregson and Lowe 1993), the only or main explanatory tool for understanding women's experience of leisure. This research seeks, therefore, to move beyond some previous research (Smith et al. 1973; Glyptis 1989) on women's (and men's) leisure which has tended to use employment status as one of the starting-points for analysis, thereby neglecting intra-household power relations.

My interest shifts, therefore, from a primary concern with the impact that involvement in the labour market by a woman (or her partner) has on her leisure, to exploring the negotiation and playing out of household dynamics in daily life, and how that affects women's leisure and what this can tell us about women's agency. This is not to deny

the importance of employment status as a key factor when considering access to leisure, for as Morris (1990:3) has argued: 'The organization of, and participation in, paid work necessarily plays a major part in the internal dynamic of the household', in addition to which, as will be illustrated, it affects household members' access to the key resources of money and time.

Women Involved with the Research

Before developing some of the themes and theoretical concerns that the women's accounts raise, it is important to make some introductory comments about the women themselves and the data they generated. The data that are drawn upon, in both this and the following chapter, come largely from the interviews, which were the main data set. The questionnaires provided some background information about these women and their leisure histories which was useful during the interviews. For this reason the questionnaire data will only be drawn upon infrequently. By selecting quotations and extracts from the interviews to illustrate particular points, there is a danger that the women's stories become fragmented, and somewhat decontextualised. To help counteract this tendency, 'potted biographies' of the women, which describe something of the context of their lives, are presented in Appendix 4. As the previous chapter has stated, the aim was to try and distribute the questionnaires to a wide range of women, in the hope that this would lead to a range of women being prepared to be interviewed. As the tables in Appendix 5 demonstrate, this was accomplished to a certain degree.

The interview sample, whilst being diverse in some ways, particularly age, occupation, income, marital status and parenthood, is very similar in terms of ethnic background with only one of the women interviewed being anything other than a white European.¹ It is important to bear this in mind because of the danger of trying to offer empirical generalisability, whereby the insights derived from this restricted study are seen to be 'true' for all women, a claim which has no methodological or empirical foundation. However, as my sample had been identified in an 'opportunistic' way, empirical

generalisability had never been, and could not be, on my research agenda. The data do, however, allow for some degree of empirical generalisation within the sample, in addition to theoretical generalisation both within and outside of the sample group. There is also scope for using the insights gained to speculate about empirical and theoretical possibilities. This being said, it can be claimed that these stories not only give illustrative insights into the similarity and diversity of women's leisure, but also set the scene for theoretical exploration and development.

Interpreting the Women's Stories

Exploring the exercise of power in household relations as it may impact primarily upon women's leisure necessitated moving beyond the immediate concerns re leisure to the more general issues concerning the structural position of women (and men) in the labour force, and the structure of households to generate a better understanding of the context within which women's leisure becomes a possibility. Developing a better understanding of such processes is crucial insofar as it enables an exploration of how, in day-to-day living, members of households come to exercise power in different ways, at different times and in different places. This moves us beyond an overly pessimistic (and determinist) view of men controlling women's leisure to consider the ways by which women exercise control over their own lives, and those of others. As the earlier discussion of Giddens' work in Chapter Two emphasised, to do this is to employ a notion of power which is seen as being potentially productive and not only something which constrains. It is important whilst talking of women's structural position to remember that these structures are mutable, and that women's (and men's) position in them fluctuates over time, as child care responsibilities and employment situations, for example, may change.

To explore women's structural position, questions in the interviews centred around decisions women had made in relation to their lives and how, and why, they acted as they did. These decisions ranged from the seemingly more major ones about employment, where to live, to the more everyday decisions about purchasing items for

the household and organising child care. By focusing on the choices women made about their lives and the influence they had on household matters, it became possible to explore the way(s) by which they exercised power and the degree of agency which they appeared to have.² This also revealed something of the nature of women's oppression.

Through examining the day-to-day lives of the women and the workings of their households, the processes of accommodation, resistance and negotiation come to the surface in the women's accounts of how they live their lives. As Crompton and Mann (1986) argued by focusing on the day-to-day aspects of people's lives it is possible to avoid depersonalizing the agent. The accounts also point to particular constructions and reconstructions of their identities as women, as housewives, and as mothers, and bring to the fore the sometimes contradictory nature of social action.

The following discussion and analysis of the women's accounts³ begins with the broader issues of women's involvement in the labour force and then moves to consider aspects of women's structural position within the household, and, in particular, systems of financial control and the division of domestic labour. The discussion then shifts to consider the negotiations around leisure and how women operate within discourses of woman, housewife and motherhood.

Decisions Regarding Women's Involvement in Paid and Unpaid Labour

Both paid employment and unpaid labour (particularly in the home), by both men and women, play a major part in the dynamics of the household. Whether the work of household members is paid or unpaid, done outside or inside the home, it gives a structure to the day and week. The structure itself can enable or constrain member's leisure, with those in most control of their work pattern being most able to make it serve their leisure patterns most. In saying this care must be taken not to slip into a position of assuming that this greater degree of control means that such women have freedom to construct their leisure as they want.

Whether women were in paid employment or not was not always something that they themselves decided (cf. Morris 1990). As a result of a change in household circumstances Sharon, a single parent, found herself in a 'catch 22' position, with a job to go to, but one with an income insufficient to pay for child care. Her only viable solution was not to work and claim benefit. For Lucy and her husband it was her husband's experiences as a child, watching his mother struggle to work and raise a family, that led him to persuade her not to work after they got married (see also Hochschild 1989). That he did not want her to have such a hard time as his mother had persuaded Lucy for many years not to work even though, unlike his parents, they had no children. Some years later, however, she responded to an advertisement in the paper for homeworkers for a large greetings card firm. Again her husband did not want her to do paid work, arguing that homeworking was slave labour, but she enjoyed it because she was at home and earning some money. Although she had to do a thousand cards a day, Lucy liked the flexibility and the structure that it gave her:

... my husband being self-employed, some days he'd be working and others he wouldn't, it was something that I could leave, and if he phoned me up and said I'll be home in half an hour, I could leave it and go back to it, but I had to do that day's work the next day.

The income Lucy gained from this work she used to pay for her husband's golf club subscription: her paid labour facilitated his leisure. In this sense Lucy's usage of her 'extra' income is similar to that of some working class women in Le Feuvre's (1994) study who spent their extra income on their children. It also bears some relation to Bourdieu's (1992) observations about women sacrificing their own needs for those of their partners or children. This suggests that supporting her partner's leisure was part of Lucy's identity as a wife.

The views of male partners about the suitability of their female partner's work was also a factor in another woman's story. Dawn had been working in a bank in the city running an investment portfolio. The job was very pressurised with the possibility of not only making huge gains, but also massive losses. The strain of the job took its toll on Dawn, physically and emotionally, and her husband felt that it was draining her and 'taking too much out of her'. With her husband pointing out all the problems with the

job, she felt that: ‘... he’s probably speeded things up in a way ...’. She felt her husband had been able to identify early on the effects of the strain which, by her account, might have taken her a few more years to realise.

On the surface of it these accounts bear testimony to the paternalistic concern that both Lucy’s and Dawn’s husbands have for the well being of their wives. Despite the potential increase in household income, they were more concerned for their wives. However, we have to consider the extent to which it was concern for their wives alone that led them to adopt the rather paternalistic views that they had, or whether they were also likely to gain from either their wives not being in paid employment, or working in a less stressful and less tiring job. In this sense Dawn’s husband’s comment that her job was taking ‘too much out of her’ draws our attention to his concern that she did not have enough energy for other aspects of her life. An earlier comment by Dawn revealed that this was probably one of these ‘other aspects’ was their marriage: ‘It’s very difficult to have that kind of life and stay married (laughs) it strains too much, you have to go away on business too much.’ This account suggests that Dawn and her partner had slightly different ideas about her identity as a wife, as his comments to her imply that he felt she should not be doing so much. Also, Lucy’s husband’s identity as a husband may have been connected to ‘his wife’ not needing to be in paid employment.

In considering these two cases (of Lucy and Dawn), it becomes clear that the decisions, either to not have paid work, or to change the nature of the paid work, were not taken solely by the women involved, rather they were decisions made as a couple. In both cases the decisions did not seem to have been imposed on the women: their acquiescence had been gained, at least for the time being, and in this sense it can be argued that the women accommodated their husband’s requests. Both women could see what they would gain out of going along with their husband’s views. As Lucy demonstrated some time later by applying for the homeworking job, this accommodation to her husband’s request was not one that she saw as in any way binding over a period of years. This gives us some insights into the nature of the power relations between Lucy and her husband, insofar as she was clearly willing to

go along with him, so far as it suited her to do so. This is similar to strategies adopted by some of the women in Hochschild's (1989) study of working parents. As Bartky (1990) points out, women are not forced at gun-point to operate within dominant discourses of femininity (and I would add, motherhood), so it is important to understand the benefits women can gain from such investments. This appreciation of the benefits and pleasures women experience (which is reminiscent of Giddens' argument for a more positive view of power) is something which Radner (1995) also supports.

Whilst there has been some evidence that men have influence over decisions about what type of paid employment their female partners do, there was no evidence of the reverse being true. On the contrary, Sharon's ex-husband broke his contract of employment with a firm soon after moving jobs and area, without even telling her. A court order ensued, thereby causing the household serious financial problems as he had to pay back £1200 in three months. There was however some evidence of shared decision-making over whether both partners should be working, and what the impact would be on the quality of life and the quality of child care if both, or only one, worked. Sue and her husband Martin discussed the financial impact of Sue not being in employment and living off only Martin's salary and they felt that it was something they wanted to do particularly as they still had one pre-school age child. In making that choice Sue recognised that they were privileged to be able to make the choice, but at the same time they felt that perhaps others may be guided by different values:

I mean I talk about having so much time but a lot of people perhaps haven't as much time, but they may have chosen different values. They may have chosen to have ... to go out to work, so they have more money, so therefore materialistically their homes will have more.

Conclusion

The women's stories support the view that women's involvement in paid or unpaid labour is subject to a range of influences. No one factor seems to be any more influential than another in the decision-making process, although for those women

with children, the social and emotional needs of the household often took precedence over purely financial considerations. Such cases seem to represent an extension of Bourdieu's notion of the women sacrificing her needs to the needs of others, particularly children and male partner. On the other hand it could be argued that placing the concerns of others before themselves demonstrates the extent to which their identities as mothers and housewives operated within the dominant discourses of the 'good' mother and the 'good' housewife. For some households, traditional views about women's role seemed to prevail, with Lucy's husband in particular feeling very strongly about wanting to 'save' his wife having to work as his mother did. Decisions about women's involvement were generally not ones taken solely by the woman herself but came out of discussion with her partner. Whether this process was the same for the decisions about the involvement of the male partner in paid labour was not something that the research explored.

Minding the Money

Closely connected to women's involvement in the labour market are questions concerning financial control within households. How is the household income generated and what are the processes that led to it being spent in certain ways by particular people? Central to household financial allocation and expenditure is the way these issues connect with intra-household power relations. Some areas of household life, as Morris (1990) points out, are more highly valued than others. For example the contribution that an income earner makes is often seen as being more valuable than the contribution that non-income earners make, even though it may be the non-income earner's skills in eking out a living from a low income that enable the household to maintain itself.

As the discussion in Chapter Three has shown, studies (Pahl 1991 and Vogler and Pahl 1993) have questioned earlier assertions that the increased involvement of women in the labour market have lead to a more equitable access to financial resources. Instead they suggest that despite the increased economic activity of women, both the domestic

division of labour and the access to household financial resources are still characterised by inequality.

Information on household income generated by the survey was limited by the fact that eighty-two respondents did not supply sufficient information.⁴ However, the interviews were more useful in exploring not so much how much money was coming into the household, as who was in charge of the money, and how it was spent.

Financial Control

Understanding the type of financial control used in households is vital insofar as it enables us to unravel the processes by which household members gain access to money. Identifying the type of financial control employed (following Pahl's typology), is only the start however, and this discussion explores some of the processes that sustain these different forms of financial control.

As indicated by the work of Pahl (1991) and others (Vogler and Pahl 1993 and Morris 1993), wife-controlled finances were most common in low-income families. However, Claire, one of the women interviewed from a low-income household, described the financial arrangements in her household as being 'totally shared'. When outlining what this meant, she said that all money coming into the household went into their joint account, from which all their bills were paid. To monitor what happens she and her husband had a monthly budget meeting to agree on the pocket money that each was to get, and what that had to cover. They tried to plan ahead and write a monthly plan of their spending. Claire saw their way of operating as being not only a reflection of the way in which they were committed to each other in their marriage, but also as:

... a very highly organised system which that avoids dissent so it just doesn't tend to be a power thing and we actually agree, I mean the arrangements are varied, when we were both working and since, but we actually agree on the amount of pocket money that each gets, and what that has to cover. But in fact we buy almost everything now out of our allocated budget amounts for specific things or out of the housekeeping so that my husband's pocket money,

he can literally spend buying bars of chocolate...

Claire's account of how she and her husband handled their household finances suggests that control over the pooled income in terms of household expenditure and personal spending money is equally shared. This seemed to be contradicted when later Claire talked of how 'her' income '... about a tenner a week ...' paid for her swimming lessons and those of her daughter, and that the rest she could spend on clothes or anything else for herself. In practice, the income from her part-time job seemed to be treated differently, and kept 'apart' from her husband's income, in this sense, it was not pooled. The 'totally shared finances' that were described earlier, appeared to mask non-pooled finances. It seemed that Claire's personal spending money was what was left over from her 'tenner a week' once she had paid for swimming lessons and that her husband's personal spending money came out of the income he had generated. This situation could still have lead to equitable access to spending money, but it might alternatively have reflected an imbalance in power relations where Claire did not feel she had the same rights to personal spending money as her husband because she had not earned as much.⁵ The issue of 'rights' in relation to personal spending money is explored later in this section.

A more typical example, which supports Pahl's (1991) research, comes from the experiences of Sarah, a woman in her early sixties. When her husband had been alive, it was she who controlled the finances. He knew nothing about how much the bills were, or when they were due, even though his pay made up a substantial part of the household income. Sarah did not recall any discussions where she and her husband established who was responsible for what. She thought that, at the time, it was expected that the woman would run and organise the house, which included the finances.

The strength of tradition in financial management, combined with the exercise of power, is demonstrated in a different way by Gill's experiences. Both she and her husband were in their second marriage, and when they met they each ran their finances in contrasting ways: he ran up bills on his Barclaycard whilst she did not buy on credit, and was much more careful with her money because she was on social security. She

took control of the finances in the household, and ran them along the 'pay as you go along' lines that her father used to. As with Sarah, she felt that her husband had little idea of the state of their finances:

...we've got a joint bank account, everything's in a joint account, but I tend to pay all the bills and accounts. You know he'll say how much have we got in the bank, he won't have a clue (laughs) em, and we manage to pay off the Barclaycard more or less every month, eh, if we want to buy something I'm perhaps the one who'll say we can't afford it and then we'll sort of sit and work it out.

Whilst there was little evidence of totally husband controlled finances, the nearest example came from Lucy who was given housekeeping money by her husband, but he never asked her what she spent the money on, or how much particular bills were, and she felt quite free to buy what she wanted, although big things she would discuss with him.

No clear pattern emerged from the interviews about any one favoured system of running household finances, except to say that husband-controlled finances seemed to be rare. Such a statement must be treated with caution because there is a danger that we assume that what could be called the more mechanical aspects of financial control, that is paying the bills and monitoring the bank account(s), are the most important aspects of financial control. Finch and Mason (1993) point to this when they argue that regardless of the system of financial control, men can still be viewed as controllers of finances.

In reviewing the data on the systems of allocation used, it becomes clear that it is insufficient just to identify the systems used, because it in itself may well be the product of the exercise of power. In other words, the finances may be wife-controlled, but that does not necessarily mean that this has come about as a result of the wife exercising her power. Future research needs to explore how decisions about systems of financial allocation are made.

Decision making over spending

If, following Finch and Mason's (1993) argument that power is exercised in ways other than can be detected by looking at the system of financial allocation in the household, it becomes necessary to consider how the money is spent and how decisions about spending money are arrived at. Claire said that she and her husband made joint decisions about how to spend their money, and that through their monthly budget meetings they were able to keep an eye on expenditure to make sure that they did not over-stretch themselves. One example of how they kept within their budget was that they made a joint decision that any holidays would have to come from the interest earned from their savings, so that the holiday was limited to whatever the amount was. One of the benefits of this was as Claire said:

... it doesn't really cause a great deal of dissension em, who has more sway in it. Well sway doesn't come into it massively, because it's a very highly organised system that avoids dissent so it just doesn't tend to be a power ploy thing.

This type of strategy which not only kept spending within the budget, but also helped avoid conflict was quite unusual, insofar as few of the other women talked of any such rationalised, verbalised and shared strategy. Others spoke of 'preferences' such as delaying making major decisions about buying furniture, large electrical items such as washing machines, and holidays until their male partners were available.

Jane's account gives some indication as to why she lets, and in fact wants, her husband to make the decisions about expensive items:

... he's much better at spending money than I am. I'm terrible, I get into a terrible panic at the thought of spending money, a lot of money you know. I don't like being in debt, we are, but I mean I don't like being in debt. So it's usually him. I mean even something like my microwave, which I thought about, I'd never have got, so in the end, you know let's get it. No usually it's him, other decisions we come to together, but buying anything expensive usually he's much better at it than I am (laughs).

Although it would be possible to consider Jane's action, of waiting for her husband

before she spent a lot of money, as a strategy she developed to cope with her uncertainty, I would argue that it is of a different nature from Claire's and therefore it may be more useful to make some conceptual distinction to highlight the degree to which the strategy is a shared one or a personal one. Similarly it is important to be able to scrutinise the extent to which decisions are joint or individual for, as Dawn pointed out, although it may seem as if she and her partner arrive at joint decisions about holidays without one saying: 'I want to go there, so we're going there...' she feels as if she is the one that drives it, and most of the other major decisions in the household.

Sue and her partner Martin had slightly different arrangements insofar as Sue would buy anything for the bedrooms or the kitchen because Martin would say '...you know what you want, you know what sort you want. You're the one that's using it, off you go'. What is particularly interesting is that the purchasing of items reflected a similar gender division to the division of domestic labour and physical areas of control within some households, that is Sue would buy things for the kitchen and bedrooms on her own. The criterion they used was that anything for their leisure use was chosen and bought together, such as a three-piece suite, a television, video or stereo. In this sense the strategy that was adopted was one largely constructed by Martin whereby he in effect partitioned the household into areas where there was either single or joint responsibility for decision making and spending. This is reminiscent of Giddens' (1993a) view of discipline proceeding only via the manipulation of time and space. Through constructing such a strategy for decision-making over spending, it could be argued that Martin has in effect constrained Sue's exercise of power. For this idea to be explored further future research would need to consider in more detail the concept of gendered space within the household (Massey 1994) and involve all household members. There is however some support for Pahl's (1991) findings that husbands were more dominant in decision-making.

Personal Spending

The source of pooled money can remain a powerful influence upon the minds of both partners, and affect how people feel about spending money (Burgoyne 1990). The

partner who has contributed the most may feel she/he has earned the right to spend what they see as 'their' money, whilst the partner who has not generated so much (if any) income may feel she/he has not the same right to spend money on 'themselves'. As Burgoyne (1990) and Pahl (1980, 1989, 1991) have noted, men seem to have a different attitude to spending, at least as was reported by their partners. Whilst this research is unable to comment on whether women's attitude to spending was different from men's, the women's accounts do reveal that being thrifty and not being 'extravagant' by spending 'unnecessarily' on themselves were part of their constructions of being a 'good' housewife or partner.

An important issue for Claire was the fact that her husband was on a low income and therefore she avoided anything she felt was an extravagance, such as buying new clothes when second-hand ones were in her eyes 'just as good'. Similarly, although Lucy and her husband were not on such a low income, she too felt that she should not be extravagant in buying clothes, and would only get them if she really needed them. Also rather than spending her income from packing cards part-time on herself, she paid for her husband's golf subscription, to save him money. It could be argued that Lucy and Claire made sacrifices to improve the conditions for others in their households, just as Bourdieu (1992) spoke of women eating less to allow their men-folk and children more. Similarly, Wendy spoke of the sacrifices she made for the family, and of her frustration that her husband did not limit his spending in the way she did. She commented.

... I don't go out that much, I mean I don't play bingo or anything like that, I don't wear makeup, I don't buy fancy clothes, nothing like that, so therefore I think well, I'm, I'm not spending such a lot, so why should he be, you know, and that is the main, out of all the arguments that is the main reason we argue, [it] is for that reason.

In this example it is clear that Wendy feels her husband is not making personal 'sacrifices' in the way that she does, and that this is a source of tension between them. However, Wendy's concern is also connected to *how* her husband spends his money: he wants to go to the pub for a drink with his friends, whilst she thinks if they can't all afford to go, he should not be spending 'his' money in this way. While she also

acknowledges his need for autonomous leisure, she finds it hard to see how he can place this ahead of leisure with the family, which is something she never does. This demonstrates some of the tensions and contradictions that women can experience. In this case Wendy sees her identity as a mother and a wife involving self-denial for the good of the children and family. She clearly expects her husband to operate in a similar way as a father and a husband, but at the same time she feels he has a need for autonomous leisure - in practice these two positions are hard to reconcile.

Conclusion

The women's accounts tend to support the view that wife-controlled finances were common in low-income households. However, the data also suggest that the majority of the women, regardless of income, were generally thrifty and saw themselves as better guardians of money. More than this there is some evidence to support Bourdieu (1992) that women saw self-denial as part of their role as housewives and mothers. There was little evidence of male-controlled finances, although decisions over spending did seem to echo the traditional division of domestic labour. To be able to explore these issues further, research which involved both partners or other household members would be needed.⁶

Doing the Chores

A key aspect of developing a better understanding of how women's leisure is to examine the part women (and others) play in maintaining the household, that is doing the cleaning, the cooking, the gardening and looking after the children. To understand the power relations within the household, and more specifically, to understand the struggle over women's leisure it is essential, as Gregson and Lowe (1993, 1994) and Morris (1990) remind us, to do much more than just map out who does what, within the household. The discourses that shape and inform that practice need to be explored to reveal how they are constructed and contested by household members. Through exploring the division of domestic labour, further insights will be gained into the wider

struggles over women's leisure.

Traditional division of domestic labour

One of the central debates within recent literature has centred on the relationship between household member's involvement in the labour force and their domestic labour. Most recently Gregson and Lowe (1994) have argued, contra Wheelock (1990), that the division of domestic labour is relatively independent of male and female employment. Morris (1990) suggests that social networks may be more influential, and it was this area that Gregson and Lowe pursued in their research. Their findings stressed the importance of gender identities in the way in which men and women come to define themselves and therefore their roles within households. This discussion therefore relates to the following one on the construction of the 'good' housewife.

The following section explores these issues in addition to considering the extent to which women can be seen as having agency within the context of domestic labour. Ruth and her husband (a couple in their late twenties, early thirties) both worked full-time. He commuted to work, leaving early in the morning and not returning until after seven o'clock at night, whilst she worked locally. Explaining how they coped with the household chores, Ruth said it was done on a 'whoever has got time to do it, does it' basis. As she works locally and is back from work earlier, it is Ruth who therefore ends up doing most of the housework through the week, although at the weekends her husband will Hoover and iron. Ironing is the only thing they both dislike doing, so they take that in turns. On the surface, Ruth and her husband seem to have a fairly equitable arrangement in terms of household work and it seems to reflect elements of what Goodnow and Bowes (1994) call a practical arrangement as well as a shared one. Ruth's comments imply that gender expectations are unimportant in influencing who does what, and that it is the pragmatics of who has time available that determine the division of domestic labour. She does, however, realise that the domestic labour arrangements look quite traditional:

I guess it seems quite a traditional division of labour, but it hasn't been kind of

imposed upon me, it's the way it's worked out.

So whilst Ruth ended up doing the housework after she had finished her paid work, she does not seem to experience it as oppressive, but more as a trade-off for not having to commute to work. However, this situation raises the question of whether, given a reversal of work locations, Ruth's husband would have done most of the housework as she did. This returns us to the question of consciousness of oppression and Giddens' (1993a) distinction between practical and discursive consciousness. Just because Ruth did not feel that she was oppressed should not stop us considering her circumstances as being oppressive, just as we should consider the extent to which their household arrangements represents equity.

Ruth's experience was similar to those of some women in part-time employment, who found themselves like Gannage's (1986) garment workers, working a double day, and seeing this as being their role. Betty (a woman in her early fifties) did most of the household chores although her husband would help out, if he was needed. The expectation was that it was Betty who would do most of the housework, with her husband only helping at her request. The onus was very clearly on Betty therefore, to organise and carry out the household work:

... he'll do things if I ask him, he'll quite happily iron shirts if he knows I'm pushed, and he'll vacuum if I ask him, but I tend not to, I tend not to ask, because I think he's doing quite a demanding job all day.

Betty's comment reveals the extent to which she was content with her own role, as well as telling us something about her view of what a 'good' wife was, that is someone who does not make 'unreasonable' demands on her husband. Her husband did not volunteer help and she did not ask for help on the grounds that his full-time job was more demanding than her part-time job. Their daughters apparently felt that their father should do more, but Betty did not entirely agree with them:

... sometimes I think he could do a little bit more but em, if I worked full-time it would be different, but I'm only part-time, and if I can't fit in the basic chores then that's my problem, because I'm out gadding about enjoying myself you see.

Research evidence from Deem (1986), and Gregson and Lowe (1994) would not share

Betty's optimism that the division of domestic labour would change to her benefit, if she switched to full-time work. Betty and her husband adopted a traditional division of domestic labour which has withstood pressure from their children to lessen the load on Betty. Betty herself has supported the maintenance of the traditional pattern, seeing any problem of work overload as being of her own making because she has enjoyed too much leisure. This demonstrates the power of the dominant ideology as regards the division of domestic labour insofar as it led Betty to see the 'problem' of too much housework, as being of her own making for enjoying too much leisure time. This also demonstrates the way in which many women do not see themselves as having a 'right' to leisure. Renegotiating the division of domestic labour was therefore not seen as being appropriate, even when in Betty's case, impetus for renegotiating came from family insiders. Another interesting feature of this 'case' was the way in which Betty felt confident that things would change if she worked full-time. Whether she actually believed this, or whether she was purely protecting the reputation of her husband, as a 'good' husband, is hard to tell. It is important to note that whilst some women were critical of their male partner's actions and attitudes, the majority of them went out of their way to convey to me that their partners were 'good' men. This was not surprising insofar as they clearly did not wish to be seen as critical of their partners to a virtual stranger.

Living with contradictions

Whilst Betty seemed relatively content with her role, despite her daughters' challenging her view of what a 'good' housewife was, Linda was less content, and her account reveals more contradictions between her role as housewife and mother and her husband's role as a father and husband. Linda worked during school hours, but did everything about the house and cared for their children, because her husband was rarely there as he worked on a farm:

God, if I waited for Richard to do the washing up (laughs) it wouldn't get done 'til about nine o'clock at night. The same with the washing, the same with the ironing, the Hoovering, the dusting. By the time Richard gets home, its just, I just can't, it's done, I mean you can't wait until men come, (Linda's

mother - You couldn't expect a man to do that lot with a job like he's got) no his job is a hard job.

Unlike Ruth, Linda was not quite so accepting of her role, but she did it for the most part uncomplainingly, because she saw it as her duty. As the above quotation suggests, Linda did not think it would be right for her to expect Richard to do household chores, a view that was reinforced by her mother, who was present for part of the interview. Linda's account is characterised by swings from seeing her role as essential and unproblematic, to seeing her husband's role (the reverse of hers) as being problematic in terms of her leisure. Within an account which highlights such contradictions, Linda avoided portraying herself as 'victim' by drawing attention to the way in which she felt she had become more independent and empowered, because she did not wait for him before she did something.⁷ This is an important point that Linda makes, which reinforces the need to move away from views of women's leisure as being something that is always, for all women, constrained. Linda's story brings into focus one way by which women may experience seemingly oppressive conditions as opportunities for empowerment. It also lends some support to Goodnow and Bowes (1994) about the part others (parents, in-laws, friends and colleagues) play in how people view household arrangements. Linda's mother reinforces a stereotyped view about Richard's role and seeks to absolve him from any blame that could be attached to him, for not doing any household chores.

Changing Chores

Whilst the previous discussion offers some support for the work of Deem (1986) and Gregson and Lowe (1994) regarding the intransigence of the division of domestic labour there were examples of arrangements being altered, even if in the face of resistance. The power of dominant ideologies about being a 'good' housewife and mother was evidenced by the resistance of two of the women to attempts by their partners to lessen their domestic labour. Mike had to work round his female partner's objections to him doing more of the domestic labour when she started full-time employment. As Jo admitted:

I did resist in some ways, you know, sort of saying, 'oh, you can't do the

shopping because you don't know what I want', and that sort of thing. But em, he ignored that and just ploughed on and helped.

Jo's resistance to any radical changes to the traditional pattern of household labour revolved around her concerns about what a wife and mother should be doing, that is doing the shopping and cooking meals, rather than being out enjoying her own leisure. Subjugating herself to the needs of the household was what Jo had come to believe was the right way of operating, and it was only the fact that her husband was opposing this that helped her break out of the mould. Gill's experiences were similar insofar as it was her husband Dave who proposed they relook at their household arrangements when she became a student:

... it was Dave who turned round and said 'right, well you know there's only so much you can cope with. Em if you're going to be at college you've got to have to treat it like a full-time job '... So', he said, 'what do you want me to do, you know I'll do the ironing or cleaning or whatever', and I opted to get out of the cleaning (laughs).

Both Gill's and Jo's comments reveal both an understanding of what is expected of them as housewives and a rejection of such expectations. They have in effect renegotiated their identities, as housewives, and have done so with the approval and support of their male partners. Another significant feature of renegotiation that these stories bring out is the sense that negotiation moves people and their ideas, expectations and identities onwards. 'Going back' to where people had been before is not a consideration. Gill and Jo's male partner's roles bear some similarity to couples that Goodnow and Bowes (1994) described as adopting non-stereotyped tasks.

Conclusion

Gill's story highlights some of the key points which can be drawn out of the women's accounts of domestic labour. It points to the potential for women to exercise power within the household but at the same time suggests that this power is not untrammelled. The division of domestic labour within households is rarely an unproblematic process and it is one which is subject to revision. Questions remain about under what conditions and under whose influence these revisions take place.

From the data gathered it is possible to offer limited support for the findings from Deem (1986) and Gregson and Lowe (1994) regarding the intransigence of the division of domestic labour. The women's accounts also bear testament to the agency that some experienced, although more detailed research on the household would be needed to find out more about the conditions in which such agency is experienced. These findings enable us to move beyond much of the literature on domestic labour which has largely neglected its potential to be a sphere in which women can exercise power. It therefore potentially offers a new way of understanding household dynamics and the struggle over leisure.

Being a 'Good' Housewife and/or Mother

As the previous sections have illustrated, intra-household relations exist in a state of flux, subject to changes in the political economy of the household, as well as to member's changing perceptions of their roles within the household. Central to an understanding of this are member's perceptions of themselves, their identities as partner, wife, husband, mother or father. As the section on domestic labour has highlighted, understanding women's roles as housewives and mothers is essential in order to be able to explore the struggle over women's leisure. Whilst Wimbush (1986) reminds us of some of the expected qualities of being a 'good' mother and / or wife - self-sacrifice and devotion to others in the household or family a more vivid picture is constructed by the women themselves as they talk about their lives.

Living up to the 'Ideal'

Whilst at times wishing that Richard could do more to help her, Linda had a clear idea of how she wanted to operate and therefore of what she felt was appropriate for him.

... I couldn't expect to sit down when Richard comes home from work, even if I'd done two hours and say to him, right I've done my little jobs and now it's time for you to do your little, I couldn't do that, I mean how could I put my feet up with the paper and the coffee and see him you know dustin' and I

couldn't do that, I mean I just couldn't, it wouldn't be right for me to do that
(laughs) ...

Similarly, Wendy at times expressed her frustration at the often unrelenting burden of housework.

... if I am continuously like washing or ironing , things like that, then, then it's more than, it's just a one-off occasion you know probably I say 'Oh, I never have time for myself', but sometimes if it is like everyday that I'm doing something and I keep thinking that every day, then, then it gets to me, you know I do feel quite low then. You know, I think well I never have any time to myself at all ...

Linda also felt that to be the 'right' kind of mother she wanted to be she had to see the children off to school, and be there when they came back each day. In this sense she demonstrates what Hochschild (1989:15) described as a traditional ideology of a marital role: 'Even though she works, the "pure" traditional wants to identify with her activities at home (as a wife, a mother, a neighborhood mom)...' However this arrangement was contingent on her mother being able to look after the children for a third of the school holidays, she and her husband each doing the other two thirds. If her mother was not able to do this she felt she would have to give up work:

I mean if Mum couldn't do it, I know I couldn't carry on doing it. I'd have to think of something different, I'd probably would go back to temping because I, I don't want to leave them with anybody else, they're mine.

Linda's view of her role as a parent meant that she felt that she and her husband should not go off together and enjoy their leisure leaving the children at home, and imposing on her Mum:

I like my Mum to baby-sit for me when I'm going out in the evening, but I somehow found it wrong that I, that both of us was walking away from Mandy and Edward and ignoring them and doing our sport for five or six hours, and handing them over to my Mum, to me that was wrong.

Wimbush (1986) suggests that such views about motherhood reflect working-class culture which sees relying on others to help with childcare as a sign of inability to cope with the role of mother. For Sharon, this meant leaving her job after her husband left her, rather than finding cheap, but possibly inadequate childcare. Doing this severely

curtailed her leisure opportunities and denied her the high levels of satisfaction from working in a responsible position in the bingo hall.

Although from a middle-income household, Hazel also felt guilty when she left her child at home in the care of a child-minder:

... if she's crying and carrying on and screaming when I walk out the door ... I think I really ... ought not be doing this, either I really ought to be at home with her. But eh, I mean she gets over it quickly, more quickly than I do I suppose, but yeah, I couldn't honestly tell you why I should feel guilty, but it does cross my mind on occasions, that you know maybe I shouldn't be out doing this, that and the other. But then my, the way I look at it, well my husband goes out shooting and golfing and playing cricket, when he wants to, so why shouldn't I? Em, but yeah you do have a guilty conscience, I suppose because you, well I think that this is my job, I, I don't go out to work ... so I think maybe during the day I ought to be at home doing what I'm supposed to be doing, even though that spills over into the evenings, the night times and everything else ...

Hazel's comments display the ongoing struggle she experienced in moving from a 'traditional' mothering role of staying at home with her children, to a more untraditional one where mothering does not mean constant childcare. Hazel's guilt was something she appeared to find easier to cope with than Linda, insofar as Hazel did not let it stop her getting out. Hazel has also identified a disparity between her and her husband's access to leisure which she felt was unfair and it was perhaps this that enabled her to not be too restricted by her feelings of guilt.

Living with Contradictions

The guilty feelings expressed by some of the women point to the way in which, for many of them, their lives are riddled with contradictions that tend to centre around views of what they 'should' be doing, or thinking, which at times clash with what they actually feel like doing or thinking. Linda's account has already revealed (in the previous section on domestic labour) some contradictions in the way she viewed her

role as a housewife, but these also extend to how she saw herself as a mother, and how she saw her partner's role as a father. This is best illustrated when she talked about her husband playing golf:

I don't think it's, it's not wrong for Richard to go wander away and do it, it is wrong for me to wander away and do it, and I don't know why, but it just is...

This account is particularly interesting because as Linda says, she is aware of the double standard, but does not quite know why she thinks that it is all right for Richard to do something that she feels she cannot. To draw on Giddens (1993a), she is practically conscious of the inequity of the situation, but not discursively aware. Subsequent discussion about husbands playing golf seemed to reveal two reasons for her acceptance of this double standard.

I mean my husband's taken days off work and gone golfing. And em it's very hurtful to eh, see your husband get excited and really you know, 'Oh, well I must go off and get my golfing game going' and that, and then you know he's not getting as excited if you go out for a day to the seaside. It's hurtful to see that happening, but then I've got older, and Richard's got older and I know that he likes that game and he never stops me doing what I want to do, and I can do all the sports I want to do, and I realise now that it was stupid me being like that because it's a game isn't it. And at the end of the day I know that when they're [the children] grown up, that if I want to do it, then I can do it ...

This raises further contradictions in Linda's account as she claimed she could do any sport she wanted to, but because she took on board the traditional role of the mother, she could not take part in any sport she wished. She had to defer such participation until either the children grew up or she and her husband retired. The second reason why she accepted the double standard, is that she thought: '... a man does like to have a sport doesn't he?' Although her mother, who was sitting in on the interview disagreed and interjected at this point saying: 'I think everybody does really it doesn't matter what ...', Linda carried on trying to justify what she had said.

Explaining the presence of such contradictions is not easy, although Green et al. (1990) point towards the ways in which women's support networks, whilst often positive, '...can function to reinforce patriarchal power and limit the possibility of

challenges to it' (p.119). Linda's mother illustrated this point, for as we have seen she felt that sport was good for women as well as men, but she also thought that because her son-in-law worked so hard, he could not be expected to do any more around the house, which meant that Linda could not find the time to take part in sport. As Goodnow and Bowes (1994) pointed out 'others' can be very influential in how women construct their roles / identities as 'mother' and 'wife'.

Wendy's view of her role as a mother was quite similar to Linda's although she felt that if her family (children and husband) were at home, she should stay at home as well. Her roles as mother and housewife were such that there was very little she did for herself, as opposed to for her family:

Sarah - So is there anything you can think of that you do outside of the house, that or that you do when they're all here, but you're doing something for yourself?

Wendy - No, no there's nothing, no because even when they're all at home, apart from actually going to the meetings [Cubs fund-raising committee] and things I never, I mean if Joe's at home and the kids I never go out, I never sort of go out with friends or anything like that, or even go out to visit anybody, if they're at home. I always feel that I, I always feel that I should be at home, yet sometimes I'm thinking well you know I wish I could be doing something else, I wish I had a bit of time for myself, but then when I, if I was to do something else I'd feel guilty because they're at home you know. It's a sort of a vicious circle really I suppose, which is bad because I think people should make time for themselves cos then maybe a lot more marriages would be a lot happier really cos you'd feel well I've had, like sometimes if my husband goes out and I think well this isn't fair, you know, he's gone out and I'm at home again with the children, you know, where as if I had some time for myself I wouldn't feel like that, I wouldn't mind him going out cos I've had my bit of time, my enjoyment, so therefore he's entitled to his as well, you know.

With Wendy, as with Linda, there was an appreciation of the contradictions between what they should, or could, be doing, and what they actually did. This made it all the

more interesting that, despite being aware of the inequity of their roles as mothers vis-a-vis fathers, both Linda and Wendy maintained a relatively traditional role of mother.⁸ As Wendy implied, fear of the guilt they might experience is perhaps one reason why she, for example, does not go out more. Unpacking the basis of the guilt was extremely hard and my questioning was unable to get beyond the ‘... I don’t know why, it just is...’ (Linda), level of response. Le Feuvre (1994:171) however, offers one explanation of why guilt might be experienced, stating that:

... women who see themselves first and foremost as wives and mothers, and who gain most satisfaction from the expression of these social identities, experience the same sort of feelings of guilt towards autonomous leisure as they experience towards paid work ... autonomous leisure (like paid work) is seen as a barrier to the expression of what could be called these women’s ‘central identity core’.

Reconstructing the ‘Ideal’

For some women, contradictions were resolved by reconstructing the ‘ideal’ to which they aspired. As such the agency of the women was evidenced by their strategies to attempt to transform what being a ‘good’ housewife or mother meant for their lives and their households. I use the term ‘strategy’ deliberately to convey the sense in which their actions were consciously taken, and not stumbled upon.⁹ The accounts demonstrate that these attempts were not easy, and that the strategies may not have been as transformative as the women might have hoped.

Sue resented the time that could be taken up with housework and she said that her strategy was to squeeze it into a small corner. She did not however find it easy to push out of her mind the ‘Ideal Home’ image and found herself thinking that ‘...nine out of ten homes will be immaculate ...’ She felt she was aided in this in part by the fact that her husband did not subscribe to the ‘Ideal Home’ image but also because she felt it detracted from what she regarded as important, her children:

...I don’t devote a lot of time to the house, as a house, I, I devote enough time to care about wholefoods because that’s something else I care about, but then

that would have a physical side to, if looking after your family properly (laughs) food would be the most important So that combined with the overall development of the children probably takes up the most of my time. The actual physical cleaning of the housework as long as the children have clean clothes and they've been ironed, and they've been fed, I'm not too (laughs) too worried. ... I would be worried if they didn't have food and clothes, but if I've only got so many hours, I'd rather spend the hours sort of going out or doing something sort of positive that wasn't going to be negated by you know a dirty shoe coming in the front door, 'cos that's negated immediately isn't, I mean housework can be negated ... sweep the floor and in about two minutes later they've had a meal and its all down on the floor again, and you know I mean either one brushes up once a day, or you can do it three or four times depending on how immaculate it's going to have to look.

Sue's account reveals that her identity as a mother and housewife, whilst not being 'transitional' in the sense that Hochschild (1989) uses the term,¹⁰ is not entirely traditional. Sue's account of her priorities about cleaning and tidying the house were borne out during my visits where piles of ironing had to be cleared off chairs for us to sit down and talk, and toys lay spread across the floor. Although being a 'good' mother was very high on Sue's priorities and were central to her identity, unlike most of the women I interviewed, she did not operate within the dominant discourse of being a 'good' housewife. Hochschild's categories are not particularly useful in this regard, as they were not sensitive enough to the experiences of women like Sue who operated within some discourses but not others.

Reflecting on how she used to be as a housewife, when she was married to her first husband, Gill commented:

I mean, I was very house proud in my previous marriage, very much the em bake bread and cakes and things that, but I wouldn't dream of doing that now (laughs) ... I suppose my priorities have changed. Em time has gone on, I've done more that I've chosen to do, or that I feel I've chosen to do, although at the time I was happy to be in the sort of domesticated housewife role, the more

I've gone away from that the more I would hate to go back to it, I couldn't go back to it.

In her reflection Gill has drawn attention to how her awareness of her circumstances altered, and how although she did not feel it at the time, she now felt she was constrained by her role as a housewife and not able to do what she wanted. Gill demonstrated a discursive consciousness which recognised that even the agency she felt she now experienced may in itself be limited.

These accounts raise some issues with regard to the conditions in which some women seem more able than others to exercise agency. Sue acknowledged the role of her husband in supporting her actions, and in this sense we can see that her agency is partially 'sponsored' by him. However, this raises the issue of the extent to which reconstruction of her role as housewife would have been possible without his support. It is also worth bearing in mind that a transformation in one aspect of household life may not necessarily mean that other aspects are going to be transformed, let alone be reconceptualised as being problematic.

The stimulus that led women to transform their roles varied, as did the ways by which they challenged the dominant ideological construction of being a 'good' housewife. For Jo it was primarily her involvement in windsurfing when she was working full-time which led her to realise that she did not have to spend the time that she did on housework. Her husband also tried to get her to do less although, as was discussed in the previous section, she initially tried to resist his help. Part of Jo's strategy was to buy more ready-made meals and thereby spend less time in the kitchen. Another factor which Jo felt had played a part in her life had been the 'Out of the Doll's House' series. For her:

[the] programme showed up you know what that role [traditional role] was so clearly, and you could see that and the feelings of guilt that you weren't being you know a good housewife, and you weren't doing the right things, and you think, what does it matter, you know.

The transformation of the role of housewife by some of the women rarely lead to any

concomitant change in their construction of their identities as mothers. The use of the term 'transformation' is perhaps misleading in this sense as it does not equate with the use of transformation as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, regarding the alteration of gender power relations. At most, the transformation of their roles as housewives that is revealed by these women led to changes in intra-household relations, but there is no evidence of changes beyond this level of social relation.

Part of how Sue saw her role as a mother was to transfer her concepts of what was 'acceptable' and 'not acceptable' in terms of dress and modesty to her children, and particularly her daughter.

I'm sure I probably would pass them [her concepts of acceptability] on to my daughter but then there, that's probably a code of ethics isn't it, in that, just in that particular dress ethics, a dress sense you probably pass on anyway perhaps. I don't know if it's about being a woman, I suppose it is really. I'm just trying to think whether it's, it's to do with being a woman or whether its to do with the sort of actual situation what we consider how one should respond, you see I mean there's a certain elegance and grace that I wouldn't like her to sort of go to certain functions either in the wrong clothes and therefore sitting like a man when you know it's, em, sort of quite inelegant ...

This demonstrates what Bartky (1990) and others (Smith 1988 and Young 199) have argued about how gendered discourse operates through socialisation into particular forms of bodily deportment and adornment.

Sue was not alone in saying that she would reproduce certain ideas about femininity in her children. Debbie said that she also found herself at times saying: '... well that's not really a very nice thing for a girl to do.' even though she said she tried very hard not to. She tried to get both her boys and daughter to do all kinds of jobs around the house because: '... they might not get married when they leave home, so they'll need to know how to do things.' In saying this Debbie seems to be implying that if they did get married when they left home then it would not be important for them to be able to do most jobs around the home, implying not just a sharing of domestic labour, but a gendered division of such labour.

Implicit in both Sue's and Debbie's comments is the sense that they feel a duty to ensure that their children (particularly their daughters in this case) know how to conduct themselves 'appropriately'. If they failed to do this, they would have failed in their roles as mothers, because their daughters might be exposed to the social sanctions reserved for those who transgress the dominant discourses of their gender identity.

Conclusion

The women's accounts not only reveal an awareness of expectations on them as mothers or housewives to do or not do certain things, but also demonstrate that discourses are not all-powerful and pervasive and that some women do find ways to contest them and put forward alternative ways of operating. What is less clear is why some women seem to exercise more autonomy than others. For some there seems to have been a catalyst that has prompted them to act, such as a desire to have more leisure, or watching 'Out of the Doll's House', but even this does not tell us why some women are empowered to act and to contest practices underpinned by dominant ideologies, and others are not. For others, the support of their partner was cited as being crucial insofar as it enabled them to readjust the commitments in their lives.

From this particular sample, social class did not seem to be significant in terms of women's perceptions of the ideologies of being a 'good' mother and housewife, nor, indeed, in how they operate as mothers or housewives. Indeed, the guilt felt by many of the women seemed to operate across class categories. The data suggest that their guilt was largely about not living up to the role of being a 'good mother'. Yet the irony of this is that much of parenting is not visible to the public eye, at least not in the same sense as housekeeping is (see Green et al. 1990). Evidence of the invisibility in parenting comes in recent legal action against parents for the neglect and / or abuse of their children, which has some times gone on for years unnoticed by outsiders.

From these accounts it seems as if there is some support for Wimbush's (1986)

findings that when there is conflict of demands between family members and mother's outside interests, it is the mother's interests that 'suffer'. However, the women often did not see themselves as suffering, but making sacrifices which they were prepared to make as part of their role as mothers. What is less clear is why some women managed to live with the contradictions that they voiced in the interviews, but others sought to resolve them or some of them by acting differently. The answers may lie in the social context and be connected to the presence or absence of supportive networks, but they may also be connected to a concern with status and the extent to which a woman's identity is based on being a mother and / or housewife.

Several of the women demonstrated how they had transformed themselves as housewives, though few demonstrated any challenge to dominant discourses of motherhood. Indeed, challenges to the traditional role of mother are often met with particular resistance. A recent public manifestation of this came following the death of the professional mountain climber Alison Hargreaves (1995) when many tributes were made to her outstanding achievements, but some questioned whether a mother of two children should have been involved in such a high-risk occupation, which also meant she was away from her children for long periods of time.

Finding Time for Leisure

Time is a crucial commodity so far as leisure is concerned but, as Deem (1986, 1996) and others (Le Feuvre 1994) have shown, it is particularly so for women. Through discussing their accounts, this section explores how the women found time for their leisure. Two key issues which were foregrounded by the women in discussions about their leisure concern the impact of labour (both paid and unpaid), and the impact of other household members on their leisure.

Being in paid employment in many ways enables leisure, not just insofar as it may increase the amount of money that can be spent on leisure, but paradoxically because it may create more time for leisure. Deem (1986) found that women in employment

seem more able to compartmentalise their time than women in unpaid work. This was echoed by Wendy who reported:

... I know it sounds stupid, but now that I'm working I find that I have got more time, because you make sure you keep up, like doing the housework for example. If you're not working you say 'oh, well I'll do it tomorrow' ...

This was also true for women in part-time employment such as Claire who felt that the structure her part-time job gave to her week was one of the reasons why she was glad to be in paid employment:

I think it does give you a structure to the week, you know somebody's expecting you at a given time, you can't just sort of vegetate and put things off totally, which I think, because I am not a person who's naturally got a great routine, it is good for me to be expected somewhere.

That the structuring of time due to paid employment should facilitate, at least for some, access to leisure time is even more remarkable given as Morris (1990) and others have illustrated, being in paid employment did not necessarily reduce the woman's domestic work.

One explanation of this comes from Deem (1995) who, building on the work of Adam (1995) suggests that the 'produced time' which results from being in paid employment marks off time which may under certain circumstances become their 'own time'. Those not in paid employment have no direct access to produced time and therefore might find it more problematic to find their 'own time'.

The degree of control that women had over the structuring of the working day, seemed on the surface to bear a direct relationship to their access to leisure time. Linda worked as a data entry operator during set hours which fitted in with the times her children were at school. She had very little flexibility over her hours, so her other tasks of caring for the children and the household and having some leisure had to be fitted in to the remaining hours in the day. Ruth, on the other hand, appeared to have been able to exert a degree of control over her work and therefore her leisure following her promotion to a level where she was able to take her days off when she wanted. Similarly, Anna was in charge of the scheduling for experiments being

conducted as part of her PhD, so she felt more able to fit the work round her aerobics class, than previously when she had to attend lectures at set times. Jenny, like Ruth, was in full-time employment and had quite a degree of autonomy and was able to create a work pattern that suited her. Her job as a fund-raiser necessitated achieving yearly targets, but when she worked and at what intensity, was up to her, so long as she met the targets. As with Le Feuvre's (1994) research, use of time for the women in this research was closely linked to being a 'good wife and mother,' with women often spending their 'free time' caring for their children and / or partner.

When analysing these accounts it would be tempting to begin to see occupational attainment and social class as significant in explaining the variance in women's control over their work, and therefore their leisure. Closer analysis, however, begins to suggest that other factors may mitigate against class being singled out as particularly significant. Jenny's account of why she structured her working day and her leisure in the way she did, points to the influence of her partner:

...that's why I go in the daytime, because of Howard saying he doesn't like sitting at home em while I go out. And I, but I don't tend to ask, I tend to go and say I'm going to so and so, but not 'Is it all right, do you mind if I go?', and so he sits at home and does his paper-work and things, and sometimes get quite resentful.

Whilst Jenny's work flexibility made such an arrangement possible, she was aware that she would have problems accommodating her husband's wishes if she had less flexibility.

...if I changed jobs and I had a strict nine to five, it would be very difficult because I wouldn't know what to do really, whether I should go in the evenings, because I'd be loath to give up going, and if you compromise and sort of go once a week or something, it's really not worth you doing it I don't think.

Jenny's commitment to her marriage was such that she was prepared to arrange her leisure in order to spend time with her husband, but her comments revealed a tension in how she wanted to divide her time. At the time of the interview the flexibility of her work saved her having to make harder decisions.

Such an investment of time into a marriage or partnership was relatively common for the women who were in relationships and in paid employment. Other accounts however, revealed less of a sense of accommodating to a partner's wishes (particularly when they ran contrary to the woman's). Ruth, for example said that:

... if I want to do anything in particular, I'll do it during the day, so that we can do something together in the evening. Purely because, I mean of the hours that I work, em it's much more flexible. Most of my exercise is taken during the day when he's not here.

Ruth's partner similarly seemed to try and arrange his leisure time around her work, so if she was working on a Saturday, he would try and arrange his golf for then. This kind of reciprocity seemed to be centred around a shared desire to spend their leisure time together rather than separately. Finding time to spend leisure together was regarded by some as being a necessity, as opposed to just being preferable. Jo, for example, felt that:

... you've got to be very careful within a marriage if you're both doing a job which takes a hell of a lot out of you, there must you know be a lot of problems, there's got to be give and take.

Part of this 'give and take', as far as Jo was concerned, meant that she gave up her full-time job and got a part-time one. Betty was similarly aware of the dangers of not spending enough time with her husband:

I do think you do need a certain amount of time together, because if you've got very different interests all the time then, em, you grow apart, you don't stay as close together. So I think it's very important, and particularly now both our girls are away from home. The pattern of life changes.

It is significant, I feel, that these comments come from the two women, Betty and Jo, who had reached stages in their lives (in their late forties / early fifties) when their children had either left, or were about to leave home. For them, leisure time having been gained, was not easily given away. Betty was fortunate insofar as she was in a position where she did not have to go back to full-time work for financial reasons, and in fact chose not to because, as she put it: '... I value my free time, and I don't think I could, I wouldn't want to work full-time again, I think life would be much too

hectic...'

Central to this discussion is the question of whether spending time with their partner was for these women about pleasure or the exercise of power, or both. It would be too hasty to interpret Jenny's story as if she was powerless and subsuming her interests to those of her husband, and not getting any pleasure from her leisure. A more valid interpretation may be that her accommodation to his wishes at that time was one small part of the working through of gender power relations within the household. As Jenny herself said, she did not ask him if he minded her going out at other times, and in addition to going to the gym three times a week she also went to evening classes three nights a week and had piano lessons. So acceding to his wishes over her attendance at the gym could be seen as a small concession to make given the other times she is out enjoying her leisure.

Fitting in with the Household

The demands of others (partners, children, dependants) in the household has a major impact on the patterns of the woman's day (see Talbot 1996). The employment status of adults, the presence and age of children will all have an impact on daily life in the household and on member's access to leisure. As both Wimbush (1986) and Deem (1986) have shown, many women, particularly those with children, have their day structured by the 'timetables of others'. Such timetables can make it difficult for women to find time for leisure, purely because they can end up with little time left for themselves. The working 'day' for mothers can mean being on call for twenty-four hours.

The problem therefore is not necessarily one of a lack of structure but the related problem of finding time. As Wimbush (1986:139) found with the mothers she interviewed: 'Most of their time was controlled and consumed by the family, domestic work and other obligations.' Weekends and holidays lead to work intensifying as opposed to lessening (see Deem 1996). The main problem reported was that of compartmentalising time between work and leisure, in order to enjoy some leisure. As

Wimbush (1986), Deem (1986) and Green et al. (1990) have illustrated, often the boundaries between work and leisure are blurred, for example, women ironing whilst watching television, or child-minding and going swimming. In this sense it was hard for some of the women to identify what actually was leisure for them as opposed to facilitating someone else's leisure. Opportunities for personal leisure invariably centred around times when the children were either out of the house, preoccupied or asleep (Wimbush 1986). Wendy found that even with her children at school she never had any time to do what she wanted and at times this got her down.

... I never have any time to myself at all, which I do really because I go to the Adult Learning Centre and things like that, but because it's in the daytime, and my husband's at work and the kids are at school, you don't think it's time for yourself, where it is really, but you think because it is in the daytime, em I can't really explain I think you understand what I mean. You know it is time for myself, but because its in the daytime and they're, they're not at home anyway, I don't class it as being time for myself. Whereas if they were at home, and I was doing something then I'd class it as time for myself.

Whilst it appears as if Wendy had time to herself, that was not how she felt. Both the cooking class and the gardening class that she went to enabled her to produce low budget meals and save money on plants by raising cuttings and swapping them with others at the classes. They enabled her to function more effectively as a wife who was able to eke out a limited household income. The irony of Wendy's position is that whilst she felt her leisure was not really her own when the rest of the family are out, she also said that she would feel guilty if she went out when her husband and the children were at home. At the same time she thought people would have happier marriages if they made time for themselves. Her experiences bear similarities with those of the women in Deem's (1996) research who experienced holidays away from home as not producing the time for themselves that they thought they might have had because their time was subject to the time hierarchies and demands of others.

The full account of Linda's story (see Appendix 4) shows how her husband's leisure patterns also added to her unpaid work in terms of child-care and housekeeping, which

further constrained her leisure. As we have seen, it was not just his employment that created problems for her, but his leisure patterns as well. More than this, it was the right to leisure that he assumed at the expense of spending time with the family that aggravated her. When the children were younger, she saw herself as having no option but to look after the children when he went off to play golf. She saw the problem as lessening as the children got older.

It doesn't aggravate me now, I think it doesn't aggravate me because the children are bigger and I feel freer and I can now do what I want to do. Whereas ... but say you're standing there with a little toddler that's swinging round your legs going 'Mum, Mum, Mum' and the other one is in your arms and you've got your husband going 'I'm off then I'll see you in five hours', with his golf, it does tend to aggravate you slightly, but now they're older and they're doing what they want to do, and I'm doing what I want to do.

Linda's account is filled with seeming contradictions, for a few moments later she talked of the frustrations of seeing her husband as having access to leisure, whilst she did not.

I mean last weekend I wanted to go in my garden and do the gardening, and by the time that I'd done everything that everyone else wanted me to do, the weekend was over, and I got so aggravated about it. I said, 'it's all right for you, you come home from work', I said 'you go off Saturday and play golf, you go off Sunday, come home from work Sunday and play golf', I said 'I want to do what I want to do'. And then Richard: 'leave the Hoovering, leave it, leave it, leave the washing up and go into the gardening', and I said, 'Oh, I can see you'd be highly delighted coming home from your golf and taking the Hoover round the house, and you just don't do you'.

The contradictions seem to operate on different levels, for at one moment Linda was complaining about the way in which Richard could go off and play his golf, but at another she is saying that she could not sit down and watch him doing housework whilst she did 'nothing'. She (and her mother) also weighed up her frustrations with him going off and playing golf with the way he helped out when she was having the children. Once when the children were ill and she developed pneumonia he was 'very

good', and it seems that these past actions absolve him from more recent 'misdemeanours'. It is important to recognise that the expression 'very good' is a gendered one. It would be expected that a woman would do what was needed when her partner fell ill, and as such she would gain little extra recognition for it. For a man to help his female partner in such a way, however, earns him extra kudos, and enhanced his reputation as a 'good' partner.

The multi-layering of contradictions is not surprising given that for both partners it can be seen that there are both gains and losses. During Linda's interview her mother was there for some of the time and occasionally she interjected comments reminding Linda that whilst she might have her frustrations with Richard and married life, it was not all that bad. For example, in support of Richard she said to Linda that: 'You've got a good husband ... You couldn't expect a man to do that lot with a job like he's got.' They both agreed that in an emergency Richard would do things like the ironing, and Hoovering, and indeed had done them when Linda was in hospital giving birth. There are some similarities between Linda (and her mother's) perceptions that she was lucky that Richard was good in emergencies, and Goodnow and Bowes' (1994) discussion of women who were seen to be lucky because they had a partner who shared household tasks. The comments from both Linda and her mother imply that Linda is lucky to have Richard as a husband - even though she might moan about his absence from the household. Their comments, as Goodnow and Bowes (1994) suggest, violate an assumption of equality; Linda's involvement in the household is taken-for-granted, but Richard's is regarded as a bonus.

After Linda had been talking about being a golfing widow, her mother chipped in with a homily about married life.

It all boils down to married life's not all that beautiful (laughs), but it's the best way of life, I always say that, although I've had my worries, but em, I still say that it's the best way of life, than living on your own.

I am not sure whether this was said to remind Linda to see the positive side of marriage, or whether it was meant as a kind of 'reassurance' to me (she knew that I was not married) that marriage is worth it, despite the ups and downs. Either way it

was conveying the idea that you may not get your own way in some areas of marriage, but it is better than living on your own.

The tensions between Linda's identity as a mother and a wife, and her identity as an individual with her own leisure rights and needs, reflect the extent to which she was struggling against dominant ideologies about motherhood and domesticity. In practical terms her actions, such as her choice of working hours to fit in with the children, bear testament to her 'acceptance' of her role as a mother. Her comments, however, about how she felt when her husband went out and played golf, suggested that she saw his role as a father and husband in slightly different ways from her.

Hazel's experiences were broadly similar to Linda's insofar as she saw her husband going out to enjoy his leisure when he wanted to, so why shouldn't she. In practice, however, she did not find it quite so easy to get time for her own leisure (as she thought he did for his) as she had to work around what he was doing.

Em if I want to do it, I mean he always says well you do what you want, but it's fitting it in with him, with work, and all the aggravation involved. At the end of the day it's not worth it. I mean, well up until two years ago, I used to have two days a year out, one to Wimbledon and one to the Crufts Dog Show (laughs). That was, you know, it just took too much organising, sorting out the meals, and all this, that and the other before you went, and so I haven't been for the last two years.

So like Linda, Hazel wanted to be able to get up and go with the freedom that her husband seemed to have, but she knew, from experience, that the cost of doing so was high in terms of the preparation before and clearing up after the event rendered the going out almost worthless in terms of what it offered as leisure. Just as Linda reported that her husband never stopped her doing what she wanted, so Hazel's husband told her to 'do what you want'. This strategy of saying that their wives could do what they wanted, whilst practically not facilitating it, in effect shifted the problem away from the husband. What is visible or tangible was the husband's affirmation of his wife's freedom to 'do what she wanted', but what was not evident was any practical support to enable her leisure, as she enabled his. The lack of support was not

something neutral: it was in effect constraining.

Such were the contradictions that many women lived with, trying to reconcile their desire for leisure with the time available and with their own subjectivities as mothers and partners. A lack of time for herself was not perceived by Sue to be particularly problematic, because she felt that she still managed to find time for herself in some senses:

...I'm not a person who really rushes round from A to B, I mean sometimes the timetables, and when I say timetables I mean ... the swimming lesson tends to put a structure on your day that wouldn't otherwise be there, but I do tend to chat and converse a lot ...

As with many of the women in Le Feuvre's (1994) study, much of Sue's life centred around the children:

... my life is probably family-centred a great deal of it I would have thought you know, because there are swimming lessons for the children as well, but you know I'm quite happy doing these things and I do the sewing class, but that has a practical base as well I'm making clothes for my daughter...

When asked about her leisure, Sue was not sure whether the sewing class, the music, and the swimming was leisure or work, because she saw it as being part of child-rearing. In fact all of her out-of-home leisure activities had some connection with her children's development and welfare. Although middle-class herself, Sue's experiences relate closely to Le Feuvre's (1994:171) findings about working-class women who: '... found it difficult to imagine something they would like to do [on a totally free day] that was not in some way linked to the domestic / family sphere.' Even though most of Sue's leisure was constructed around her role as a mother and a housewife, she did not convey any sense of frustration at this: on the contrary she seemed quite content to subsume her needs to those of the family, and gained pleasure out of doing so. This offers some support for Coward (1987) and Pringle (1988) who argue that it is possible even when women might objectively be seen to be in a relatively powerless position, that they may be gaining some pleasure.

The departure of Sharon's husband following their separation gave her a new sense of

freedom, even though she in effect became a single parent with two children.

...I think when your time's your own as well you use it ... you use it more to suit yourself, you know than when you've got someone else to consider. They [the children] still have to have their meals at a certain time, but when you know you've got someone coming home from work at half past five, you've got to have dinner ready at six, and all that, you're tied more aren't you?

A key limiting factor for working class mothers such as Sharon was the financial resources needed to pay for good childcare, combined with a reluctance to leave the children with relatives (Wimbush 1986). Sharon, however, had sought to overcome this by establishing a reciprocal child-minding arrangement with a friend along the road. However, it was interesting to note that despite this agreement Sharon had only one out-of-home leisure activity that did not include taking the children: that was going to a dance or disco less than once or twice a month. Like Sue, Sharon's identity as a mother was strongly linked to sharing leisure with her children. For Sharon this may have been partly related to the fact that she was a single parent, although this was not something that she raised as an issue in this regard. In this sense then there was some indication that Sharon was unwilling to call on others to help with the childcare, unless she could repay people in some way. Sharon's out-of-home activities were mainly walking and going to the Adult Education class (which was heavily subsidised by the Local Education Authority). The walking was done largely out of necessity, and involved taking the children to school, and to the Adult Education Centre when Sharon went to classes, because they had a crèche.

Working-class women who were unable to pay for suitable childcare therefore had to find other ways of occupying the children if they were to gain personal leisure time. The problem for Hazel was compounded by the fact that she did not have any relatives living in the area who could help out with baby-sitting, and with her husband working long hours, she was the one who baby-sat. As a result of this she felt that she was the one who lost out. Unlike Linda (discussed earlier) and Sharon, Hazel did not express any sense that to leave her children and go and enjoy her own leisure time would be problematic, in terms of her identity as a mother. Even when the children were old enough to all attend school, she anticipated still having to fit any leisure activities

around the school times.

Conclusion

The data discussed in this chapter suggest that a central element to making sense of women's leisure is the need to understand their identities as partners, wives, mothers. How a woman operated within the discourses of motherhood and being a 'good' housewife defined her leisure experience. These discourses, whilst often being closely related, were not always so, as in Sue's case. Whilst employment (or the lack of it) was an important factor, I would support Le Feuvre (1994) in arguing that it is not the key variable on which to base analyses. Whilst Le Feuvre (1994) sees class and gender identities as being equally important as employment, there is only partial evidence from this research to support her focus on class.

By exploring the workings of the household it has been possible to reveal the ways in which women live their gendered identities and how these interact with other household members. Through this examination of intra-household relations it is possible to identify the way in which women's leisure is for some constructed to fit in with the time schedules of others, whilst for others it takes precedence over their role as housewife or partner. As with Gregson and Lowe (1993, 1994) changes in the employment status of women rarely led to a change in the amount of domestic labour performed, but there were examples of male partners initiating changes in the division of household labour.

Invariably, the actions of household members have implications for others, whether it concerns how much money is spent on leisure and whose leisure it is spent on, or whether it is about the time that is spent on leisure. The actions, however, are best conceived of as being played out in relation to other household members and the relations between them. Women's identities and women's access to leisure, what they do, with whom, when and where and at what expense are therefore questions that can only be answered through examining the household context. Women are therefore

seen as having agency, though it is not unlimited, as gender identities and conceptualisations of the role of a 'good' housewife and mother are struggled over.

¹ Although I distributed questionnaires to ethnic minority women, the anonymity of the responses makes it impossible to estimate how many of the returns were from ethnic minority women. As Table 2 on page 123 illustrates one of the lowest return rates was from Fitco which is where I had hoped to make contact with women from several ethnic minorities.

² The limitations of exploring decision making from only one person's view is acknowledged as being problematic, and I return to this issue in Chapter Nine.

³ All the names and place names used in the text and in the biographies are fictitious.

⁴ There could have been several reasons for this: some of the women did not want to reveal any financial information and asked why I wanted to know; others I suspect probably did not know how much they had coming into the household. Others did supply some information and wrote down 'pension', but without details as to whether this was a state or private pension the information could not be used.

⁵ Whilst data concerning her husband's views about his access to, and use of, personal spending money would enable further discussion of this point, Claire's feelings about what is right to do with the money are of great value in themselves.

⁶ In the pilot study for the research partners were interviewed, but as the focus of the research was on the potential for women to become more socially empowered through involvement in physical activity, I felt that interviews with partners were not fully able to explore the salient areas of women's experiences. The pilot interviews were, however, very interesting in terms of developing another view of the woman's life within the household, and relationship.

⁷ The independence that comes from doing the most of the domestic labour, even whilst in paid employment ironically had some advantages for Sarah when her husband died: 'Yes, yes I eh I did run the house em, and I did run all the financial side, the mortgage and so forth, he knew nothing about that. If anybody would ask him what the mortgage was he wouldn't know you know when the bills were to be paid or anything, I took all that on, and eh I also used to help with the garden. So when he died, I mean apart from the loss of him, and the grief and so forth, things didn't come hard to me like they do to a lot of women that rely on their husbands to do everything.'

⁸ In this sense the experiences of these women is no different to the experiences of younger women discussed in Chapter Three who are aware of the problems in marriage and yet want to be married.

⁹ The concept of 'strategy' has been the subject of some debate within sociology, see (Crow 1989; Watson 1990; Knights and Morgan 1990).

¹⁰ Hochschild (1989) uses the term 'transitional' to describe the situation where a woman wants to identify with her role at work and at home, whilst still believing that her husband should base his identity more on work than she does.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WOMEN AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Introduction

The previous chapter on intra-household relations and their impact on women's leisure has provided a grounding for now turning the focus towards women's involvement in physical activity. The division between the two chapters is a heuristic device adopted to bring into sharp focus how the women experienced both household relations and physical activity. By focusing on women's experiences of physical activity, this chapter explores the extent to which MacKinnon (1982) and others are justified in claiming that women are trained through their bodies to be weak and passive by having their actions circumscribed, or whether Connell's (1987) and Theberge's (1987) views of women as active agents is more appropriate. Drawing principally on interview data, the chapter begins by examining the nature of the women's experiences of physical activity and seeks to develop an understanding of why certain activities may become more important than others. This leads into a discussion about women and their bodies and how their subjectivities relate to discourses about women's bodies. The final part of the chapter considers the extent to which these women experienced empowerment as a result of their involvement in activity.

Becoming Active

Previous Experiences of Physical Activity

Although at the time of the interviews some of the women were not involved with physical activity, all had been at some point in their lives. Many of those with children

had, like the women in other studies (Deem 1986; Wimbush 1986 and Green et al. 1987), curtailed much of their out-of-home leisure, particularly physical activity. A couple of the women who had not had children, and who had had early positive experiences of activity, had maintained their participation as much as their work permitted. There were, however, several women for whom their experiences of physical education had put them off physical activity for many years. The key factors that led them to turn away from physical activity related partly to the nature of the often team-based competitive sports, the physical environment of outdoor games in winter and showering after such activities. The behaviour of fellow pupils also led some, like the women in Dewar and Wright's (1996) study, to feel humiliated, physically inadequate and rejected.

... I never really enjoyed it at school, it was kind of, you was in sort of teams, where people, sort of, you know kind of threatened you 'if you don't let me win' kind of thing, and this all put you off and the business of showers and things, and I never did like sport from the word go because of things like that and em that's why I've never kind of followed it up (Wendy).

These accounts bore a marked similarity to those of some of the women Dewar and Wright (1996) interviewed about their early experiences of activity (see also Scraton 1987, 1989, 1992). Although Debbie had enjoyed dance lessons (outside of school), she felt that PE had put her off other activities:

It probably was the way it was taught, in that I didn't, I'm a person that doesn't like the cold and we were dragged out to play netball in the cold (laughs), it was horrible, so it's probably just school, the way they do games. Now I'm older I'd quite like to get into some sort of activity, I try to encourage the children as well, because I think it is good for you to keep fit.

Of those who had positive experiences of PE, only one maintained an almost continuous involvement in competitive sport (tennis). Several of the women, like Debbie, spoke of how they enjoyed dance in preference to team sport when they were younger. Debbie, however, was the only one who took it seriously, beginning when she was first five years old and continuing until she was fifteen years old.

Losing Weight

The catalyst that prompted most of the women back into becoming active centred around their perceptions of their bodies and how age was affecting them:

... I was unathletic as a kid, cos I had to do sports and things at school I didn't want to you know, but as I've (*sic*) getting older, I began to think you know, I'm getting older, getting unfit, getting fat and em you know I started to think that I must do something ... (Jane).

'Getting fatter' was a major concern for many of the women and they turned to physical activity because they either thought it was a relatively enjoyable way of losing weight, or they felt it was going to be more effective than dieting. Many of them had tried to dieting on its own, but had not been that successful at it. Hazel started going to the Health club to do weight training partly to lose weight after she had had her third (and last) child and also to get out of the house. Now she enjoys it for its own sake as well as for the social side of the club. Debbie's reasons for exercising also changed over time as initially she wanted to lose weight, but continued because she enjoyed the social side of her activity. Both Debbie and Anna felt that exercising would be a better way of losing weight. As Anna put it: '... when you diet you don't lose weight where you want to, whereas with exercise you have a chance that something might work.'

As the later section on 'Reshaping the Body' explores, many of the women did not just want to lose a certain number of pounds, they also wanted to lose inches from particular areas of their bodies. None of the women talked of being a certain number of pounds over weight, but most of them spoke of parts of their bodies that they wanted to reduce or tighten up. This lends some support to the view that some of the women were striving to discipline their bodies within dominant discourses of femininity and were subject to the normalising 'tyranny of slenderness' (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1990, 1995 after Chernin).

Holding Back the Years

As the work of Featherstone and Hepworth (1990) outlined, the anticipated decline of the body's functions was something that clearly concerned quite a few of the women. Jenny started going to the gym because she felt that: '...especially as you get older you start thinking "well god I'm starting to go to seed"...' and that she had to do something to stop it. Hazel, who was in her late thirties at the time of interview, was in effect trying to turn the clock back in her attempts to look as she did ten years previously. Hazel can be seen to be operating within the discourse that Bartky (1990) identified which demands that women's skin should not betray signs of ageing. She did not feel, however, that just any activity would help her do this:

...I mean I don't think shooting, tennis, squash or anything like that would do very much, but actually working on my body is keeping it as it was, and making me feel better, because I think I look better, and so therefore that makes me feel better...

Hazel's concern to work on her body is reminiscent of Miller and Penz's (1991) discussion of female body builders working on their bodies in a 'rational' manner. Her effort is productive in that she not only feels better, but thinks that she looks better - the real, hard work has paid off. The effort seemed particularly necessary to her in order to delay the effects of ageing and maintain her 'look'.

In this discussion of the effect of ageing upon women's leisure choices, it is interesting to note that even relatively young women, in their late twenties, were using physical activity as a way of trying to stem what they saw as the undesirable effects of getting older. Although none of the women expressed explicit concern about how their perceived physical decline affected their relationships with their partners, there does seem to be some support for Featherstone and Hepworth's (1990) claim that women's power is linked to their physical 'beauty'. To have a body that has *not* 'gone to seed' could be read as a sign of self-discipline and inner strength.

The fear of becoming a size sixteen as she grew older proved to be a strong incentive for Carol to get to grips with her body.

I think it was one horrific morning when I looked in the mirror with no clothes on, I was thirty eight, my son was twelve, and I thought you are a slob, you eat all the wrong things, you don't take any exercise, its no wonder you've fallen apart at the seams, you must do something about it. ...

It was just a case of trying to beat the years really. Vanity I suppose. I didn't want to be fat, and I didn't want to wear a size sixteen and I was nearly a size sixteen, and I thought this is silly. It's laziness, I was lazy.

Carol's comments touch on the current discourse re a healthy body, that is that you must eat the 'right' kind of foods and take exercise. Not to discipline your body in this way is therefore seen in contemporary Western society as being unhealthy and an outward sign of an inner malaise. As Bordo (1990, 1995 after Chernin) argued, the 'tyranny of slenderness' constructs a powerful discourse about how women's bodies should look. Combined with the commercialised health and fitness market it offers people a way to regain the desired shape.

It was only in the final analysis of the interviews that the pattern of the concern over 'getting older' began to emerge, so unfortunately my questioning did not probe any further about why 'getting older' was seen to be particularly problematic. Unlike Deem's (1986) research in which 'going to seed' was a concern for those in their forties and upwards, in this research some women expressed a concern about the effect of ageing when still in their late twenties. This poses the question not just about why women become concerned with the effects of ageing on their bodies but also whether this is a concern that is now affecting people at a relatively young age. If this were borne out by other research, it would pose an interesting problem given that women's life expectancy has never been so long, yet women are getting concerned re ageing earlier. If Featherstone and Hepworth's (1990) claim that women's power is based on physical beauty is accepted, then the answer to these questions lies in women's fears of losing their power when their physical beauty begins to decline. A supplementary question to ask would be to explore the extent to which men are concerned about the effects of ageing, and whether it is to do with their appearance. Featherstone and Hepworth's (1990) work would imply that they would not be concerned with a decline in how their body looks, as their power is not based on their

bodies. Whilst I accept part of what Featherstone and Hepworth's (1990) thesis argues, it seems to sit uneasily with Bourdieu's (1992) view of physical capital. Having said this, however, Bourdieu, as Shilling (1993) points out, is more concerned with class issues than with gender. Clearly, there is a need for further work in this area, both in relation to women and men.

For older women in their late sixties a concern with size and appearance did not seem to be the key factor prompting them to get involved with physical activity. Their concerns centred around other issues of health such as a desire to keep mobile, increase social contacts and be less reliant on medication.

Sarah: So, so what do you think the benefits of going to it (*keep fit*) are for you?

Margaret: I think em something different, I suppose it keeps you supple, or more supple than you might be otherwise (laughs). It is quite nice to meet other people, I don't have anything to do with any of them other than at the class. But em, no, I think that is the main reason, just an activity I enjoy.

The extra mobility gained as a result of going to keep fit or dancing was particularly valued by several of the women who had arthritis and some like Joy felt less reliant on medication as a result.

Sarah - So as well as the keeping mobile and feeling better physically for it, do you find that you get any other benefits from it [keep fit]...?

Joy - Well obviously you feel better, you're not taking wretched tablets you don't need and sitting in the doctor's surgery and being all miserable, you haven't got time. So I think it keeps us out of the doctors, em I mean they say, 'Oh, well I wasn't very well last night, oh, well I'm here', you know they shake themselves and get on with it [the keep fit].

Whilst a concern with the size of their bodies or how their bodies looked was not so important to these women, they too wanted to gain greater control over their bodies. Some of those who were on medication for arthritis were in effect trying to regain control over their bodies from the regulatory regimes of medicine. So it becomes important to distinguish empirically and conceptually between these women and those

who were exercising to improve their look. The former can be seen as regaining control of their bodies, whilst the latter can be seen as working within a disciplinary regime of the body. It is important to explore why women might begin to view their bodies differently and why some might continue to strive to operate within the discourses of femininity which say they need to look good, whilst others seek to resist discourses which portray ageing as being negative.

Sport or Physical Activity?

MacKinnon (1982) argued that one of the key ways by which women have their physical potential thwarted is by being trained to be weak or specifically not being trained. Whilst physical education is one place where this may occur, the 'training' to which MacKinnon refers is not just that which takes place within the formal educational process. It also concerns that which takes place in the more informal educational contexts of Adult Learning classes or commercial leisure and activity classes.

Whilst most of the women in the sample who were involved in physical activity came from keep-fit classes or a health and fitness club, many of them had rejected competitive sport as a way of getting fit and many of them did not participate in sport at all. As was discussed earlier, this seemed to be related to childhood experiences of PE that had turned them off sport. Working on the body which is central to keep fit also appealed to some. Jenny had tried aerobics and enjoyed it but wanted something 'a bit more serious and dedicated' and so turned to weight training. She rejected activities like squash because she 'loathe[d] competitive sport'. This rejection of sport seemed to centre round the competitive side of the sport rather than because sport was too serious, as that was why she had chosen weight training over aerobics. It would have been interesting to have unpacked this further to explore whether as others (Theberge 1987; MacKinnon 1987) have suggested the 'maleness' of competitive sport puts women off.

In becoming active there was a variety of benefits that the women experienced and

these were generally related to the specific activity. For example Dawn enjoyed keep-fit much more than yoga because it was more social. Similarly, the group of women from the Health and Fitness Club spoke of the social element of their participation and commented on how it was not the same as exercising at home and that you needed someone there to work with. They also commented that if it had not been for the club they would not have met together in a social setting away from the gym to speak to me.

Although most of the women interviewed who were physically active participated in one activity which they did by themselves (with no other household member present), some felt that they also wanted to do some physical activity with their partner. Ruth was about to learn how to play golf so that she and her husband could play together. They both played squash but he refused to play with her because he thought it would be unfair, so because the only other sports he played were cricket and golf she chose to learn golf so that they could do some activity together. Betty arranged her activities so that her husband could join her for tennis on the night he was free. All of the women spoke of the social aspect of activity as being important, whether they were going with a partner or friend, or meeting up with people at the activity.

'Watch out Here Comes Muscles'

Ambivalence about Muscles

Ambivalence about muscles was one of the main themes to come out of the interviews with the women from the Health and Fitness Club. The focus on muscle is partially explained by the fact that the main activity at the club was weight training although there was also a sauna, which tended to be used *after* a weights session, rather than in its own right. The ambivalence was not only in how others perceived the women's involvement in weight training, but also in the women's views about their own bodies and the development of muscle through their work at the gym.

Several women reported that people had tried to warn them off weight-training by

saying that they would get great big muscles, and that as they got older and stopped doing the weights, their muscles would sag. The message located in the dominant discourse of emphasised femininity was two-fold, first do not exercise your body in this way and develop muscle because it will look worse when you stop, and second that such changes in their bodies would be unfeminine, and generally things that women should avoid. The point Butler (1987) made almost ten years ago concerning the evidence of a 'new prototype of the body beautiful' still holds true today. The imperative is still that you can only be strong if you look (heterosexually) beautiful (Lenskyj 1986). The women were aware of what others thought about them lifting weights, as one of the women in the group interview said people considered them butch because they weight-trained. This demonstrates what Lenskyj (1986) and Bartky (1990) argued about the connection commonly made between the display of physical strength and masculinity. Breaking the bounds of what women are supposed to do and displaying physical strength, leads people to question women's sexuality. This demonstrates the connections within dominant discourses of physicality and sexuality. Such a display of physicality is perceived not only to be a threat to emphasised femininity but as something which serves to undermine hegemonic masculinity, which is partially built on a bedrock of physical strength. To be physically assertive, to have a display of musculature is to display a body that is not 'passive' or 'docile' - it is a body and a subjectivity that is perceived to be threatening. The threat of powerful female bodies lies not in their capability to dominate others physically, but because they subvert the basis of female (and male) physicality. If one form of women's physicality includes the display of physical strength, where does that leave male physicality? The complementarity that Gatens (1996) talks of becomes unstable.

The response the women got from others when they knew they did weight training varied from approval, surprise, disbelief to disapproval. Hazel had a mixed response from people, but generally found that those who had known her for some time were more positive:

... if I meet somebody that I haven't seen for a long time, and they say, 'caw, you look good Hazel', 'look well' whatever, 'you've lost a lot of weight', and I tell them what I've done, now in that respect they think that's quite good, em

whereas people that haven't known me before em, sort of just got to know me think it's quite funny, I don't know.

Carol (who worked in a local school) felt her involvement in weight-training had been problematic for some at work, and whilst some of the boys¹ joked and said things like, 'Watch out here comes muscles', some of the predominantly male staff reacted differently.

... it's the men, who really have nothing to do with me, who think I'm a bit butch I think, and think that it's um well they say why on earth do you want to do it, you know, why do you want to lift weights, and why do you want to build muscle.

In qualifying this Carol said that it was only some of the men who seemed to be negative:

The ones who don't do very much, they do tend to, I don't know if they mean to sneer, I think they [think] there's something wrong with you if you like to actually hurt your body, and I don't think it hurts to hurt your body occasionally. You stretch it not hurt it, perhaps that's the wrong word, but really stretch yourself physically, just to see what you can do, and they're horrified by that.

Although Carol qualified what she said in relation to 'hurting' herself, her approach to physical activity seemed to be closely aligned to the dominant male discourse of sport, where a pushing one's self to the limit and 'no pain no gain' philosophy rules. Carol's physicality raises Whitson's (1994) question of whether it is possible for empowerment to be detached from an emphasis on force and domination.

The joking that Carol experienced at school is worth commenting on, for several other women spoke of how people had made jokes about their weight training, whilst none of the women doing keep fit or badminton spoke of similar experiences. Cunnison's (1989:153) work on gender joking in school staffrooms suggested that jokes commonly referred to women's appearance and therefore '... to conventional ideas about gender and femininity.' This was largely the case for the women in this study, but the jokes also extended to the women's newly acquired physical competence and strength. Unlike those in Cunnison's study, the jokes made in the presence of the

women were not barbed, but they do seem to be indicative of an unease (on the part of those making the jokes) with the women's physicality.

Downplaying Muscle

The women's responses to others comments is revealing in so far as they demonstrate the way in which some women chose to downplay the muscular development that their weight training, almost by definition, was designed to create. Ruth found that the men she worked with were surprised that she went to the gym:

Presumably because they have this mental picture of weight training I suppose, they, they have this sort of picture of women who do weight training, body-builders and that. And then they sort of get curious and say 'Well what do you actually do?' and I say it's only just general fitness, I said I'm not there to build up muscles or anything you know, I'm just there to keep fit.

Another of the women spoke of how she felt other women disapproved of her building muscle:

Hazel: ... a lot of older women, a lot older than me, em obviously think, think its awful, cos how they look at you when you're doin it ...

Sarah: How do you mean, 'how they look at you'?

Hazel: Um well I don't know, you just get this feeling, you know that they think you're a bit strange because you're, you can use weights. I mean even younger people really, because they're not into that sort of thing, I mean not that I am, because I don't like to see a woman with all big muscles or anything, but to keep, you know a nice shape and look nice em which is what I'm doing at the moment, and some of them down there think it's terrible, but then I'm fairly strong anyway.

As with Ruth, Hazel's comments reveal an ambivalence towards women and muscle: she enjoys doing weight training, but does not want people to think she wants to build big muscles. She avoids saying 'pump weights' and prefers to talk of 'keeping fit'. Some of the women in the group interview interpreted negative reactions to their involvement in weights as jealousy from people because they could not be bothered to do anything like that themselves. Whilst on the one hand it would be possible to

interpret the women's involvement in weight training as resisting the dominant discourse about what women should do with their bodies, many of them downplayed the muscle / power dimension as if to do otherwise would bring suspicion on them about their femininity. What this means in terms of women's bodies being disciplined is that it is *both* men and women who are disciplining women's bodies. A body which breaks the boundaries of what is deemed in the dominant discourse to be appropriate for men or for women is, as I've argued previously, a threatening body because it challenges the status quo and questions the validity of the norms that many people have lived their lives by. It is clear from what some of these women have said that they were aware of the price they paid for revealing what they did i.e. by saying they did weight-training, as opposed to saying they went to the gym. Other women spoke of how in public such as at a party they did not say they did weights, but talked of going to the gym and keeping fit, a much more innocuous, and therefore appropriate sounding activity for a woman.

The downplaying of weight training seems to have much in common with Felshin's (1974) female apologetic, whereby the renaming of their activity into something that they felt would be more acceptable, is in effect an apology for the fact they are doing it at all. This raises the question of whether something that within the confines of the gym might seem to be resisting the dominant construction of femininity and female physicality is actually resisting, when the muscular side of the activity is consciously downplayed in public. As Theberge (1991) pointed out resistance which subverts the dominant discourse of femininity by drawing on 'flex' appeal may not be resistant: it may serve to reinforce the dichotomy of hegemonic masculinity / emphasized femininity. The display of muscle by the women operated within the limits of a new discourse about the female muscular body: that is women can only be strong if they look beautiful (Butler 1987). Downplaying the activity, as the women did, could be seen as a form of internalised homophobia, where the fear of being labelled as lesbian because of the connection between physicality, muscle and strength, leads the women to disguise their activity.

Carol found people expressing their views in guarded and subtle ways by what they

said:

... in general, people, they're very, very careful in what they say, things, they word things, they're barbed, but they're done in such a careful way that you can't really take offence, because you're not absolutely sure that it's meant to be offensive.

Some men have clearly been threatened by her physicality, which for them breaks the bounds of 'normal' (hetero)femininity. As Coward (1987:78) claimed: 'Most women know to their cost that appearance is perhaps the crucial way by which men form opinions of women' (see also Bartky 1990). However, as Cunnison (1989) points out, the way in which jokes and comments are made means that negative or hostile comments are veiled with humour and any response to the negativity is dismissed as an over-reaction to humour.

Challenging how people view women was something that Jenny seemed quite happy to do, as the following extract illustrates:

Sarah - Did that cause a problem at all, because I mean the notion of, eh, I mean you mentioned Tarzan, and you mentioned kind of big biceps, I mean the notion that many women have is, 'Oh, no', that somehow if that were to be the way they were going to develop, they'd think 'Oh, maybe I'm losing my femininity', maybe you know you're becoming less of a woman because you're getting some muscles, was that ever something that crossed your mind?

Jenny - No, I liked it perhaps I like to be a bit different from other women, but I liked the idea of you know becoming a bit muscular and so on, you know it was, well not something I was afraid of. I don't know, my husband sometimes jokes about it, you know, about how strong I am these days, compared to how I used to be. But you know we take it in good part, its something desirable rather than otherwise.

Although Jenny said that she liked the idea of being a bit muscular when I asked her about buying free-weights she said that she had thought about it but decided not to, given that she went to the gym three times a week as it was and: '... just how much like Johnny Weismuller do I want to look anyway...'. In her pursuit of muscles, Jenny

was clearly not opposed by her husband, although his jokes, as argued previously, could be a sign that he was unsure of quite how to react to her growing physical power. The jokes could also be read as a sign that she was succeeding in challenging what it is to be a woman.

For Jo it was seeing a small woman lift weights that made her realise that the dominant image of weights building bulk was not necessarily accurate:

... you know you think of weight training as producing big muscular people but when I saw some of the people there, especially there was an American girl, absolutely marvellous shifting these huge weights, tiny little thing, and that fascinated me ...

However, the resistance of the women should not be too readily underplayed, for although they may not be challenging wider social relations, there is evidence from their interactions with others that their actions and bodies are challenging the dominant discourse of femininity. As Whitson (1994) argued we should not dismiss such resistance too readily as being ineffectual.

Reshaping the Body

Striving for a Better Shape

A common theme in the interviews which revealed the extent to which the women were subject to the normalising strategies outlined by Bordo (1990) was the desire on the part of the women to lose weight and change their body shape. Several saw their bodies as being the wrong shape and therefore they wanted to remodel them. Jenny for example wanted to: '... get rid of my fat stomach...', whilst Hazel wanted to: '... lose weight off my backside (laughs) that's where I've always got it...'. Jo's comment reveals how she had been concerned about her weight for some time and that it had affected her leisure participation:

...I was always very conscious of it (*her weight*), and like going to dances and

sitting there, I always envied my slim friends and I remember trying desperately, trying to slim

Although Jo and some of the other women recognised that they would never achieve their 'ideal' shape, it was not easy to dismiss it from their minds:

... you've got this image of women, you know, we say, you've got this image haven't you, of women. I think I've learned to accept it now that I'm not never going to be a sort of size eight, but you do get this craving to be small and dainty.

We also need to consider the extent to which age has an impact on women's ability to accrue capital from their bodies. The solution to getting older, for the women I interviewed, was to turn to some type of physical exercise. In Jane's case her questionnaire revealed that she had tried a variety of activities over the years in an attempt to find something that suited her. Carol, as was mentioned earlier, felt she was a 'slob' who ate all the wrong things and had 'fallen apart at the seams' as a result. In this sense it could be argued that she had come (as Bordo suggests) to regard the size and shape of her body as a symbol for her personal order. Both Carol and Jenny admitted to being driven to exercise partly by vanity, and in doing so our attention shifts from the initial concern about the effect of ageing to one of sexual attractiveness and good-looking bodies. Jenny felt that exercising would not only help to keep her weight down but would also give her '...a better shape and so on...', although she did say that cosmetic reasons for participating were less important now than they had been when she started. Again it is impossible to separate age from physicality, and from sexuality. One feeds off the other, and any exploration of women's leisure needs to take these dimensions on board. Jenny's comments that cosmetic reasons were now less important than they had been are interesting, as she seems to have moved outside of the dominant discourse of improving her looks through exercise. Alternatively, it could be that she has achieved the desired 'look' and so it is less important for her.

The desire to lose weight was expressed not just by those who felt that they were over-weight, as Sharon's reasons for going jogging illustrate:

... well a lot of it was you know just wanting to lose a bit of weight and look a

bit, you know, neater and that sort of thing. You know I've never been overweight, but you know I suppose you feel that you want to change, you know freshen yourself up, brighten yourself up a bit.

One of the women in the group interview said that she (and her husband) were quite amazed at how her 'saggy boobs' had toned up as a result of going to the gym. It is important not to forget that 'shape' is closely linked to the 'look', as Jo's comment reveals:

... it's always nice again, like if you've got an appreciative husband you know, so and the fact that if you've got someone who notices what shape you are or (laughs) I mean if you can get into your bikini and still look good, I mean that pleases me (laughs).

Having tightened up, made firm, bolted down their 'saggy boobs' the women were now able to reassert themselves as more sexually desirable. 'Look', however, was not just about body size and being trim or flabby, it was also about displaying certain impressions of the self.

I think I am fairly feminine and I would like to look feminine ... I mean I don't worry about conforming to the norm in most respects, you know socially and that sort of thing doesn't bother me, but I must admit, I would like to be slimmer and maybe taller, although you know I accept myself as I am ... (Jane).

In these accounts there seems to be a recognition of the unreal nature of the norms about female body shape and size, but there also seems to be a desire to strive towards these norms. It seems that the problem for many of the women lies not in the existence of a stereotyped norm, but in terms of the unattainable nature of it i.e. a size 8. The body (as Bordo suggests) becomes a site of struggle between gender normalisation and the woman's consciousness of her own body and the benefits of exercise and diet. Haug's (1987) use of the term 'slavegirl' perhaps encapsulates the extent to which women are aware of what is happening and are able to exercise some agency, even if it is limited. Lifting weights and becoming more muscular whilst masking and underplaying that muscularity could be a form of resistance in accommodation: as the women resist with muscled bodies but accommodate by seeking to display their femininity. The accounts also demonstrate the connections between physicality and (hetero)sexuality, for these women were concerned with achieving a heterosexually

attractive look in order to satisfy the 'male gaze'. Achieving the look, however, was something they knew they had to work at.

Working on the Body

As with Miller and Penz's (1991) study, the mirrors both at home and in the gym seemed to be used for 'rational' rather than 'contemplative' reasons, to help women to identify how their body-work was going as opposed to admiring themselves:

... now I go in the gym and I look in that long mirror and I think yuk, that's got to come off, but at the moment I am nearly okay in proportion. I think if you, you know if you look at yourself and you see the bits. Also if you jump up and down, the bits that wobble need to come off (laughs) ... you can usually see the bits round the waist, the top of the thighs, and know that those bits should go (Carol).

The mirrors were also used 'rationally' by some of the women to help them ensure that they were using the correct technique to lift the free-weights. However, when I questioned them on whether they ever used the mirrors to see how they looked (more of a contemplative use), several of the women admitted that they did so (unlike the body-builders in the Miller and Penz study), but they said that they did this without thinking. This they tried to explain as being related to the rational work on the body: '.. so we do look at ourselves to see what shape our bodies are going to don't we? Yes' (Group).²

Unlike the female body-builders in Miller and Penz's study, these women seemed partially to reject the work side of the sport and were determined not to take it too seriously. Although this could partly be explained by the fact that the activities of body building and weight-training are different, it was interesting that they also rejected the pose / contemplative side of the activity. Indeed some of the women (in the group interview) were quite scathing of women who weight train in the latest fashions and with an ultra-feminine look. In some ways the rejection of the ultra-feminine look suggests a resistance to emphasised femininity, just as the rejection of sport as work-like seems to reject the male-model of sport.

Mirrors, however, were not the only means that were used to identify how well the body was shaping up: other people who knew the women acted as mirrors:

... someone said to me not long after I, we started, she said, 'you know when you came here your body was straight, your hips, your waist, you didn't have a waist' she said, 'now you've got a waist, you go in and come out'... (Group).

Similarly, one woman's daughter, said to her that she had not got what she calls a 'Mum's tum'.

The monitoring of the body is all part of 'bolting down' the body and making it tight (Bordo 1990). Clearly, having body parts that wobble is not part of the look that Carol is pursuing, yet by the same token she does not want to '... look like Mrs. Universe. You know I want to be, I want to have a sort of profile, but I don't want to be big and muscley.' Clearly then there are some contradictions in the discourses of the body as espoused by Carol. She wants to have a 'bolted down body', but not one which is 'too much' so. This view was shared by women in the group interview who raised their concerns about the exercises that one of the instructors might introduce following a visit to a body-building gym. They thought she was going to introduce new exercises to build up the pectorals and that this would lead to them developing large breasts because of the added muscle development.

It could be argued that it seems that to either bolt the body down 'too much' and develop a well-muscled physique or to be 'too flabby' is equally powerful in terms of the ability to resist dominant ideologies about what women's bodies should be like. It could be argued therefore that shaping the body and resisting through the body is related to the degree of shaping and the extent to which it challenges dominant ideologies about what it is to be a woman or a man. Bordo (1990) however, would argue that 'bolting down' the body fulfils the pattern of gender normalisation and leads to the creation of a 'docile' body. However, as Shilling's (1993) discussion of physical capital reminds us, notions of gender normalisation must surely be mediated by class, and I would add, ethnicity, sexuality and age. In challenging dominant gender ideologies, women are also invariably challenging dominant ideologies relating to age, class, ethnicity and in some cases sexuality. Of particular relevance for this study was

the way in which gender and age intersected.

There are some contradictions therefore in the reshaping of women's bodies. Whilst on the one hand the shaping of a female body into a well-muscled body can be seen as challenging, it can also be seen (as Bordo's work outlines) as leading to gender normalisation and the creation of a 'docile' body. In making sense of this I turn to Bourdieu's work and consider what type of capital women can gain from reshaping their bodies. If women can gain social, cultural, political or economic capital from their bodies, does it matter if on the surface it looks as if they are developing a normalised body?

Shilling (1993), drawing upon Bourdieu's work on physical capital reminds us of the ways in which the dominant classes seek not only to maintain their bodies in different ways from the working classes, but also to convert the resultant physical capital in different ways. Bourdieu (1992) and others (cited in Shilling 1993) claim that the middle classes are less concerned with producing a strong body (which is socially valued by the working classes), and more concerned with producing a slim body. Such a body has greater exchange value within their social habitus. Women may perceive that this is especially the case with achieving a 'good marriage'. Despite this, and unlike Kissling's research (1991), there seems to be little apparent difference between women of different social classes in this study. It is clear from the women's stories that, even when participating within a limited range of activities, some women are able to convert their newly acquired physical capital into social and cultural capital that enables them to have more influence and control over their own lives.

Physicality and Empowerment

Skill and Confidence

The discussion in Chapter Two identified one of the elements of physicality as centring around the acquisition of skill (Whitson 1994). Becoming skilled or learning new skills

can lead to a growth in confidence in an individual's ability. Claire felt strongly that physical activity offered something that was unique:

... if you do a physical activity it does somehow boost your confidence, I think particularly if it is anything that involves speed or accuracy or skill, if you know you can hit the target in archery, or be a good tennis player it just washes over the rest of your life. Also, you can't do anything like playing tennis which is competitive and driving without being quite assertive and it probably, just if you are used to asserting yourself on court, it's much easier to put double-glazing salesmen in their place off court.

Joy, who was in her late sixties spoke of the difference her new-found skills in dancing and swimming had made to her life.

... I picked it [dancing] up really well, I'm quite proud of myself that I can now get up and go, and if I go abroad like to Spain or anywhere ... now I can get up and dance.

For Joy part of the thrill, was not just that she now had more freedom, and more confidence, but also that she had learned new skills at a relatively late stage in her life, even though initially she thought she was too old to learn to swim:

... I was fifty-eight when I learned to swim and em when I did my first lengths of the baths I got one of those stickers that the kids get (laughs) ... and as I beat two men that were much younger than me, that was quite pleasing, so now I can also swim.

It seems, therefore, that both the dancing and swimming were empowering for Joy, insofar as they gave her more confidence in the ability of her body, despite the fact that she was in her sixties. Her sense of empowerment arose largely because she had developed the skills later rather than earlier in her life. This is consonant with McDermott's (1996) understanding of physical agency and the notion of self-possession.

These accounts provide examples of what Shilling (1993) meant when talking about the conversion of physical capital into social capital, although the stories also display a difference in the scope of the social capital attained. Claire's experiences led her to suggest that she was able to interact differently with others in a more assertive manner,

whilst Joy did not speak of social relations being affected in any way by her new found skills. The stories also raise a common feature of involvement in physical activity; the acquisition of skill. In the competitive situation that Claire describes she sees competitive sport as being particularly useful in helping women become more assertive. Clearly, however, many other leisure activities involve learning new skills, as Lucy did when she went to upholstery classes.

Whilst for some women just participating in leisure activities independently may lead to an increase in assertiveness, Carol had followed other leisure activities independently for some time, but felt they did not have the same effect on her as the weight-training in the more social environment of the Health club. This suggested that at least for her it was something particular either to the weight-training or to physical activity more generally which led to her empowerment. Similarly, Betty felt that her involvement in sport since she was a child had led her to gain in confidence. Jo also felt that as a youngster who was quite shy at school it was sport that helped her gain confidence:

... I think when I was at school that sport gave me confidence because if you do well in something it gives you confidence, em if you belong to a team as well it gives you so much more confidence.

Jo's confidence grew when she took up windsurfing in her forties. This confidence came partly from developing new skills, but also from being the oldest woman out on the lake. Jo's actions can similarly be seen as being unconsciously challenging, mainly because of her age and the fact that she windsurfed:

... I think it gives me confidence actually, I mean windsurfing, sometimes I know I'm probably the oldest woman out on the lake or perhaps the only one (laughs) and I quite enjoy that feeling, even though I don't race.

These accounts of a development in confidence linked to the acquisition of skill offer some support for Whitson's (1994) comments that some level of skill is necessary for empowerment to be experienced. What is markedly absent from these women's accounts is any connection between elitism and the domination of an opponent. Whilst this may in part be due to the sample being drawn from women non-team activities, many of them had played competitive sport in the past. They also, however, suggest

ways by which the women can convert their physical capital into social capital. Some may even have converted this into economic capital through developing skills and confidence which facilitated entry into employment.

In Wimbush's (1988) terms Jo challenged the dominant assumption that people involved in sport (particularly water-sports) are predominantly male and young, and in so doing she challenged dominant conceptions of female physicality. The comments that women have made about developing new skills in their late forties and onwards is particularly interesting. Their stories contradict the commonly held belief that getting older is all about the body going into decline, physically as well as mentally. These women, by their actions, are proving that this is not necessarily the case. In the process of challenging, Jo and women like her could begin to transform sport and leisure. Contrary to the view of a woman in her late forties finding her power limited owing to her fading physical attractiveness (Featherstone and Hepworth 1990), Jo's experiences as a physically active older woman were empowering.

Physical competence and power may develop over time in such a gradual manner that it is impossible to identify a particular turning point. Carol's story of her involvement in weight-training provides a good example of just this happening. As she became more physically competent at lifting weights, she saw herself as becoming more assertive. This was not solely a recognition on her part of some change having occurred, but also an awareness on the part of others such as friends, husband and her son.

I mean people say to me I am much more positive, I'm much less, it sounds awful to say, inclined to be polite, I keep my mouth shut less than I did, if I don't agree with something I say I don't agree with it.

Carol perceived that her husband saw her increased assertiveness as her becoming 'more of a handful'. Although she said this with a laugh it does highlight the fact that some may regard increased assertiveness in women as problematic. Such a view is based in the zero sum model of power discussed earlier i.e. that what one person, or group gains, another person, or group loses.³ It is this view that is implicit in the notion of complementarity.

Carol's empowerment was manifested in two interconnected ways: she felt stronger in her body and therefore felt more confident; this led her to feel more positive about life and meant that she did not get so depressed. The inter-play between the physical, psychological and social benefits of exercise was also reported by other women, as Jenny's and Sharon's stories illustrate. For Jenny it was not just about pursuing any activity, but about doing the right kind of exercise for her:

... if you feel that you are in quite good shape you certainly get an amount of self-confidence from that. I think if you em also have found the right way of exercising, because I come out of the gym and I feel quite sort of healthy and glowing and think, oh, well I'm glad I made the effort to go in.

Other comments by Jenny indicated that it was not just the activity that mattered but also the context and setting of it. She found the gym in Upton much more conducive to a good work out than going to Body Work Studios in London which she felt was full of pretentious and 'pseudo' people.

Sharon talked less of the physical benefits of her home based-exercise and more of the social-psychological benefits, such as being able to switch off from life at the end of the day. This still however raises the question of whether such benefits that women may have gained through participation in physical activity necessarily lead them to becoming more empowered. It does seem from Sharon's account that there is a connection between a feeling of well-being and out-of-home activity. However, it is not clear whether the well-being came from getting out of the house or from what she did when she was out of the house. The relationship between the social context and location of the activity, the activity itself and individuals subjectivities is a complex one.

In addition to speaking of the links they saw between their development or acquisition of skill and self-confidence, some of the women spoke more generally about what their active leisure had done for them. Several women for example talked of how after being active they felt more alert and more able to do other things:

I mean it sounds a bit daft really, but em having done actually twenty minutes

or whatever of exercise and then going and having a shower and a sauna perhaps, I actually feel sort of more enthusiastic to go out and do anything, something else (Ruth).

The physical dimension of the activity therefore seemed to offer something to some of the women that other activities did not. Identifying what it was about activity that led to these feelings proved very hard to identify. It seemed as De Vault (1990) commented that both the women and myself struggled to find the language to unravel what they felt.

Whilst most of the accounts the women offered highlighted the positive side of their recent involvement in physical activity, one demonstrates that negative experiences may serve to not only close off a possible avenue for future enjoyment, but may also lower self esteem and lead to being disempowered. Linda, for example, took her daughter to play badminton at a local sports centre, but after one week decided that it would be better to book a court on their own. What had put her off was the attitude of others there, particularly of some other women, who as Linda put it:

I mean I can't say they were bitchy or anything like that, but I could tell when they were playing with us that they were good at it and they'd gone to have a game and I wasn't giving them a game, because we didn't know what we were doing.

Booking their own court seemed to help:

... I felt more at ease last week, and this week with my friend and we laughed and giggled and I felt so much more at ease because I knew she wasn't going to criticise me and I knew she was on the same level as me and if people intimidate you it doesn't give you the nerve to carry on does it? If they squash you in a corner, you don't feel like going back.

Whilst Linda and her daughter kept on going, they did so on their own terms, and had to create an environment which they felt comfortable with. As Linda implied, they could easily have 'given in' and not gone back.

Physical Presence

One of the elements of physicality that McDermott (1996) identified as being important was that of physical presence, which connects with the observations made by Young (1990) and De Beauvoir (1979) concerning a woman's sense of her own embodiment. Several comments made by some of the women revealed how some women (contra De Beauvoir) felt extremely confident in their physical presence, whilst others felt less so. Either way their awareness of their bodily presence or vulnerability impacted on their movements and leisure activities outside of the home. Dawn, Margaret and Lucy for example curtailed their out of home leisure activities because they felt unsafe in some areas at particular times. Dawn who was in her late twenties felt particularly vulnerable in London:

... when we lived in London I would like to have gone out in the evening more, that's the main thing and come back from friends late at night 'cos I'm not one for travelling on my own, but it's silly travelling on your own late at night ... on the trains. There's things, I find that very restricting cos I'm cross, because well I'd like to, but I'm cross because I can't, because it's not safe for women to travel late at night, on their own ... I'm a bit on edge because I'm aware something might happen to me and it would be my own stupid fault, but on the other hand I get frustrated because I think it's not my fault, it's somebody else's, because you know you have that fear of being attacked.

As she talked, Dawn was able to express the contradiction she felt by saying that if anything happened to her it would be her own fault, whilst at the same time being aware that it would not be her fault. The result is as Hanmer and Maynard (1987) and Smart and Smart (1978) have argued, that the threat of rape and violence against women keeps them off the streets and leads in part to them spending their leisure in safe places (Dixey 1988).

Similarly, Margaret, who was in her late sixties, chose not to go to any evening classes because she did not want to go out in the dark. Lucy, however, felt constrained during daylight and had not walked her dog across the fields near her house since a man exposed himself to her. These women felt that they had no option but to constrain

their movements, and therefore felt unable to challenge or resist the actual and potential threats that men posed to them. Two of the other women, however, felt that they could go anywhere they wanted. Anna said she was not worried at all about going out after dark in Upton, although she did not say why, unlike some of the other women, she felt safe. Claire, similarly felt safe when walking out late, but put this down to the way in which she walked and her general demeanour:

... my nervous friend really ... sort of slinks along, wishing that nobody would see her um, now I lived in South London for two years and I was never even approached with a view to sort of mugging or bag lifting, or anything like that, and I am sure that it is partly, its because I am physically tall, well I am not that tall, five feet seven and a half. Um, I walk confidently, and people just don't pick on you when you walk confidently, um I enjoy walking confidently, I take huge steps, very unfeminine, but I always wear flat shoes and stride along, all my friends sort of tend to tease me about it, but I don't care that they tease me about it, I'm sort of proud of being me, and it shows the way I walk down the street, and I think that's good for women. Em, you are much more likely to get hassle in the street, I mean I never worry about walking home after dark, I walk through alley ways in Upton at eleven p.m., I don't bat an eye lid, and I am sure that is partly why I have never had any trouble in the line, either in Upton, or in South London, and I lived you know half a mile from Brixton ... I just never have any problems I'm sure its cos, you know, head up, shoulders back, who's bothering me .. nobody.

Claire's story demonstrates how her experiences (of never being threatened or attacked) reinforced her views about the benefits of a particular type of physical presence. What is interesting about her story is that she implies that she has adopted unfeminine ways of moving in order not to appear vulnerable, and that in doing so she has been made fun of. Implicitly her sexuality was questioned because she was operating outside of the dominant discourse of femininity (Smith 1988 and Bartky 1990). In this sense her actions can be seen on the one hand as being resistant, because she is moving in ways not normally associated with women and she is proud and confident in doing so. On the other hand she could be seen as operating within a male discourse that equates physicality and physical presence with power and in this sense

she is reinforcing it, as opposed to challenging and subverting it.

Other regimes of the body operate within the family, and were reproduced by the women themselves. Sue as was mentioned in the previous chapter found herself in something of a dilemma, because as a result of going to Alexander Technique classes she had come to realise that the best posture for sitting is one where the legs were loose and apart, but it was a posture she had been trained to avoid:

... I must admit, although I've been, its been brought home to me in a sort of conscious way with Alexander Technique, I still find in company I don't like sitting in a masculine sort of, I mean it relaxed me but it would be thought of as a masculine way, so I haven't totally (laughs) been able to ... I still am aware socially that I, I'm supposed to be a lady (laughs).

Sue clearly felt unable to change what she was doing, partly because it would mean going against years of socialisation:

... I would feel its inelegant to sit as a man sits, but that again would be years and years of behaving or being expected to behave in a lady-like fashion, and I don't think one throws that aside, you know what I mean?

In rationalising why she continued to sit with her knees together, and not challenge this particular construction, despite what she had learned about a healthy posture, Sue felt that society would be too big for her to take on. For this reason she said she would continue to encourage a certain amount of modesty and restraint in her daughter's posture. Another explanation is that as was discussed in the previous chapter, Sue's identity as a mother and as a woman is firmly connected to a particular form of physicality which as Young (1979) and Bartky (1990) argue equates with restricted body movements which avoid opening the legs too wide.

This illustrates the often entrenched nature of many ideas about female (and male) physicality and sexuality. It may also be, that following Shilling's (1993) discussion of the conversion of physical capital into social and cultural capital, that Sue felt that maximum social and cultural capital could only be gained by developing a certain type of socially acceptable physical capital. This raises the possibility that it may be easier to challenge certain bodily practices when one is older, and possibly less reliant or less

concerned about the conversion value of one's physical capital.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on women's bodies, and explored how through being active women can become empowered. Through their bodies women can challenge and contest dominant ideologies, not just about how they look or what they should do with their leisure time, but also about themselves as partners, housewives and / or mothers. In so doing it has explored some of the contradictions that have appeared between what women feel about their position within the household and the labour market and how they see themselves, and how they feel about themselves (that is their gendered subjectivities).

In considering the role of physical activity in the empowerment process, there are several aspects that have been introduced that are explored further in the following chapter: the nature of the activity and the context within which it takes place; the experience of empowerment, how it manifests itself at different stages in women's lives; and finally the possibility that involvement may in fact be disempowering. In addressing the question of whether involvement in physical activity can make a contribution to women's empowerment these accounts give some limited support to the idea that it does. However the nature of the empowerment and the degree of empowerment and transformation which takes place needs further consideration. These accounts have also highlighted ways in which particular physical activities, located in particular social contexts, may be more likely to lead to empowerment than others. Whilst some of the women's accounts highlighted the role that physical activity in sport related activities plays in empowerment, it was also evident that part of this may have been related to the fact that many of these activities took place outside the home and had some social element to them. Distilling out from the empowerment nexus what the precise role of physical activity is, is problematic, and perhaps ultimately not a particularly productive line of enquiry to follow. A more useful line of enquiry would be to identify what seem to be the key factors which promote

empowerment.⁴ In addition we would need to explore the possibility that involvement in physical activity may not always empower women, but could actually erode their sense of empowerment.

At one level the women's stories have revealed a picture of women exercising more social power through their participation in out-of-home leisure. At another level I am arguing that women can, through involvement in physical activity become empowered through their bodies. Through experiencing and developing physical skills through their involvement in physical activity, women can develop a bodily competence which, as one of the women put it, 'can spill over the rest of your life', thereby creating an impact on their social relations. Whilst Bordo (1990) argues that body maintenance can lead to the normalisation of female bodies, the evidence from this study has been that a range of activities from badminton to weight-training can lead to empowerment.

Growing older was seen by many of the women as heralding a stage in their lives when they had to get a grip on their bodies. What is interesting to note is that 'getting older' was not something that was perceived to happen when a woman reached a particular age, such as retiral age at sixty. Examples have been given of women in their early thirties getting concerned about their bodies revealing their age. Unlike Bourdieu's (1992) research which pointed to the different ways in which class was invested in bodily practices, this research does not reveal such marked differences. There is little evidence of any difference between working-class and middle-class women in terms of their experiences of empowerment or disempowerment through physical activity, although as Deem (1986), Wimbush (1986) and Green et al. (1987) have shown, working class women are less likely to be able to take part in physical activity, and therefore, as a route for empowerment, physical activity is relatively exclusive.

¹ Carol taught music at a local boys school.

² These comments came from women during the group interview.

³ This example highlights how stories might be relayed and constructed in such a way as to convey particular images and reputations of key people, for example partners and others involved within the power sphere of the women interviewed.

⁴ Such research would need to be conducted with women who were involved in a wider range of activities.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THEORISING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

As outlined in Chapter One, this research was partially driven by my dissatisfaction with theoretical explanations of the connections between my physical being and my interaction, as a woman, within the world. The review chapters discussed the potential value of sensitising concepts that may be of value in advancing our understanding of the connections between women's physical activity and their exercise of power. These chapters concluded that concepts such as structure and agency, negotiation, hegemony, and empowerment might be particularly useful in understanding the connections between the body and power. Chapters Six and Seven have discussed the key findings of this research and demonstrated the varied nature of women's experiences of empowerment through their involvement in physical activity but to extend this work further these conceptual tools need to be reassessed in the light of the analysis of my findings.

Structure and Agency

The accounts discussed in the previous chapter revealed that it is problematic to talk of women's leisure solely in the language of control, constraint and oppression. This is not to deny that at times some women did not find their leisure constrained, or feel that they were oppressed, but rather that such language tends to mask the ways in which women are powerful. This is reminiscent of Giddens' (1993a) argument for a theory of structuration, whereby a focus on the main concerns of classical marxism

masks the ways in which people (in this case women) may have agency. The accounts demonstrate why it would be inaccurate to conceptualise these women as being passive members of households who are only there to service the needs of others. Even some of the women who to an 'outsider' may appear to have little agency in their lives, may on closer scrutiny of the internal workings of the household, exercise power. The accounts equally illustrate the extent to which it would be wrong to see women's leisure as being untrammelled. The social, economic, political and cultural context of the household has a profound impact on women (and other) household members, but it is not an impact that can easily be reduced to a series of 'law-like' statements regarding the access to leisure of women in low-income households, or women with pre-school age children. Indeed postmodernism highlights the differences between women and draws our attention to the dangers of assuming such homogeneity (Lather 1991). Whilst acknowledging the contribution of postmodernism, Scraton (1994:225) argues that despite the lack of recent research on women's leisure there is still evidence to suggest that:

Many women continue to share an unequal position due to their *social* and *economic* position rather than their lifestyles or patterns of consumption.

So despite the evidence in this research of women's agency, there still seems to be a need to ask why do women not exercise more power (Ramazanoglu 1993)? To begin to answer this question necessitates returning to consider whether the categories that have been employed to describe power are adequate. Women may have appeared to have been relatively powerless because the categories used were unable to identify the power they exercised. As I argued in relation to household finance, to focus largely on the system of financial control as an indicator of intra-household power relations may mask the exercise of power in relation to decisions about how money is to be spent and perceptions of who has a right to spend what. Similarly, decisions over household spending may seem to be shared, but individuals may feel they are instrumental in influencing those shared decisions.¹

It may not be just a problem of the categories used to describe power and other processes, but also a matter of the language available to describe these processes.

Although I drew upon De Vault's (1990) work on male centred concepts in the methodology, her ideas are also pertinent to this discussion. Perhaps by adopting Giddens' conception of agency as being largely social, we have missed seeing the ways by which individuals (women and men) may have agency which is centred on or at least connected to their physicality. McDermott (1996) talks of the *physical expression of agency* and I think this is a useful way of proceeding, and certainly a better way than to talk of *physical agency* (a term which she uses synonymously with 'physical expression of agency'), which would presuppose some separation between 'different' forms of agency. This shift to conceptualise agency as having different dimensions enables us to move beyond Giddens' view of agency and conceive of a hybrid form of agency which also draws on Bourdieu's 'physical capital' whilst also remaining open to the possibility of there being other dimensions yet to be fully explored.

The contradictions that some of the women lived with are interesting in so far as some seemed able to live with them, whilst others sought to reduce the level of contradiction. To make sense of this it is perhaps useful to think of levels of tolerance for such situations, and to conceive of those women who are able to live with multiple contradictions as having more tolerance for this than those who seek to create a change in their circumstances to reduce the level of contradiction. However, in using the word tolerance I would want to distance it from the connotations of every-day usage of the word which associates 'being tolerant' more positively than 'not being tolerant'. The level of tolerance may be connected to the benefits to be gained by women in such situations. For example the contradictions that Linda verbalised over her husband's access to autonomous leisure while she looked after the children were ones she could tolerate because she felt that they were not going to last much longer. It becomes possible, therefore, to see Linda not as powerless, but as someone deciding not to exercise her power by creating a change at that time. Alternatively we may see women living with contradictions as protecting the investment(s) they have made in the relationship and / or household (Hollway 1984). Interpreted in this way, Linda could be seen as 'putting up' with the situation even though she did not feel happy about it, because she expected it to improve over the next few years.

These stories have revealed some ways in which women do have agency through being able to shape and drive decision making, to do what they want, when they want with their leisure, and are not passive in intra-household relations. However, they also indicate that, without reverting to a single notion of 'a shared women's experience', women's agency is both enabled and bounded in a variety of ways by their social, cultural, economic and physical capital. It is important, therefore, not to lose sight of the role of structures in setting some limits on peoples' actions, whilst at the same time not seeing those structures as immutable and existing outside of social relations. The question remains as to how those structures and the accompanying social relations can be transformed.

Negotiation

One sphere in which women demonstrated their exercise of power was in that of intra-household relations. Through focusing on how the women experienced intra-household relations, one perspective was gained of household life and the leisure of household members. Whilst the main focus was on how the women managed to make time for their leisure activities, this opened up for discussion the actions of other members of the household and some of the exchanges that took place between household members over household, employment and leisure matters. The concept of negotiation was drawn on to examine the give and take within households.

The stories offered some important insights into the processes of negotiation that women engaged in in order to gain leisure time, and help to distinguish between negotiation and accommodation. The stories also raised questions about the exercise of power which underpins such processes. The distinction between negotiation and accommodation was illustrated by focusing on Jenny's organisation of her leisure in response to her husband's concerns. Whilst being aware of her husband's feelings about her being at the gym in the evenings when he was at home, there was no evidence of any type of negotiation taking place between the two of them. Rather she

sought to 'solve the problem' by adjusting her activities to accommodate his wishes. The distinction I am making, therefore, is that negotiation involves some form of interaction between the parties involved (Finch and Mason 1993; Goodnow and Bowes 1994), while accommodation does not.

For both processes to be understood, however, we need to be aware of previous such encounters as well as of people's reputations and subjectivities. For as Finch and Mason (1993) have observed, relationships between kin develop over time, and people develop and cultivate reputations which they may later have to guard. This may help us to understand the reluctance of a couple of the women to have their partners do more of the housework. They may have felt that their reputations and identities as housewives would be under threat if they did less and their partners did more, or possibly it might have threatened the basis of their relationships to their male partners. Life histories, or perhaps household historiographies, would enable understandings to be built up of the life of the household and member's locations, reputations and actions within them. A more rounded view of intra-household power relations would then emerge. Certainly there is a need for further research into entire households as opposed to single members or just couples within larger households.²

The concept of negotiation within the household has also enabled us to make sense of how women were able to reconstruct their roles as housewives without seemingly disrupting the smooth running of the household. Their roles as housewives and mothers were renegotiated with the active involvement of other household members, and in Gill's case was instigated by her husband. Because of its focus this research has been unable to fully explore the perceptions of other household members concerning some of the negotiations that took place around women's leisure, although this would be a fruitful area for further research.

As a concept, negotiation draws attention to the process which couples or members of households engage in to resolve differences, but it is less useful when it comes to understanding the ongoing nature of household life which a concept such as accommodation implies. Indeed negotiation seems to imply acquiescence and

agreement and tends to mask the degree of resistance and opposition that there may be between the parties involved.

Hegemony

As has been previously discussed (in Chapter Two), power is wielded in a variety of ways, and often the most effective types of power are those where the subjugated are barely aware of their subjugated position and might even see themselves as being in some ways powerful.³ A hegemonic view of power also draws our attention to power as being part of a process of economic, social and political struggles, and not a battle won once and for all. In this sense it becomes rather problematic to separate notions of empowerment from the processes of resistance and accommodation, as often they are inter-twined. A focus on accommodation and resistance within households draws attention to the way in which the ability of household members to exercise power may well fluctuate over time. In addition to this, the changing nature of the household in terms of the change or loss of a partner, or the arrival or departure of dependants may alter intra-household relations. By using such concepts as accommodation and resistance (within a hegemonic framework) we are able to develop a view of household relations as being dynamic and open to change. In this sense it connects with the earlier discussion re agency and the ability of the individual to 'act back' and create change.

The varied pattern with which women live out their roles as mothers and housewives suggests that the ideologies of motherhood and domesticity get taken up and reproduced to different degrees by different women. This raises the question of how and why this happens. What makes one woman subsume her leisure needs to the needs and timetables of others, whilst another resists dominant ideological messages about, for example, being a housewife, and sees her own leisure needs, for example, as being as important for her as keeping the house immaculately clean? For women to operate outside of the dominant discourses means that somehow they must perceive those discourses as in some way lacking or constraining, and be able to consider an

alternative way of operating and have the resources to do so. This was illustrated in the women's stories by those who felt that they did not have enough time to do anything for themselves, which, coupled with a perception that their male partners had more time to themselves, led them to question the dominant discourse of the 'good' housewife. That even such a growing perception did not always lead to the women trying to effect change indicates how powerful the dominant hegemonic ideas are, such that they are able to contain potential challenges. Alternatively, it may suggest that despite some concerns about their lives, the women felt that generally their position was not sufficiently problematic to change the running and dynamics of the household.

The dominance of hegemonic ideas is partially due to their prevalence in every day aspects of life, as well as the fact that they are part of traditions within families. Several women spoke of what their, or their partner's, mothers had done when they were raising children, and how this had made an impact on their own lives. Anyon's (1983) notion of resistance in accommodation and accommodation within resistance goes some way to make sense of what can at first seem to be contradictory actions of some of the women. In order to understand how some women were able to move beyond resistance we need to turn towards the concept of empowerment. The following discussion of empowerment points towards some reasons why perhaps some women are able to not only resist dominant ideologies but to seek to reconstruct them.

Physicality, Empowerment and Transformation: limits and possibilities

Key questions about the potential for physical activity to be empowering have been recurring throughout this thesis and it is appropriate at this stage to reflect on the understandings that have been reached as a result of engaging in the research. Ramazanoglu (1993) argued that in producing feminist knowledge we should be developing guides to facilitate liberation, whilst remaining aware that what constitutes liberation varies according to the context. In supporting this point it is clear that I am rejecting a central tenet of postmodernism, that there is no element of a shared women's experience and therefore no shared base from which to begin political action.

The postmodernist caveat of the dangers of false universalism is valuable and care needs to be taken not to lose sight of the multiple differences between women, whilst pursuing such a political goal. The pursuit of a political goal also aligns me with Gore's (1992) understanding of how empowerment is used within a critical and feminist discourse, which sees empowerment as being part of a political project aimed at creating changes in societal power relations. In arguing for this understanding I am not rejecting the value of empowerment as seen within a conservative or liberal discourse, which may lead to relations on a more personal or institutional changing, whilst societal power relations remain untouched. On the contrary, I would suggest that it is likely that empowerment invariably begins at the personal level and builds from there, potentially leading to other more profound changes in social relations.

In weighing up the evidence from this research I am conscious of the warning that Dewar (1991) offers about not romanticising resistance and in effect seeing it where it is not. At the same time I am also mindful of Whitson's (1994) warning not to dismiss the increased involvement of women in indoor activities, such as aerobics and keep fit, as being of little significance to the wider challenge of the definition of sport as being male. As the earlier discussion of the data illustrated, there is little evidence of changes taking place in wider social relations as a result of the involvement of these women in physical activity, but I would argue that this does not mean that involvement in physical activity is not empowering. On the contrary I see it as encouraging that some of these women have gained through their involvement a greater sense of their own physical and social power. The question then becomes one of why do more women not find such involvement empowering and why is there not more transformation?

One answer to these questions centres around what constitutes empowerment and transformation, and whether there are sufficient conditions for these both to occur. As the discussion in Chapter Three highlighted, recent literature has identified key aspects which can promote transformation: collective action, which involves physical activity; action which is visible and public and action that is informed by political / feminist consciousness.⁴ None of the activities of the women involved with this research met all these conditions, and indeed there has been little research into women's activities

which have shared all of these characteristics. The most notable exceptions discussed earlier concern women's softball (Birrell and Richter 1987 and Zipter 1988), although as Birrell and Richter point out, feminist praxis which is isolated from the main-stream may have a limited transformative capacity in terms of wider social relations. This may be true of isolated cases such as a softball team or league but the larger the event, the more public it becomes and the harder it is for it to be sidelined. The Gay Games⁵ are such a case in point: they have moved from being an event only some lesbians and gay men knew about to being an event which has gained wider cultural recognition along with the Sydney Mardi Gras and the Pride marches in Britain. The publicity surrounding these events makes it hard for them to be 'recuperated into heteronormativity' (Lloyd 1996). Whilst these examples, along with Birrell and Richter's and Zipter's softball teams, were all informed by either a political or feminist consciousness, many of the women in my research did not espouse such a consciousness, but I would argue this does not mean that they did not possess one. In explaining this I return to Giddens' distinction between practical and discursive consciousness. None of the women described themselves as being feminists,⁶ yet some of their responses suggested feminist sympathies insofar as some of the women resisted being 'pigeon-holed' into what they saw as a stereotyped role for women, either in the way they had been brought up or in the way they related to their partners and families. In other words they displayed a practical consciousness which was not evident at a discursive level. I would argue therefore that we need to be careful not to assume that just because a feminist consciousness is not displayed discursively it does not mean that the action is not informed by feminist consciousness. Also we need to be careful not to undervalue women's actions just because they do not appear to be, or are not, informed by feminist consciousness.

Whilst many of the activities the women in the research participated in were with other women, I do not think there are grounds to argue that this was necessarily collective in the sense that some of Birrell and Richter's softball teams were. Similarly, I assume that Scraton (1987) was referring to collective action in the sense that individuals join together for purposive political action based on the notion that their combined strength will be greater than the sum of the individuals. Several women in the research

commented on how they enjoyed the social side of keep fit or aerobics, but this seemed to be only in the sense of being able to chat to one another occasionally. Only the group of women from the health club who met together one evening to talk to me expressed any sense of valuing meeting together as women. The meeting seemed to be valued because when they reflected on their involvement in weight training some commented on how their confidence had developed, to the extent that they could meet together in such a group, even though they did not know every one particularly well. This alone, however, did not bring this group near the sense of collectivity displayed by the softball teams studied by Birrell and Richter. It remains unclear however quite what counts as a collectivity and further research into existing groups of active women may be useful to explore the links between feminist / political consciousness and being involved with collective action.

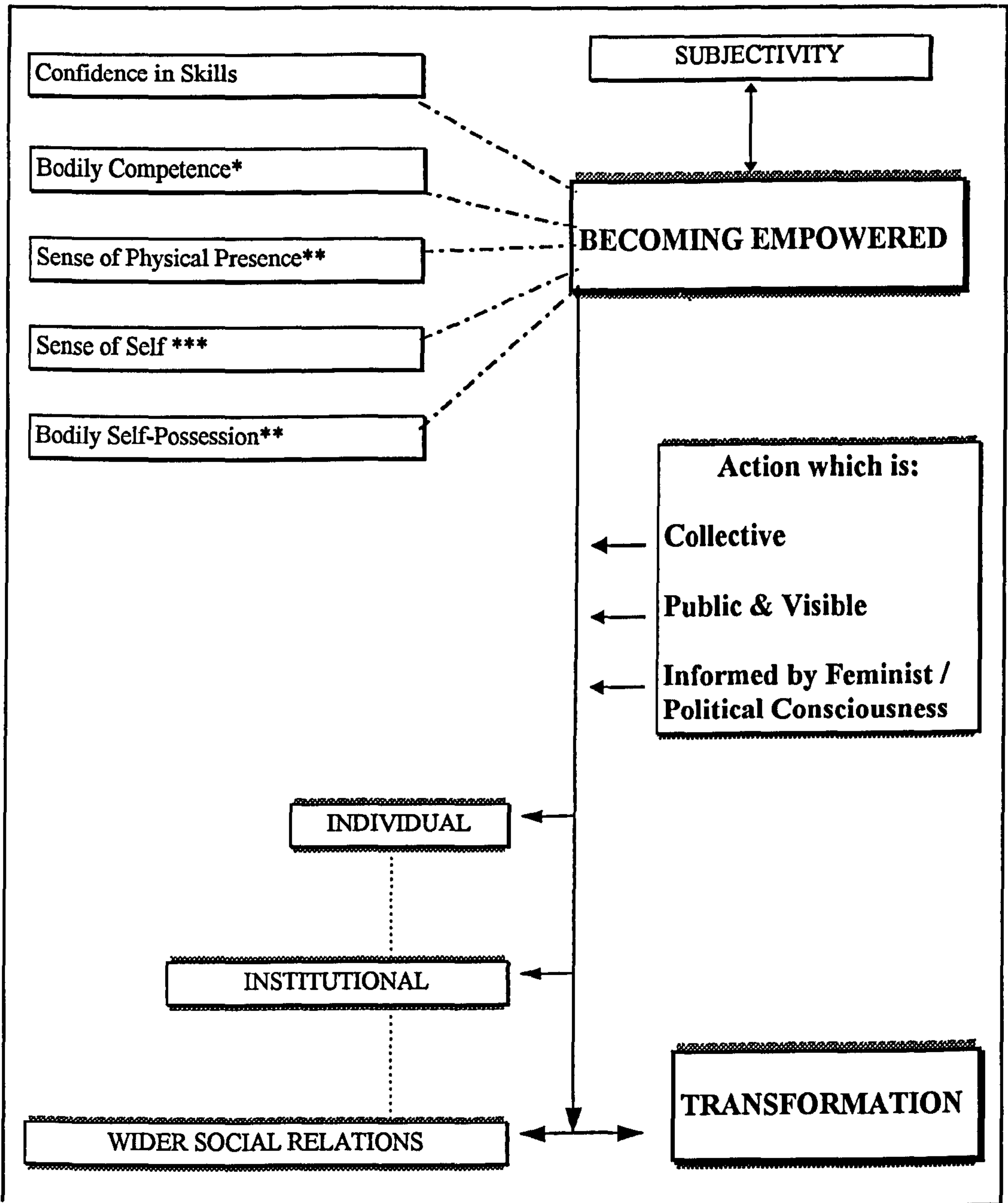
Another answer to the questions concerning why more women do not find activity empowering and why there is not more transformation through sport necessitates turning to the issues raised by Whitson (1994) concerning the nature of sport in most Western developed countries in the 1990's. Whitson asks whether it is possible for empowerment to be detached from an emphasis on force and domination (which is typified by the predominant male model of sport). To extend his line of questioning further means exploring whether experiences of empowerment only seem to occur when women (or others) develop muscular power and or skill which involves overcoming opponents with force, or whether it is possible to become empowered through other means such as learning to move with skill and in coordination with others, with the pleasure being in the sense of accomplishment in the skills rather than in the domination of others (Whitson 1994:360). From the women's accounts in this research, becoming skilled in movements such as dance and swimming and enjoying them for their own sake were clearly important and relate to Whitson's sense of empowerment. However, this may just be because I targeted women involved primarily in individual activities as opposed to team sports⁷. Research into team sports would be useful in exploring the prevalence of empowerment being related to domination and force in ways not encountered by most of the women in this research. The research conducted by Birrell and Richter into women's softball illustrated an

attempt to redefine the cultural values of the sport by the way they decided to play the game, and manage their teams. Lesbian (and gay) teams and sports groups are forming (e.g. 'Dynamo Dykes' a volleyball club and 'Out to Swim' a lesbian and gay swimming club) which set out to challenge the dominant cultural values of sport, and whilst as was argued earlier such attempts can easily be marginalised, Birrell and Richter, and Whitson would hope that as the numbers participating increase so the chances of these 'alternative' sporting values subverting the old ones increases. In this sense it could be argued that collective action is not so vital, so long as the sporting values are challenging the traditional male sport model. Clearly whilst both feminist and masculinist discourses and practices in sport may be challenging the popular male model of sport, the problem is the firm cultural location of such as model. The media, as researchers have shown (Duncan et al. 1994), reproduce the tough macho image of male sport and celebrate demonstrations of toughness, domination and ruthlessness in the male sporting arena, whilst emphasising the grace and beauty of female performance. As one of the women in the research pointed out, being aware of the inappropriateness of media messages about the desirable body did not stop her (Jo) wanting such a body.

In exploring the scope for empowerment in physical activity it is worth reflecting on the extent to which the physical nature of physical activity or sport offers some unique experience or avenue for empowerment. For, as was argued in Chapter Six, Adult Education classes or other activities can also lead to women's empowerment. We need to scrutinise whether becoming skilled in some aspect of physical activity that is qualitatively different to becoming skilled through successfully putting up a shelf or plumbing a kitchen. Both the sport-related activity and the do-it-yourself jobs require skill, both require a certain amount of physical labour, but does one offer something unique? Perhaps this is the wrong question to ask; maybe it is more fruitful to think not so much of an activity per se as potentially leading to empowerment, but rather that empowerment centres more around the subjectivity of the individual and her experience of the activity. Conceptualising empowerment in this way might enable us to understand why one woman might experience an activity as empowering but another might not.

The following figure encapsulates these points and represents the key elements that have been identified as being central to empowerment and transformation.

Figure 1. Empowerment Through Physical Activity



* Blinde et al. 1993; ** McDermott 1996; *** Shields 1995.

The key to empowerment is the individual's subjectivity, which following poststructuralist theory operates within discourses which have been constructed within particular social, cultural and political contexts. Empowerment through physical activity is connected with a range of experiences gained through the body. The five 'experiences' represented in the figure are somewhat problematic in the sense that they overlap each other to varying degrees, for example skills and bodily competence. However, collectively they represent some of the main ways through which women (and others) may experience their bodies in empowering ways. As the discussion on empowerment explored, empowerment could result in relatively small-scale interpersonal changes to social relations, or it might be more profound and impact on institutional or wider social relations. Birrell and Richter (1987) and others (Lloyd 1996) argued that, for transformation to occur as opposed to empowerment, women's actions generally had to display some or all of the following characteristics: be collective and informed by political consciousness and be public and visible. To advance the political goals of feminism through sport and physical activity would mean seeking to create and promote more opportunities for women to become empowered and transform the social relations of sport.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to assess how useful structure and agency, negotiation, hegemony and empowerment are in making sense of the connections between women's involvement in physical activity and their exercise of power. I argue that whilst negotiation has some value it is also limited in its ability to grasp the resistance that may exist between the parties involved. More useful in this regard is hegemony which enables a more sophisticated understanding of the way in which individuals may accommodate and resist at the same time. The tensions within households over access to leisure time and resources to allocate to leisure are not easily explained by winning and losing, and hegemony enables us to understand the ongoing nature of household interaction. Similarly, structure and agency draws attention to the ways in which women exercise power within the household and in other spheres, whilst also pointing

to ways in which their agency is limited. What is argued for is a broader sense of agency which takes on board a physical dimension thereby enabling us to consider the embodiment of power.

¹ These reflections lead to the logical conclusion that research which involved all household members rather than individuals would be better placed to explore the perceived influences of individuals over household decisions.

² Dual career households seemed to have attracted most recent attention in Britain e.g. Gregson and Lowe 1993, 1994 and Morris 1993).

³ Foucault's work on surveillance is a good example of how power can be wielded, and people can be 'controlled' without even realising it. John Hargreaves (1987) work on schooling the body, where he discusses the normalising of male youth through their involvement in sport, is another example of how people can become subjugated without being aware of it.

⁴ Although using the term feminist consciousness as a singular it would be more accurate to write it in the plural for there are many, but I chose to use the singular to ease the flow of the sentence.

⁵ The Gay Games are an international sports and cultural event which is held every four years. They were founded by Dr. Tom Waddell to promote the emancipation of homosexuals and lesbian women. The first Games were held in 1982 and the next Games are to be held in Amsterdam in 1998, the first time the Games will be held outside of the USA.

⁶ The women were not asked whether they thought of themselves as feminists, although I felt that had they seen themselves as feminists it would have been evident from their responses to a range of questions about their lives, households, partners etc..

⁷ Several of these women actively avoided anything to do with competitive sport, having had negative experiences of it when they were younger at school.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

As Chapter One outlined, this research has its roots in my own experiences of physical activity. I had a sense that the benefits of my involvement in physical activity were more than directly physical ones (such as feeling fitter), but I was not quite sure what they were. At the same time I was aware that in contrast with most of my female contemporaries I was somewhat unusual because I had maintained my involvement in physical activity as opposed to withdrawing from it as they mostly did in their mid to late teens. Reflecting on this theoretically I began to consider the connections between involvement in physical activity, where individuals could explore the physical capabilities of their bodies, and how those individuals functioned within their particular social locations. In particular I chose to focus on the connections between women's involvement in physical activity and empowerment. The key questions that the research set out to address centred on the potential for involvement in physical activity to empower women. This led to other questions concerning whether some women might be more likely than others to experience activity as empowering (or not), and whether some activities or contexts were more likely than others to lead to empowerment. In asking these questions the research sought to explore not only the nature and extent of empowerment for women through physical activity but also its possibilities and limits. Related questions concerned whether physical activity has something unique to offer in terms of empowerment, and to what extent women were able to convert their physical capital into other forms of capital, such as social, cultural, political or economic.

Whilst the focus on the potential for women to become empowered implies a political standpoint which sees such an outcome as both individually and collectively desirable, this research was initiated primarily out of intellectual and theoretical curiosity. In this sense the research was not part of an explicit political project to create change (a stance advocated by Smith 1987), but if in the process it has produced useful knowledge for those working in the field of recreation and sport development then that would be an added bonus.

This conclusion reflects on the extent to which these research aims have been achieved and maps out both the empirical and conceptual contribution that the research makes. A key element of this involves examining the efficacy of the theoretical frameworks and sensitising concepts utilised to explore women's involvement in physical activity and its potential for empowerment. This chapter therefore builds on the previous one which has focused on the key sensitising concepts and sets these within the broader context of the construction of gender power relations through considering women's involvement in physically active leisure, and its relation to empowerment and the embody-ment of power. In so doing it considers the strategy adopted in the research to examine intra-household relations in addition to women's experiences of physical activity. This enables an assessment to be made of how this research contributes to these and wider debates about women's leisure, household relations, identity and empowerment. In so doing it leads into a critical reflection on the research and offers suggestions for future work in this, and related, areas.

Women's Involvement in Physically Active Leisure

As the autobiographical note in Chapter One illustrates, to make sense of my experiences of physical activity and to begin to understand my physicality and my subjectivity it is important to consider more than my current involvement and experiences of being active. Similarly to begin to understand the place of physical activity in the lives of the women involved in this research it was important not only to explore their involvement in physical activity over their life span but also to set this in

the context of other aspects of their lives. The interviews (as explained in Chapter Five) therefore explored these areas in order to begin to comprehend the interplay between the individual and their social location, or the relationship between agency and structure.

Whilst earlier theorising about women's involvement in physical activity has focused on the extent to which it is best understood in the language of constraint, control, oppression and subordination, this research supports more recent interpretations which recognise women's agency as being demonstrated through their leisure practices (Wearing 1992; Scraton 1994). However, just as postmodernism has warned of the dangers of false universalism that led people to making claims about the commonality of women's leisure or women's oppression we must also be wary about slipping into treating women's agency as universal. This research demonstrates the diversity of women's experiences, but also does not lose sight of the similarity of some women's experiences. Certainly of the women who were involved with this research, particularly at the interview stage, only one was from an ethnic minority group, although the age ranged from between 26-35 to 66 years and over. The majority of those interviewed were from lower income households. It was not surprising therefore to find that one common theme of the interviews was of how household and leisure needs were tailored to low income levels. As Scraton (1994) pointed out many women continue to share an unequal position due to their social and economic position. The research also highlights the enjoyment and pleasure that many women experience in and through their leisure practices, despite some of the struggles some of them went through to gain that leisure. The focus on the household as a way in to understanding women's involvement in physical activity enabled some of these struggles to come to light. Whilst on the surface the struggles might seemed to have been ones between individuals, over who should do what in terms of domestic labour and childcare, the research revealed that they were related to women's (and men's) identities as wives, partners, mothers and fathers. Making time for active leisure was a problem because many of the women were struggling to operate within dominant discourses relating to being a good mother and housewife. Similarly, their bodies were sites of struggle as they sought to operate within discourses of femininity whilst also wanting to develop

their physical capabilities.

Through the focus on activity across the life span, a pattern emerged of many of the women being active when they were younger, although as Chapter Seven pointed out several of the women had negative experiences, particularly of PE which led them to avoiding physical activity for some time. Others had had very positive experiences, such as Betty who was brought up in a house which backed on to tennis courts and started playing and was still playing some forty-five years later. Those who disliked PE tended to dislike the outdoor, competitive games particularly, expressing their 'loathing' of getting cold and of people who were competitive and made them unvalued. For some of these women other activities offered within PE held more attraction such as dance. However, the data suggested that as Scraton (1987) and Dewar and Wright (1996) found the dominant discourse of sport had little in common with young women's developing identities. The maleness of sport transfused PE and turned most of them off activity, at least for some years.

It was not just the activities, or the climatic conditions that put some of the women off as some also spoke of their resistance to not being given a choice. On leaving school some of the women spoke of how they and their partners enjoyed taking part in physical activity together whilst others spoke of a separation in terms of participating in physical activity. These findings are not new despite Rojek's (1995:34) claim that feminist leisure research omits '... any sense that women might enjoy their leisure with men'. Whilst one reading of the changing patterns of women's physical activity is to consider the pragmatics of time, employment, finances etc., there is a danger that such a focus draws attention away from how involvement in physical activity relates to women's subjectivities. The work of Bartky (1990) and Bordo (1990) draws attention to the need to scrutinise why many women began to turn from their mid-twenties onwards to regimes to discipline their bodies. Such work influenced by poststructuralism and phenomenology prompts an examination of why women operate in particular discourses but others do not. For most of the women in this study their involvement in physical activity was in some way connected with altering their body shape and / or body weight, in ways they hoped would be more sexually desirable.

Physical activity was often turned to because other regimes such as dieting had failed to achieve the desired aim of shedding excess weight and tightening 'saggy boobs'. Women were in search of regimes of the body that would enable them to control their body shapes. A concern with what were perceived to be the negative effects of ageing was central to prompting many of the women into working on their bodies.

Because of the strategy used to make contact with the women, and because of my interest in researching women involved with individual activities as opposed to team sports, most of the interviews were with women involved with keep-fit type of activities; only one of the women had maintained any involvement in competitive sport (Betty played badminton and tennis). These choices clearly had their roots in earlier experiences of activity and PE when younger, yet combined with the concerns over ageing bodies they suggested an acceptance of dominant discourses re women's bodies and how they should appear and move (Young 1990). It would, however, be inaccurate to portray these women as passive dupes who have consumed media images and messages about what their bodies should look like and how they should be controlling them. Despite the fact that many of the women were concerned with their bodies and how they looked, and that those who were involved with weight training did not want to develop 'large' muscles, some of these women demonstrated an awareness of the problematic nature of discourses about women's bodies and activity. The attempts to conceal the fact that they lifted weights whilst at the Health and Fitness Club could be read as an indication of their acceptance of the dominant discourse re women's activity as not being about power and strength and building muscles, but about improving their appearance in conventional heterosexual style.

In examining the fluctuations in physical activity of these women, an understanding of household relations has been crucial. While much research has focused on the constraints that the household has put on women's leisure, this research has demonstrated that the picture is more complex than that. Some of the women turned away from expectations about what they should be doing as a key member of the household and as, with Jo, went and enjoyed some active leisure on their own. Others have sought to restructure the operation of the household and their employment to

facilitate their leisure, whilst some felt they had won the right to leisure only when all household labour has been completed. Through developing understandings of households and household life, we are in a better position to comment on the power women exercise both in and out of the household. Indeed, it may lead us to consider the connections between the power that people exercise in different fields, for example, the household, active leisure and employment. To do so would be to reject a zero sum notion of power in favour of a more fluid, Foucauldian concept of power. That individuals may exercise power in some spheres more than others, and that this may change, also seems compatible with the work of Giddens and Gramsci. Fluidity, however, implies that there are no limits to the exercise of power, but this, I would argue, moves us beyond the evidence from employment which indicates that even when women of equivalent experience and qualification get appointed to similar posts as men they are still paid less. The work of Giddens and Gramsci would enable us to recognise that the exercise of power has its limits and that these limits themselves are socially constructed and therefore open to contestation.

What is being argued, therefore, is that women exercise power in a range of spheres and in a variety of ways. Crucially the exercise of power within the household can enable women's leisure, even if that leisure appears to be centred on the pursuit of a 'normalised body'. It becomes essential, therefore, in research to move beyond focusing on what women (and others) do, to explore the social, cultural and political contexts in which identities are constructed and which makes that action possible. The value of considering the household context in order to understand the place of physical activity is that much of our lives revolve around households, and part of our identities are centred around relationships within households. According to poststructuralist theory our subjectivities as women are constructed through discourses of women as mother, housewife, daughter, as woman - but there is scope for different constructions of our subjectivities. A focus on the household is a useful starting point to exploring the construction of women's subjectivities and the place of physical activity in the process. The household, therefore, emerged from this research as an important framework within which to consider leisure and the construction of subjectivities.

Whilst women's employment is an important factor, as Gregson and Lowe (1993) and others have found, it is a mistake to think that it is the key factor in understanding women's leisure and the construction of their subjectivities. In exploring the connections, therefore, between intra-household relations, employment and physical activity, this study has begun to make new links between hitherto relatively discrete areas. Leisure research has tended to relegate the household to the margins, just as 'household research' (Morris 1990) has neglected leisure. This research, therefore, moves the debate forward to explore how intra-household power relations impact on women's leisure, and points towards exploring the negotiations (both explicit and implicit) between household members. Women's power to contest and challenge patriarchal ideologies about motherhood, being a housewife, and indeed being a woman, becomes more tangible as a result of focusing on life in the household. Women are, therefore, seen as having some agency to challenge and redefine dominant discourses concerning 'their roles' as women.

Physical Activity and Empowerment

In addition to understanding the exercise of power within the household and the construction of discourses of women's roles, the main aim of this research was to consider activities the relationship between involvement in physical activity and empowerment. As the introduction to this chapter has outlined, the key questions revolved around the degree to which empowerment is possible and how experience of this might vary, and also the significance of the activity itself and the context within which it is experienced. Central to this discussion is what is meant by empowerment. In this research I have been guided by the work of Gore (1992) and others (such as Blinde et al. 1993; Sheilds 1995 and McDermott 1996) who pointed to the enabling aspect of power whereby we can say that people who are empowered are more able to exercise power. Sheilds (1995) points to the centrality of competence in terms of skill development that can lead to empowerment and I feel this has much to offer our understanding of empowerment through physical activity. As I argue in Chapter Eight,

it is useful to conceptualise of empowerment as being not an 'all or none' phenomenon, but rather to see it as being more fluid and operating at different levels, having different spheres of influence. The more profound the changes as a result of individual and collective empowerment, the more likely it is that wider social relations will be transformed. To use my own experiences as an example, I can see how I, as a result of my experiences of physical activity, became empowered in the sense that I developed a confidence in my own abilities that extended beyond the realm of physical activity. This empowerment, however, had little impact on wider social relations: they remained untouched, and at an early stage they remained unchallenged, because I did not see them as being particularly problematic. At a later stage my growing feminist consciousness led me to question and challenge (at least at a local and personal level) practices which I saw as limiting women's potential. Working with others through for example the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) (and in this sense becoming part of collective action) was part of trying to create institutional change, not just in sport but in other related areas, such as education.¹ The culmination of empowerment is transformation (see Figure 1 on p.226), when wider social relations begin to change because of the challenges being made. However, it is clear that whilst advocacy groups such as the WSF may have begun to create change, transformation of social relations in sport or wider society are still some way in the distance.

As discussed in Chapter Eight, the accounts from the women in this research suggest that some of them experienced individual empowerment through developing increased competence in the capabilities of their bodies. The acquisition of new skills, the discovery of new physical potential of their bodies such as feeling stronger, having more energy were foregrounded by the women as being important to them and made them feel more positively about themselves and their potential. There is nothing from the data to suggest that particular activities were found to be more empowering than others. This is contrary to Theberge's (1987) suggestion that team sports may be more likely to lead to empowerment. Few of the women in this research spoke positively of their experiences of team sport which contrast with Birrell and Richter's (1987) findings about women's softball and raises questions about the context and nature of team sports. One of the main differences between the examples that Birrell and Richter

(1987) discuss and the experiences of the women in this research is that the teams that Birrell and Richter (1987) researched were women-only teams, most of which were formed with an express aim to create their own form of competitive sport quite unlike the dominant male model. The context of the activity therefore seems to be important, but this does not mean to say that a women-only group will necessarily create an environment which will lead to some form of empowerment. One of the women in this research spoke of how she felt quite alienated from the other women at a previous keep-fit class she had gone to, because she felt they were there to 'pose' as opposed to work out. The women I spoke to from the Health and Fitness Club in the group interview were I suspect just beginning to talk between themselves about their activity, their bodies and what they felt about lifting weights. As one of them said it was the first time they had met together as a group, either inside or outside the gym.² The lack of collectivity between the women in this research is not surprising given the individual nature of the activities they were engaged in, which is probably why Theberge (1987) suggested that team sports may well lend themselves to facilitating empowerment. However, it is not just women gathering together that makes them a collectivity, for implicit in the work discussed in Chapter is the sense in which a collectivity committed to change would be based on a 'shared' political consciousness.

Whitson (1994) posed the question of whether it was possible to detach empowerment from domination and the exercise of force to overpower others. This research has yielded data which suggest that it is possible for empowerment to be connected to the acquisition of skill and the development of competence which leads an individual to move her own body in ways that she finds rewarding which is unconnected with the bodies of others; that is they are not directly competing with one another or trying to dominate others physically. Whitson's (1994) work still poses a question, however, in relation to certain activities such as weight training which centre on developing power in the body. I found it interesting that Carol spoke of 'hurting' her body in order to contain it and construct it into the shape she wanted, and others spoke of seeking to control their bodies not just through exercise but also through their diets. The bodily 'work ethic' seemed to be strongest in those who were involved with the weight training, and in adopting this ethic they could be seen to replicate the values of male

sport: 'no pain, no gain': the body needs to be disciplined and pulled into shape in order to perform (Bordo 1990; Bartky 1990). This relation to the body seems ironic for on the one hand these women were following at least some of the conventions of male sport and therefore reinforcing them, but at the same time they were seen by others they met socially to be challenging conventions about how women should exercise their bodies and how their bodies should look. Without setting out to challenge dominant images of women's physicality their very involvement did so, even if they attempted to conceal the nature of their activity by calling it keep-fit as opposed to weight training.

From the evidence in the women's accounts, I concluded in Chapter Eight that through their bodies women can challenge and contest dominant ideologies, not just about how they look or what they should do with their leisure time, but also about themselves as partners, housewives and / or mothers. They could redefine their own identities / subjectivities. There was also evidence in particular of older women enjoying 'defying' expectations about themselves as 'old people' unable to learn anything new. Age (as I discussed in Chapter Seven) was a significant factor for many of the women, not so much because of the changes they were experiencing in their bodies, but more because of what they thought was going to happen to their bodies, that is breasts and stomachs sagging, losing their sexual attractiveness; hence the concern with 'going to seed'. In this regard the different ways through which women became empowered did seem to vary across the life course as changing discourses of sexuality and physicality came into play. Several older women, for example gained a new sense of power through learning of a new physical activity (e.g. swimming, dancing, wind-surfing). For other women, particularly those involved with weight training, it was the growing strength in their bodies, and their increasing control over their bodies that lead to them feeling more empowered. These findings do raise interesting questions regarding the interplay between empowerment and age, and I would argue sexuality.

This research leads to the conclusion that empowerment need not necessarily be connected with the domination of others (as in hegemonic male sport) but that rather

women's subjectivities can be redefined and they can become empowered as a result of their involvement in physical activity in which they develop a sense of enhanced competence in their body's capabilities. This research has largely focused on women involved in indoor activities such as keep-fit and weight-training but has also touched on other activities such as swimming, wind-surfing, tennis and dancing. All of these were experienced by some women as empowering in the sense that they generated an enhanced feeling of skilled competence, achievement, confidence, self-worth and fulfilment. Several women spoke of how physical activity made them feel different than other leisure activities, but there is little evidence to argue that physical activity offered something unique. However further research could usefully explore this area further.

The Embodiment of Power?

At this stage it is appropriate to reflect on the nature of the contribution that this research makes to our understanding of the potential for women to experience physical activity as empowering. Empirically the research has made a significant contribution because as Hall (1993), Hargreaves (1994) and Scraton (1994) note there has been little empirical research³ in the area despite the calls that have been made. More than this the research has brought two relatively disparate areas of research together: the household and the physically active body. None of the previous research by Theberge (1987), Birrell and Richter (1987), McDermott (1996) and Lloyd (1996) has considered how other aspects of women's lives may impact on their physicality and empowerment. The value of adopting this approach is that it opens up new ways of understanding how women's subjectivities are constructed and how the process of construction is not just within a discourse of the body, but also in and possibly between discourses of their identities as mothers, partners, housewives etc.. Failure to consider the impact of these other processes and aspects of women's lives could lead to a distorted view of not just women's physicality, but also of their agency. Women might seem to be operating within dominant 'normalizing' discourses of the body whilst within the household context they may be resisting and redefining their role as

mother or housewife in order to engage in physical activity. Similarly, household research (e.g. Gregson and Lowe 1993) has neglected women's leisure as being an important dimension of household life, preferring to focus on employment and domestic labour instead.⁴ This research, therefore, argues for a more wholistic approach to understanding women's physicality, which necessitates exploring the other contexts within which women's subjectivities are constructed.

The theoretical contribution of this research comes in its attempts to develop an understanding of the connections between physicality and empowerment. Central to this has been the utilisation of Giddens' concept of 'agency', which I argue should be conceived as having a physical dimension (see also McDermott 1996). Agency alone, however, seems insufficient to explain the gendered nature of the body and power relations; although combined with poststructuralist feminism it possibly has the potential to enable us to understand the embody-ment of gender power relations. Such an approach would enable a clearer understanding of how women's subjectivities are partially constructed through their bodies and how some women manage to resist and redefine dominant discourses of sexuality and physicality. By drawing agency and elements of poststructuralist theory together it may be possible to see discourses as structuring, without losing sight of the individuals' capacity to exercise power. In advocating such a theoretical stance it is important to ensure that the postmodern concern with understanding difference and diversity is not lost. Individual's subjectivities and experiences are mediated by the interaction of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and age. The work of Bourdieu on the acquisition and conversion of different forms of capital (physical, cultural, social and political) may also be of value in understanding the embody-ment of gender power relations.

Reflections on the Research Process

Inevitably when reflecting on the findings of this research I am drawn to consider how well the original ideas which underpinned the research facilitated the exploration of women's involvement in physical activity and its empowering potential. Part of this

reflection centres on the conceptual framework utilised which I have discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, the other centres more on method. It is to these that I now turn, to examine how well they served the research.

The decision to utilise a mixed methods approach (Brannen 1992; Bryman 1992) was partially successful in that it generated useful data on which to draw during the interviews. However, the sample lacked diversity partly due to the methods I had chosen to contact the women. The organisation of the questionnaire phase of the research meant that whilst I did meet many ethnic minority when I went to the Fitco factory, the fleeting contact facilitated by the white Assistant Personnel Manager may not have helped create the right atmosphere for the research. I felt I was automatically labelled as one of them (the management), as they had approved my entry into the factory, and the Assistant Personnel Manager had given me a personal tour of the factory. Although many women at the factory and at the bingo willingly accepted the questionnaire, I suspect it was to get me to leave them in peace, to enjoy their short breaks between shifts or games. An alternative strategy to increase the ethnic diversity of the sample would have been to have made more sustained contact through cultural or religious groups within the local community. My position as a researcher might therefore have been in some ways more neutral, even though my whiteness could still have been problematic.

The decision taken following the pilot study to focus on interviewing just the women in the sample and not other members of their household, seemed the right one at the time, for the reasons given in Chapter Five. However, as the interviews progressed issues to do with the household loomed larger than initially anticipated, which would lead me to recommend that further research in this area could usefully draw upon the views of other household members. Although the women (particularly in the group interview) spoke about their bodies in an open and frank manner, I felt there were problems using solely interviews to access women's feelings about their bodies; the language we were able to access in those situations did not seem to facilitate easy communication. The group interview did lead to an open discussion, but this could have been because they all knew each other to some extent and therefore felt at ease,

and able to be open about their bodies. Using photographs that the women had of themselves over the years may have been a useful way of stimulating discussion not just about how they felt about their bodies, but also how they felt about the changes that had taken place in their bodies and their lives. Alternatively women could write about their bodies and use this as material for them to talk to in an interview, or it could be material that is passed on to the researcher, with it then being drawn upon in an interview.

More prolonged contact with the women, either in the form of a follow-up interview(s), or through group interviews might have enabled more of a rapport to have been established which might have encouraged other women to become involved with the research. When I went to meet the group of women from the Health and Fitness club I was struck by their enthusiasm to talk about what they did and about the impact it had on their lives. In the individual interviews I had had to spend some time developing an environment where the women seemed comfortable to talk about their lives and their bodies, whereas in this group interview this was not necessary, because they (or at least some of them) had initiated the meeting. Group interviews might not have been so successful with other women involved in individual activities, because for the most part they did not know many others in the class or group. Carol's role in bringing the group together had been crucial, and could probably not have been achieved by an outside researcher. In this type of group I saw potential for a form of body project workshop similar to that Haug et al. (1987) set up.

The danger of lone researcher misinterpreting data because there is no one else for them to check their interpretations with is highlighted by Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994). Working with a group or groups of women on a 'body project' (along the lines Haug et al. 1987 adopted) would enable the group(s) to be involved in the process of interpretation. Although the degree of theoretical analysis that might be possible through such an approach may be restricted, there is possibly a danger that we underestimate people's abilities to 'theorise' about their own lives.

Theoretically, as I mentioned earlier, the terrain has developed rapidly as concerns

about the nature of the modern or postmodern society dominate. The focus has shifted from the structures of society to how individuals' identities / subjectivities are constructed. Despite such theoretical shifts, I would still argue for the importance of an understanding of household relations as a way to making sense of gendered identities of household members. In highlighting gender, I do not mean to underplay the significance of class and ethnicity, and indeed there is much scope for research to explore the connections between identity, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and physicality.

Although still somewhat underdeveloped the work of Bourdieu seems to offer much to our understanding of the embodiment of social actors. Although somewhat underdeveloped in terms of how capital is converted from one form to another, and how the ability to convert capital seems to be gendered (as well as being subject to ethnicity, age, sexuality and ability) this approach keeps both the body and social structure in view. I am less convinced about the connections that Wearing (1992) seeks to make between interactionism and structure based approaches, although I share her concern to bring identity and subjectivity more to the fore, whilst also not losing sight of structural dimensions.

My theoretical position has shifted during the time I have been engaged in the research from a starting point which could best be described as socialist feminist to one which defies convenient labelling. Feminism is still at the centre, although life experiences have led me to become much more aware of the need for theorising which presumes neither homogeneity within gender groups, nor heterogeneity between such groups. I have also begun to consider whether gender is always where we think we see it. Research on the household for example presumes that much of the negotiation and interaction within households over domestic labour and childcare etc. is gendered, yet until research begins to consider more varied types of households, such as those which are comprised of women or men, and those of lesbian and gay couples then we must put a question mark over household relations as being heavily structured by gender. This research has also touched on the connections between ageing, physicality, sexuality and subjectivity, but this need more concentrated work, which could refine

our understanding of the way in which subjectivities are constructed and reconstructed as we grow older. In addition to a feminism which embraces diversity, I have also found myself drawing closer to poststructuralist concerns with identity and subjectivity. However, phenomenology may also open up 'new' ways of thinking about bodies that may keep the corporeal dimension of the body in focus without it slipping into being solely the product of discourse.

Concluding Remarks and Thoughts on Future Research

In concluding this thesis it is appropriate to summarise the key points from the previous discussions and point to areas for future research; I feel there are four key areas which need detailed consideration. The first concerns the extent to which intra-household power is connected to gender power relations. Recent research by Finch and Mason (1993), Gregson and Lowe (1993, 1994), and Morris (1993) has opened up new lines of inquiry about the workings of the household which could usefully be related to the leisure experiences of household members. In addition to this, most of the research on households concerns heterosexual couples, although Morris (1990) does make reference to some American research on homosexual couples and their households. As such this research is rather limited in its ability to say much about the gendered nature of the division of domestic labour. We need to explore other types of households, within which there may, or may not be sexual relationships, to fully comprehend power relations between, and within, the sexes and the impact these have on the identities and lives (and leisure) of household members.

Secondly, we need to develop a much more sophisticated understanding of how ethnicity, class, sexuality and age combine with gender to constrain or enable women's leisure. In particular, issues of empowerment through the body need to be explored within different cultural and religious contexts. This is not just paying lip-service to the post modern concern with false universalism: on the contrary, it reflects a commitment to feminist politics. If involvement in physical activity can be empowering for some white working- and middle-class women we need to explore its potential for

empowering other women.

Third, there is a need to develop Bourdieu's work on the conversion of physical capital into other forms of capital. As Shilling (1993) pointed out, Bourdieu's concerns are with social class which means that the discussion of gender and physical, social and cultural capital is relatively underdeveloped. We need to explore the ways in which women seek to convert their physical capital into social and cultural capital and how this connects with empowerment.

Finally, further research could usefully explore different physical activities, both sporting and recreational, in a variety of contexts to develop our understanding of the conditions in which empowerment and transformation become possible. Despite Theberge's (1987) comments re team sports possibly being particularly beneficial, there has been little empirical work in this area. This research also needs to explore the contradictory nature of women's lives, for it may look as if, along Bordo's (1990) lines, a woman is subject to the normalising grasp of dominant discourses of femininity, when she may actually be subverting the look and creating another form of cultural capital.

Engaging in these new areas of research should facilitate our understanding of the potential for physical activity to empower women, but it would do more than this, as this research has done. In the process of exploring women's empowerment through involvement in physical activity this research has not only developed our understanding of the connections between physical activity and empowerment, but it has also revealed how some women's identities are closely related to their perceptions of their bodies. Further research into women's and men's experiences of their bodies and activity over the life course would continue to develop our understanding of identity and structure in late modernity.

¹ I was one of a number of women who joined together to create the WSF, which was constituted in 1985. I was one of the members of the first Education subgroup of the WSF.

² I do not know whether they met subsequent to the group interview, but the impression I was given was that they had enjoyed talking to one another and that they might meet again.

³ McDermott (1996) is currently engaged in work concerning women's activity and physicality.

⁴ Recent work by Massey (1994) and Deem (1996) on space and time may lead to a greater consideration of leisure.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Areas to explore during the interviews, which were derived from reviewing the literature and from the pilot interviews.

- Early involvement in physical activity e.g. as a child in the family, in PE at school
- Employment / career pattern since leaving school
- Involvement in physical activity post school
- Leisure activities - over the years
- Feelings about the body
- Household dynamics - work and leisure

APPENDIX 2

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

WOMEN AND LEISURE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is just one of the ways in which information about women's involvement or non-involvement in physical activity is being collected.

The questionnaire should take you about 20 mins. to do, but if you'd like to expand your answers then please feel free to write comments on the back of the sheets, or talk to me later.

If there is any question that you don't want to answer, then please feel free to leave it blank.

The answers that you give will be held in the strictest confidence.

Thank you for your help,

Sarah Gilroy

Address

Phone Number

1. Please tick which of the following match your circumstances:

- Single (no children)	
- Single (children - please give their ages)	
- Married (no children)	
- Married (children at home - please give ages)	
- Married (children left home)	
- Widowed or divorced	

2. Own Occupation

Please tick any of the following items which apply to you:

- student	
- housewife (no paid employment)	
- casual / occasional work	
- in part-time job (please state what this is)	
- in full-time job (please state what this is)	
- self-employed (please state what this is)	
- retired	
- unemployed	
- other (please state what this is)	

3. Partner's Occupation (Please pass onto the next question if this does not apply to your situation)

Please tick which of the following items apply to your partner:

- student	
- casual / occasional work	
- in part-time job (please state what this is)	
- in full-time job (please state what this is)	
- self-employed	
- retired	
- unemployed	
- other (please state what this is)	

4. Which age group do you fit into? Please tick one box.

- 16 - 20	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 21 - 25	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 26 - 30	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 31 - 35	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 36 - 40	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 41 - 45	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 46 - 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 51 - 55	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 56 - 60	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 61 - 65	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 66 and above	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Personal Income

Please estimate the total gross (before tax) income which you have in a year. Tick the box which comes closest to this amount.

- None	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Up to £2,499 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>
- £2,500 to £4,999 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>
- £5,000 to £7,999 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>
- £8,000 to £10,999 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>
- £11,000 to £13,999 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>
- £14,000 to £16,999 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>
- £17,000 and above per year	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Household Income

Please estimate the total gross income (before tax) which your household has in a year.

Tick the box which comes closest to your situation.

- None	
- Up to £4,999 per year	
- £5,000 to £7,999 per year	
- £8,000 to £10,999 per year	
- £11,000 to £13,999 per year	
- £14,000 to £16,999 per year	
- £17,000 to £19,999 per year	
- £20,000 to £22,999 per year	
- £23,000 to £25,999 per year	
- £26,000 and above per year	

7. Accommodation

What kind of accommodation are you in? Please tick the box(es) which apply to you.

- Living with parents	
- Owner / Occupier	
- Council (tenant)	
- Privately rented (tenant)	
- Housing Association	
- Other - please state	

8. Transport

What kind(s) of transport do you use? Please tick the box(es) which apply to you.

- Drive own car	
- Drive family car	
- Drive other's car	
- Access to car (but don't drive)	
- No car	
- Use pedal bike	
- Use moped / motor bike	
- Use public transport	
- No transport available	

9. Which of these **IN-HOME LEISURE** activities do you do, and how often do you do them?
 Please tick just one box for each activity. You probably do others as well so just add these to
 the bottom of the list.

	2 - 5 times a week	Once a week	Once / twice a month	Less often	Never
Watch television					
Read newspapers					
Sitting down for a break					
Sew / knit, do crafts					
Cook for pleasure					
Read books					
Watch videos					
Listen to radio					
Play records / cassettes					
DIY / decorating					
Listen to, make music					
Have friends round					
Gardening, plant care					
Read magazines					
Have family round					
Animal keeping					
Sleeping, having a nap					
Writing					
Spending time with partner					
Chatting on the phone					
Studying, thinking					
Beer / wine making					
Card / board games					
other activities - please list below					

10. Which of these **OUTSIDE-HOME LEISURE** activities do you do? Again please indicate how often you do them, and if you do things which I've not listed, just add them at the bottom of the list.

	2 - 5 times a week	Once a week	Once / twice a month	Less often	Never
Visit friends, relatives					
Go shopping					
Go to the cinema, theatre					
Visit social clubs					
Go to the pub, restaurant					
Go to evening classes					
Go for a walk					
Go to classes during the day					
Do voluntary / community work					
Family outings					
Visit museums, galleries					
Watch sport (not on TV)					
Play bingo					
Visit countryside / seaside					
Go to clubs, societies					
Go to dances, discos					
Union / political meetings					
Play competitive sport					
Recreational activities					
Go to church					
Other activities - please list					

11. Now I'd like to know more about the kind of physical activities (i.e. sport and non-competitive, less organised activity) that you've done in the past.

If you have not done any kind of physical activity please move onto the next question.

For each of the age ranges below go down the list of activities on the left and tick the ones that you did between those ages.

For example if you started swimming when you were 37 then you would put a tick in the 36-40 column (along from where it says swimming), and so on. Again there will probably be things that you do which I haven't listed, just add these on the end of the list - if in doubt ask or add it!

ACTIVITIES	16- 20 yrs	21- 25 yrs	26- 30 yrs	31- 35 yrs	36- 40 yrs	41- 45 yrs	46- 50 yrs	51- 55 yrs	56- 60 yrs	61- 65 yrs	66 + yrs
Walking											
Swimming											
Keep fit, aerobics											
Dancing											
Bowling											
Cycling											
Badminton											
Tennis											
Golf											
Sailing											
Self defence											
Rounders											
Athletics											
Horse riding											
Camping											
Climbing											
Canoeing											
Table tennis											
Squash											
Yoga											
Jogging											
Football											
Rugby											

ACTIVITIES continued	16- 20 yrs	21- 25 yrs	26- 30 yrs	31- 35 yrs	36- 40 yrs	41- 45 yrs	46- 50 yrs	51- 55 yrs	56- 60 yrs	61- 65 yrs	66+ yrs
Gymnastics											
Hockey											
Netball											
Volleyball											
Basketball											
Cricket											

Other activities - please list below

12. Finally I'd like to know who you tend to spend your leisure time with, and how often you spend it with them.

Tick any of the following that apply to you.

My **IN-HOME** leisure activities I tend to do:

	often	now and again	not at all
on my own			
with my partner			
with my family			
with my friends			
with others			

My **OUTSIDE-HOME** leisure activities I tend to do:

	often	now and again	not at all
on my own			
with my partner			
with my family			
with my friends			
with others			

ONLY THOSE WHO ANSWERED Qu.11 NEED DO THIS LAST SECTION

My PHYSICAL activities I tend to do:

	often	now and again	not at all
on my own			
with my partner			
with my family			
with my friends			
with others			

THIS IS THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE, BUT PLEASE READ AND DETACH THE NEXT SHEET.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO HELP ME.

IMPORTANT

PLEASE READ THIS PAGE, COMPLETE THE FORM AT THE BOTTOM, AND RETURN IT TO ME IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED.

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire, the information gathered will help give a better idea of how women spend their leisure time. But I still need your help to find out why women spend their leisure time as they do.

What I'd like to do now is meet with you (either in groups or individually) to chat about the nature of your involvement in physical activity and your attitudes towards women (in general) being involved in it.

The time this next stage will take will vary for each person, but at a minimum it would probably take at least 20-30 mins, sometimes more for each person.

Please complete the rest of this sheet indicating whether you'd like to help me further.

I would / would not be interested in helping you further.

My name is _____

I can be contacted on the following phone number _____

between the hours of _____ and _____.

or at the following address

APPENDIX 3

CODING OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Introduction

As the questionnaire's prime aim was to promote contact with a potential sample of women to subsequently interview, the questionnaire was structured around areas which could generate useful demographic data about the women, and provide a basis for subsequent interviews. The construction of the questions therefore did not centre on their ease of coding and quantification, but around the information that they would yield. As the number of questionnaires distributed, and returned, increased it became clear that computerised analysis would be useful. SPSS was chosen due to its availability and my familiarity with it. The problem remained however that the questionnaire responses would have to be coded, and in some cases reduced, in order to enter them in a meaningful way. The following section outlines the treatment of the questionnaire data from their 'raw' form in the questionnaires returned, to their 'final' form in the SPSS data file. The implications of this codification process for the quality of the data are also discussed.

Codification of Questions

Although a codification system had been worked out for SPSS in advance of the questionnaires being returned, it was not until the questionnaires were being analysed that it became clear that this system was going to have to be modified because of the way in which people had answered the questions. The recoding reduced the categories being considered; for example, 'household circumstances' was reduced from 10

categories to 5. The reason this variable had ten categories initially was that it ensured some depth and quality to the data. The categories could always be reduced if necessary, but they could not be increased, which was why the respondents had been asked for so much detail.

Prior to discussing how each question response was processed and coded the problems that were encountered with each question will first be discussed (see Questionnaire in Appendix 2). Question one was concerned with marital status / household circumstances. The six options were designed to generate information about family commitments i.e. whether the women were married, had children at home etc.. However, from the questionnaire responses it became clear that these options proved to be problematic for women who were separated, but not divorced. It was also clear that some women may well have had commitments to men and women which did not fall into the category of marriage, but were similar in terms of household structure and daily living patterns. Coding of this question was expanded beyond the six options in order to take account of the ages of children at home. The responses to 'Married (children at home - please give ages)' were therefore split into three: children under 5 years; 5 - 16 years; and 16 years and above. The age of the youngest child was taken to be the crucial deciding factor where children's ages crossed age groupings.

Question two, on occupation, gave women the opportunity to tick whichever items applied to them. By giving this kind of freedom of response it also created problems for coding. Again a hierarchy of response was established, so that if a woman ticked both 'housewife' and 'retired', then this was entered as 'retired', to indicate that the woman was no longer eligible as part of the workforce (due to age or injury etc.). Where both casual and full time work were ticked then full-time work was the response that was entered. The coding that was used, therefore, related to the question options except that only one response was coded.

Some of the problems with question three were related to the problems with question one. Several women who had said they were either single, divorced or widowed in question one, entered occupations for their partners. In some cases, particularly for those who had put 'widowed' in question one, partner's occupation had been filled in and then crossed out. For others though there had been no alteration and it has to be assumed that they had a partner but were not married to them. This problematic area was picked up later in the questionnaire, in questions on household income and spending time with partner etc.. The coding for this question was the same as that for question two, with a hierarchy of work coming into operation if more than one item was checked.

Question four on age presented no problems in terms of responses, although for coding purposes it might have been simpler to have condensed some of the age categories. However, all eleven were kept as they related to question eleven.

The questions on income (Qu. 5 and 6) were problematic in so far as not everyone responded to these questions. More people responded re personal income than they did re household income. Some writing on the questionnaire that they did not know the household income (despite knowing their own income). The nature of the responses to occupation (of both self and partner) did not always match up with those for household income. This could have been because question 6 was not read carefully enough and that after personal income women expected to see partner's income (following the same pattern as the occupation questions). The responses to the income questions were coded as entered.

Question seven presented few problems with only one entry under the 'other' response. This was for someone who was living with their daughter. For coding purposes the responses were recoded into four categories instead of the existing six. As the only 'other' response was to do with living with the family option, two

categories ('other' and 'living with parents') to become 'living with family'. 'Council (tenant)' and 'Housing Association' (no responses) were joined together, whilst 'Owner/occupier' and 'Privately rented' remained as the existing two responses.

Question eight was similar in nature to the questions about occupation insofar as more than one item could be checked. Whilst getting a picture of the range of transport available was useful for subsequent interviews, for analysis purposes the responses were condensed into three categories of; 1 = access to car (as passenger or driver); 2 = no car, use alternative forms of transport i.e. public transport, bicycle etc.; and 3 = no transport available. The hierarchy in operation meant that if 'Drive own car' and 'Use pedal bike' had been checked then this would have been coded under 'access to car'.

Questions nine and ten asked about the frequency of both in-home and outside-home activities. From a range of five options from 'never' to '2 - 5 times a week' the respondents had to check one for each 'activity' listed. Whilst many people responded in this way, others seemed only to have made a positive response to those that they did, leaving all options blank for activities that they did not do. This created the problem that the 'never' category may have reflected only a fraction of those people who never did the 'activity'. Interestingly it seemed that there were some items that were checked, even when others were left blank i.e. bingo - 'never' and Sleeping/having a nap - 'never'. In terms of coding each 'activity' was be treated as a variable against which there were the five possible responses. Some studies (i.e. Wimbush 1986) have grouped similar activities and interests together, but as doing so also had the effect of reducing the quality of the data, I chose not to do that at that stage in the analysis. Some responses to question ten overlapped with those in question eleven, so in order not to miss anything out, the responses for both questions were compared and where items and been misplaced (i.e. put in Qu.10 instead of Qu. 11) they were put in the 'correct' place. On the few times that this occurred a mark

was made on the questionnaire indicating that changes had been made by the researcher.

Question eleven posed similar problems in so far as it sought to find out not only what physical activities women did, but also to map these over their life-span (16 - 66 years and above). An example was given of how the respondents should complete the question, but the responses suggested that this was perhaps not always fully understood. The other main problem was in how to deal with the data generated. A simple frequency count of how many activities women did between the ages of 16 and 20 could have been calculated. However, even this data would have been misleading, for some of the respondents would have been responding to what they did four years ago (when they were in that age category), and some would have been responding to what they did forty or fifty years ago. The historical dimension to these responses therefore meant that like was not being compared with like. Such kind of data however are rare and so in order to encapsulate it in the analysis a profiling system was developed which would retain data on the range of activities as well as on the age of participant. The data generated from this question was used as a key reference point during each interview.

Question twelve sought to find out who people spend their leisure time with. As with questions nine and ten there was a tendency for respondents only to check those items that applied to them in a positive way, despite the fact that there was a 'not at all' category. In terms of coding this question was treated in three separate parts dealing with in-home leisure, outside home leisure and physical activities.

APPENDIX 4

Women's Stories

Introduction

In the process of discussing what the women have said about their experiences of leisure, the household and employment it is all too easy for their accounts to get fragmented and to lose sight of the women involved. These potted life histories have therefore been included to serve as a useful reference point, as they draw together data gathered from each woman's interview and questionnaire. All of the women, with the exception of Anna were white Caucasians, Anna was part Lebanese.

Anna's Story

Anna was in her early thirties, married and with a nineteen month old daughter. She and her husband were full-time post-graduate students who had come from Mexico specifically to study in Britain. They lived in a rented flat and had their own car. She was brought up in what she described as a liberal Catholic family where despite fairly traditional views about marriage, children and work, she was given support to go into whatever profession she wanted to. She chose to do engineering at university and has continued in this field for her Ph.D.. Although she has always liked dancing, walking and cycling, she had not enjoyed sport at school and that had put her off trying anything else. It was at university in Mexico that she began to enjoy sport when she joined the fencing club. Once she left university and started work however, she could not continue with it because she did not have a club to go to, or for that matter any of the equipment.

In her late twenties she did do some aerobics, which she enjoyed because of the dance like nature of it. She was ill for some time after having her baby and she felt that she needed to get back into her old shape so she signed up for an aerobics class, at an

adult learning centre which has a crèche. She did not have to use the crèche all the time however, as she and her partner shared the child care, so if he was free he looked after the baby. As she put it:

I think I'm very lucky, I have one of those men that doesn't only say they're going to do it, he actually does it. ... Since the baby was born he's really been a lot of help, he's the sort of man that you can leave the baby with.... Anything related to the baby he's as capable as I am, and sometimes even more... I think I am very lucky.

Jenny's Story

Jenny was married, in her late twenties and working full time in paid employment. She and her husband had lived and worked in London, but had moved up to Upton three years previously. Although Jenny had been brought up in Upton, she had not lived there since she was eighteen and consequently did not have a ready made network of friends there. Most of their friends lived some distance away, so often their weekends were spent staying with friends. Because weekends were often spent away from home Jenny felt that most of her leisure activities had to be 'squeezed into the week'.

Although she had done ballet as a child, she hated the competitive sport that she had done at school. As a result of this her only physical activity whilst at university was some hill-walking. Her interest in physical activity as an adult came when she lost some weight after having been abroad for some time and on returning to Britain she decided to try and keep the weight off and get fit, so she started going to aerobics at the Body Work Studio in London. Although work commitments did not always allow her to keep up the aerobics when she lived in London, she joined a local gym when she and her husband moved up to Upton. Walking was not something that she did any more because her husband 'hates it'. In addition to going to the gym Jenny was involved in a number of leisure activities outside the home, and when asked how she managed to fit them all in, she explained how she juggled things around to make time for her leisure. As if confessing, she said that she and her husband did not do very much housework: '... it sounds terrible, we very rarely do housework you know, quick flick of the duster once a month or something...'. It seemed that Jenny's priorities lay

in making enough time for all her leisure activities, with gardening and housework being done when time permitted. This careful time management that enabled Jenny to do what she wanted, also involved 'negotiating' with her husband to 'win' time for her leisure. The negotiation was not necessarily explicitly verbalised, but she knew that if she wanted to avoid conflict with her husband she would have to find some way of solving the problem. The problem was that her husband was not so heavily involved in so many out of home leisure activities and he did not like her being out in the evening whilst he was 'sitting at home'. She knew that he would resent it if she went out, so she took steps to avoid being out, what he regarded as being, 'too much'. She recognised that at the time of the interview she was fortunate to be in a job which offered her some flexibility in terms of her working day; she was not sure what she would do to resolve the potential conflict between her and her husband if she had a nine to five job. So long as she met her monthly targets, it did not really matter whether she was in the office all the time or not. This therefore enabled her to go to the gym in the afternoons, and be at home for at least some evenings.

For some of her leisure activities there was little room for negotiation over timing and location because they were evening classes e.g. creative writing, Italian and tap dancing. Piano lessons were also circumscribed by the teacher's availability, but her weight-training at the local gym was potentially more flexible insofar as it was not centred around classes. Jenny clearly works at managing her leisure, work and commitments to her husband:

... you have to work very hard at fitting things in, in a modern life, if you've got a job and you don't want your job to take over your entire life, you want, you have to force yourself to make time for other activities or else you get totally swamped. You find the time for the job and the activities and then you find you've no time left for your husband or your homelife or whatever, so that's difficult. I think, you know, you have to find an evening or two a week when you're definitely going to be in, to spend time together and that way, with the gym being Monday, Wednesday and Friday, even if you did have to go out, to go there, you could then say, well Tuesday and Thursday, I will be in, and work it that way.

Hazel's Story

In her late thirties, Hazel was married with three children (ages 7, 3 and 18 months). Although at the time of the interview Hazel described herself as a housewife, she had been in the police, joining immediately after she left school. She had enjoyed sport at school and was able to carry on participating whilst in the police cadets and in the police. She kept all her activities up until she got married when she was 25, and then she stopped participating in all but the occasional game of squash. She stopped work when she got married and a year and a half later had her first child. For the next six years, during which time she had the children, her main type of exercise was walking the dog. She was looking forward to the time when her youngest would be at school all day, because then she would feel free to do what she wanted during the day. Just after her youngest was born she started going to the Health and Fitness club because she had put on weight and could not get into her clothes. The weight soon dropped off and she has kept going since then, although she is careful not to develop big muscles. There are times when she cannot go to the gym for her regular three sessions, such as in the summer when her husband, who is self-employed, does not get in from work until late. However, in school term times she regularly manages to get her three sessions in. The nature of her partner's job means that she has the main responsibility for the household, which sometimes gets her down as she feels that she rarely gets to do anything for herself. This problem is accentuated by her husband, who she feels, just does what he wants, when he wants to, whereas she has to plan everything and get him organised.

Beryl's Story

Beryl was married, in her early sixties and both she and her husband were retired. She used to work as a machinist and had planned to work up until she retired, but the company went bust and she was forced to retire five years prior to the interview. I met her through a keep fit class that she went to with a woman who lived across the road from her. She had always been reasonably active when younger and swimming, cycling and old-time dancing had been her favourite activities. Her activity levels dropped when she got married and particularly when she had her daughter. As a family

however, they were quite active as they went on camping holidays to Europe. Shortly before she retired she and her husband, and a friend from work started going to swimming classes. They went twice a week, although she is the only one who goes and she just goes once a week. When she retired she missed people's company as her husband and many of her friends were still working, so she started Adult Education classes, which included the keep fit. She felt that the keep fit helped to keep her arthritis at bay.

Lucy's Story

I met Lucy through an Adult Education, where she was doing dress-making. She was in her early fifties and was married to a self-employed motor trader. Although she described herself as a housewife, she did do all of her husband's paperwork, and had for a brief period done some home-working. After leaving school she took up an apprenticeship in dressmaking and worked for several years before meeting and marrying her husband when she was twenty-three. Her husband was in the Armed Forces at that time and although she could have worked at the various areas he got posted to, he did not want her to and she had no great objections. When she was at school she did not like physical education, largely she felt because of the teacher. She did however enjoy netball and hockey, although she did not see herself as sporty. Her main physical activity was dancing, and she and her friends went regularly to the dances at the local forces camps, and it was there that she met her husband. She and her husband, who was a PTI in the RAF, did do some activities together such as badminton and golf, although she prefers more passive leisure activities. She used to walk the dog a lot, but one day a man exposed himself in front of her and she has not liked to out as much since then, so she feels that her leisure is limited in that regard.

Sarah's Story

Sarah was in her early sixties and had been widowed for fourteen years. I met her through the Vale Women's group, of which she was the Press Secretary and a committee member. Although she had planned to carry on working until she reached retirement age, she was made redundant when she was fifty-seven and did not find another

job because she felt she had to nurse her brother who had fallen ill. Just prior to the interview however, she had found that she had to work again because she could not afford to pay the rates, so she managed to find a part-time secretarial job at a local church.

Although troubled by arthritis of the spine since she was thirty-two, she had been quite active when younger and had loved roller-skating and ballroom dancing. She and two other girls used to go dancing at the local army camp and at the Corn Exchange. However, after she married she did not do so much dancing as her husband was not keen on it, and also the arthritis became problematic. Although both she and her husband were working she was the one who was in charge of all the finances, and she in effect ran the house. With hindsight she could recognise the benefits of this system of financial control:

... so when he died, I mean apart from the loss of him, and the grief and so forth, things didn't come hard to me, like they do to a lot of women that rely on their husbands to do everything.

She joined the Women's group after her husband died and she has been going ever since.

Joy's Story

A 'retired' housewife was in her late sixties, Joy was married with three grown-up children who lived close by. Her husband had not long since retired from his full-time job and was, at the time of interview, in a part-time job. They were a busy couple who seemed to have trouble finding time to fit everything in; as Joy said: 'I'm not a sitter knitter, if you know what I mean?' She goes to a keep fit class and an old time dancing class every week as well as taking her dog to training classes at the local dog club. This is what she described as her 'abiding passion' and she belongs to the club's team which puts on shows for charity. She also enjoys taking her dog for long walks across the fields near their house. There was a time however, just after she retired when she was not part of any club or group, and did not have a dog and she was pretty miserable. She's found though that the classes (keep fit and dance) and her clubs have kept her going. She felt that the keep fit in particular had helped her avoid having to

take tablets and generally kept her healthier.

She had always liked dogs having worked in a kennels on leaving school. She then moved on to become a cutter at Benton's where she worked up until she retired seven years prior to the interview. The only break from work she had had was to have the children. When she was younger she used to do keep fit at work, and was in the works keep fit team. Barn dancing was something else she and her friends used to do, but the old time dancing she had only recently taken up. She has really enjoyed going to the dance classes as she picked it quickly and now feels very confident to go anywhere e.g. in hotels abroad when they are on holiday, and dance. She had a similar boost to her confidence when she learnt to swim when she was 58.

Claire's Story

Claire was married, in her late twenties with a 16 month old daughter. She had a part-time job and her partner was in a temporary full-time job, after having been unemployed. Her part-time job entailed caring for an elderly woman for five hours a week. Prior to having her daughter she had been working firstly as an editorial assistant when she left school and then as a lab technician for seven and a half years. Her leisure interests when she was younger revolved around the guides and the Church Youth Fellowship. She also took up ballroom dancing and jogging around the time of her mock 'A' levels because she felt that being fitter would help her exam performance. When she was younger Claire hated physical education and was quite glad to be exempted from it because she had brittle bones. She used to spend her time walking round the hockey pitch or reading. However, as she grew out of her condition she enjoyed becoming more active. In addition to doing the dancing and jogging she also learnt how to swim and ride a bicycle. Both she and her partner are still very involved with the church, and she had, just prior to the interview, agreed to help with the Sunday School.

I met Claire through the pottery class at an Adult Education centre in the town. She had been going pottery classes since coming to Upton but it was really only after the birth of her daughter that she fully appreciated the value of them. They got her out of

the house, talking with adults:

... you soon realise in the first few weeks of parenthood, that if you completely let your own mind and personality be just soaked up like a sponge by the baby and never think about anything else than the baby, that when it gets past immediate babyhood you are going to have nothing to give it em plus the fact that you are much more likely to succumb to post-natal depression or just depression later on, and when you have been out at work and been used to social contact at coffee breaks and son on, with other adults, you do really miss it, and having waited a longer time than most people do before choosing to start a family, probably I missed it more than I would have if I'd only had that for two or three years. And it was a golden opportunity to get other adult contact and know that she was well cared for, and in fact the fact that if she hollered too loud and long they could bring her in so she wasn't being made to really suffer for my pleasure and my well satisfaction.

With a household income of under £11,000 Claire and her partner keep a tight control on expenditure. They manage their finances in a shared fashion, and discuss their budgeting regularly. Where possible they try to save money, for example they are part of a baby sitting circle which operates in a reciprocal fashion, as they cannot afford to go out and pay for baby-sitting. Claire's earnings go to pay for the swimming lessons that she and her daughter have, and although in theory she could spend some of the money on clothes, she prefers to save money for essentials and buy second-hand clothes.

Sharon's Story

Sharon was in her late twenties, separated from her second husband and living with her two children who were three and a half and one and a half years old. At school Sharon had been quite physically active, particularly in roller skating, in which she represented both her school and county. After leaving school when she was sixteen she started working full-time in a large discount store. Her last job had been as chief cashier at the local bingo hall, a job which she found very fulfilling. However, when she and her husband separated she had to resign because she could not afford suitable childcare.

As a single parent, who was unable to work due to lack of affordable childcare, Sharon's leisure became more home-based, and child-centred. She did try going to relaxation and exercise classes at a nearby centre, but it proved unsuitable:

I would've kept going but they were having trouble getting someone to run the crèche for the kiddies and you ended up having the kids running round you, with you, you can't really relax (laughs)...

She would have liked to have gone to aerobics, but instead she started to exercise to music in her lounge, something which enabled her to '... switch off from life...', and get rid of all the tension.

Sharon and a friend had a reciprocal agreement for childcare, which meant that there were the occasional times when Sharon would have some free time in the day. Time free from the children at night was harder to win, although Sharon 'admitted' that she sometimes put the children to bed early just to get some peace and quiet. The fact that this comment was made as if it were something wrong, i.e. she 'admitted her crime', suggests that she had internalised the view that a 'good' mother should not do this. The 'crime' was that she was putting herself before her children. In discussing her status as a single parent Sharon felt that it gave her freedom, and therefore more time, but in considering the position of married friends, she did not see them as being free, but as having time. In making sense of this she felt that the fact that they did not have children may have been an important factor. In addition to this she also felt that money was an important factor in facilitating leisure. However, as Sharon put it: '... you do what you can do within your means really don't you'.

Faith's Story

(The quality of the interview tape was very poor and most of Faith's story relies heavily on the field notes made after the interview.)

Faith was in her late fifties and worked part-time in Adult Education. She started teacher training when she was forty four, but by the time she qualified there were too many teachers and not enough jobs. She worked in market research for a while, but had to give that up when her daughter moved out of the house, and so she no longer

had access to her daughter's car. She moved into Adult Education and taught some arts and crafts, but at the time of interviewing she was co-ordinating the Adult Education Centre's newsletter. It was in this capacity that I met Faith, and her daughter, who also did some teaching at the classes. Although her husband had retired from the police he was, at the time of the interview, working full-time in local government.

Throughout her life Faith had been very active and since her late teens had been swimming, dancing and walking. She also played tennis and went cycling well into her forties.

Dawn's Story

Dawn was a housewife in her late twenties, who had stopped work to have a child. Her husband worked full-time and commuted to work in London. After having done French and political history at university Dawn did a secretarial course which led her into working for a bank in London. She progressed through the bank ending up running an investment portfolio. Much as she enjoyed the job however, she found the life too pressured and after five years she decided to try and find something that was less stressful. They moved out of London to Upton for a quieter life. Wanting a break from work, Dawn chose to be a housewife, and because she found this quite lonely she joined a Keep Fit class. As she did not find this particularly social she decided to find employment again which she thought would be a better way of getting to know people. She managed to get a secretarial job which gave her the social benefits of work without the stress she had previously experienced. In terms of leisure activities she had not done much whilst at university because she got bored so quickly with the activities. She had however tried yoga when she was feeling very pressured by her investment job, but she found she was too tired to get a lot of benefit from it. She also used to go to a gym once a week, down the road from her work, but despite its convenient location, she often did not have enough time to get there. At one point she had also become concerned about her shape and went to slimnastics to try and shed a few pounds and slim up. When she moved to Upton, in addition to joining the keep fit class she also did Spanish at an evening class.

Gill's Story

After Gill and her first husband separated she found it hard to get involved in many leisure activities as she had her son to look after. As she could not afford childcare, it meant that any leisure activity she did had to accommodate her son. This was why she chose to play squash, because there was a crèche that she could leave her son in whilst she played. After an injury curtailed her involvement with squash she looked for something else to do, and eventually, sometime after meeting her second husband she tried and enjoyed the Health and Fitness club. At the time of interview she was about to renew her subscription for the fourth year. The reason she enjoyed the club and the weight training so much was that she found it relaxing. She finds that with the variety of machines they have got she never gets bored, which is something that she found happening when she tried jogging. She also enjoys the friendly atmosphere at the club and makes sure that she goes at least three times a week despite her full time course at college. She had thought that she might have to stop going to the gym, but she remembered how valuable she found exercising was when she did her 'A' levels. Doing the weight-training makes her feel physically and mentally better, and more able to cope with daily life.

Her life had changed in many ways following the break up of her first marriage, she started going to college and she met her second husband George. She started at college doing an RSA book-keeping course and then she went on to do 'O' levels and 'A' levels and at the time of interview was doing a B.A. degree. Throughout much of this she was living with George who supported her wholeheartedly. It was George who suggested that they alter the division of domestic labour in order that she could focus more on her work, and have to worry less about the house. She felt that with George her role had changed from the traditional domestic role to one of a shared partnership.

Sue's Story

Sue was in her late thirties, married and with two children ages seven and four. She and her husband had decided that although she could probably get a teaching job to

boost their household income, they and the children would lose out and they would also probably have to spend money on paying for child minding, housecleaning etc.. So Sue was not in any paid employment except for the occasional day doing supply teaching. She was however very heavily involved in unpaid work, such as being on her child's school governing body, and being on the playgroup committee. In addition to this she spent a lot of time with the children helping them with their music practice and taking them to swimming and music classes. She took a very keen interest in wholefood cooking to ensure that the family were eating the right things. At the sewing class I met her at she was also making clothes for the children. Sue did however also manage to find time for some leisure activities that were more for her benefit, such as the WEA history and her Alexander Technique classes. Although she used to play tennis and go horse riding when younger, she had a bad fall from a horse a few years prior to the interview and she was still suffering from it, so she had cut down on her physical activities. However, found the Alexander technique classes very beneficial in helping her to relax.

Jo's Story

Jo was in her late forties, was married and had four children, three of whom had already left home. Both she and her husband worked full time, although there had been a period of eight years when she did not work whilst the children were young. When she was at school she was very keen on tennis and was a member of a club. However, in London where she trained as a nurse it was very hard for her to keep playing, partly because of the facilities, but also because of the physically demanding nature of her training. She loved jazz and enjoyed being able to dancing at the jazz clubs in London. When she got married and moved to Birmingham she had an eight year break from nursing. When the children were growing up she taught them to swim and also played badminton with them, but her own activity levels were low. She returned to part-time work initially and after she passed her driving test she was able to go full-time. Her involvement at the Health and Fitness club started some three years prior to the interview at a time when she was very busy at work and her mother had just died. She wondered what she was going to do and then she saw the club advertising a free promotional session. She enjoyed it so much that she joined and has been a member

since. She also started wind surfing, more as a joke initially after a comment she had made at a party. She particularly enjoys the wind surfing because she feels she must be the oldest woman out on the lake. She also feels that with the weight training and the wind-surfing combined she has become much stronger.

Margaret's Story

Margaret was in her late sixties, single and living with her partially disabled sister. She had retired from teaching some seven years prior to the interview, having been a homecraft teacher in a local middle school. She found it hard to find time to fit everything in, as she helped out at the Sue Ryder home, went to her keep fit class, sang in the Choral Society, went to a French class, the music club and church discussion groups. She prefers not to go out in the evenings so most of her out of home leisure activities are done during the day, except for the choral society. Since retiring she had developed arthritis in her thumb, so all the homecraft things she had planned to do and make she now found impossible. Although she never played sport when she was younger, she started going to keep fit when she retired because she wanted some kind of activity. She thoroughly enjoys the class as she thinks it keeps her going. The only other exercise she used to do was when she was younger she did folk dancing, but she stopped that in 1950.

Edith's Story

Edith was a 71 year old widow who lived on her own in a small bungalow on the outskirts of town. Since she was 57 she had been suffering from arthritis in her knee and she relied heavily on pain-killers to make life bearable. When she was younger she and her husband used to run dances in the town, he was the MC and she did all the publicity and bookings. She loved the dancing and often her husband would get her to fill in and be a 'spare man's' partner. When she left school she went to work in a fruit shop in the town and then went on to work at Fastco, or Lowe's as it was called then. She had hoped to work there until she was sixty, but she got made redundant when she was 58. Her arthritis put severe restrictions on her out of home leisure and one of the things that attracted her to the sewing class, at the Adult Education Centre I met

her at, was the fact that they offered to collect and return people to their homes. She not only enjoys making things, but she also enjoys the company. For although she has a daughter living in the town, she does not see her and her family very much because, although they have a car they do not go over very much. Transport was easier when she had a bus stop right outside her door, but since it had been moved up to the top of the road she was less able to use it. However, with the help of friends she still managed to go to a luncheon club, an arthritis club and MS society meetings.

Wendy's Story

Wendy was married, in her late twenties with two children ages seven and four. Her husband was in full-time employment as she had been prior to having the children. When she left school with 5 CSEs she went into an office job as a junior clerk. She worked her way up through accounts to the wages department where she was working prior to having the children. After an eight year break from work, to raise the children, Wendy had only just returned to paid employment as a kitchen assistant at a local school. For her the attraction of this type of job was that it was only three hours a day, and it fitted in with her own children's school times. She manages to find time to go to two Adult Education classes, a cookery one (which is where I met her at) and a gardening one, that she goes to with a woman she met at cookery. In addition to this she also helps out with the cubs by being a member of their fund-raising committee. Physical activity does not figure in any way in her leisure activities, which is something she puts down to having been put off by physical education at school. She recalled people threatening her to let them win, she disliked showering, and generally whenever she could get out of PE she did. Having said all that, she did say that she would love to be able to swim. When she worked in the office, her leisure centred around going to the cinema, discos and walking. She does quite a lot of exercise daily as she has no access to a car, so she gets everywhere, either by walking, cycling or using public transport.

Linda's Story

Linda was in her late thirties, was married, worked full time in paid employment and had two children who were eight and eleven years old. She had always been quite involved in physical activity except when the children were young. As a child herself she had fairly active and played netball and rounders. She left school at fifteen with little in terms of career prospects. As Linda put it:

... you were so into your history and geography and PE and let's get the homework done, rush out and see your boyfriend in the evening, you didn't really think about, you know, career wise at all, well it's true isn't it?

Her first job was as a punch machine operator and she has carried on working in the same area ever since. She stopped work when she had her first child, but went back and did some temping, before stopping again to have her second child. After almost eight years of staying at home to have the children, she felt she had done all the things she wanted to do at home. She also felt that she no longer had to stay at home all the time for the children:

... they don't need me for x amount of hours in the day, and providing I'm here when they go to school in the morning and here when they come home from school - be quite happy to go out and do something.

Her return to paid work then was conditional on her finding the right kind of employment which would give her the flexibility that she wanted, so she could still feel that she was being the 'right' kind of mother i.e. being there when they left and came home from school. After a period of temping she found an employer who was happy to have her working from half past nine in the morning until three o'clock.

So whilst the tensions were not entirely confronted or resolved, getting access to leisure time in some ways became less problematic as the children became more independent. Linda's role as carer however did not end with her children and she gave up her sports for a while to look after her father-in-law when he became ill. Regardless of these strains and sacrifices Linda still felt that she had the 'best of both worlds' by being able to work for a few hours whilst still fulfilling her role as mother.

Jane's Story

Jane was in her early forties, married and working part-time as a clerk / typist. Jane took 'O' levels at school but she did not enjoy school at all and felt rather smothered by the 'over-keenness', as she saw it, of others. As a result she tended to be rebellious and kick against the system. Combined with this she felt that coming from a working class background it just was not expected that she would stay on and do 'A' levels. She left school and worked in the library at Harrods for a while, until she met her husband. She moved to an office job because she needed more money and since then has, in her words, 'drifted through' various kinds of clerical work working in the Health Service and at the Police Headquarters.

I met Jane through one of the Keep Fit classes which she had gone to with a friend from work at the Police Headquarters. She went because she had not done any activity for a couple of years and thought she must get back into it. However, she found it a bit too dance like for her tastes and so she only went for a term. So, by the time I came to interview her, she had already stopped going to the keep fit. At school she has been unathletic, but as she grew older and more unfit she felt that she had to do something about it. At the age of 35 she learnt to swim, and she tried horse riding, but not only was it expensive, but she was rather nervous. She had previously tried aerobics and badminton before, but had not persevered with anything, as she said her exercise tended to be spasmodic. One thing that was constant though was her walking. They had a dog which she loved to take on long walks. The dog in fact seemed to have made quite an impact on their lives insofar as they had begun to find new walks to take the dog, and in so doing were finding out more about the area they lived in.

Betty's Story

Betty was in her early fifties, married, with two grown-up children who were no longer living at home. Her husband worked full-time, whilst she was in part-time employment as a secretary in a school for mentally handicapped children. On leaving school Betty had initially wanted to go to art school or into nursing, but her parents thought a commercial would be much more useful. She did this and subsequently got a

job as a secretary in a hospital. She stayed in that area eventually becoming the secretary to a Professor of Child Health, a job which she loved. Although she never saw herself as university material she was good at sport, and as sport was highly valued at her school, she gained a lot of confidence from being good at it. Her love of sport was kindled from an early age when she used to lean over the back wall of her parents garden, and watched people playing tennis on some grass tennis courts behind. When she was older she joined a tennis club and represented her club in the county league. She used to play three or four times a week with matches at weekends. She also sang in the Choral Society. Having children led to a break in her tennis for a period of about seven years, but as she was very busy anyway, and the local amenities were not that good she did not miss it too much. In total she had an eleven year break from work as the children grew up. Even when the job came up in the school, she was not actively looking for one, but a friend drew her attention to it, and she applied and got it. In addition to her tennis Betty also played badminton, and it was through the Ladies Badminton Club that I met her. She had been playing badminton since 1957, sometimes this was with her husband, but more often than not he was too busy. To try and get out more together she started to learn how to play golf, and she played for about two years, but they could not go together very often, so she stopped playing.

Ruth's Story

Ruth was in her late twenties, married with both a full-time and a part-time job. Her partner also had a full-time job. At school Ruth always enjoyed netball, hockey and athletics, even if she was not particularly good at it. After school she went straight to college to do a catering management course which led her into working for a company which did catering for British Rail. Whilst she was at college she did not do much activity as there were not any facilities, but she did go to a local swimming pool occasionally. She became concerned with putting on weight and went with a friend to an aerobics class, but after her friend hurt her back they decided to try the local health and fitness club. She began to feel much better and lost a stone in weight. She had tried jogging but it made her chest hurt, whereas weight training created no problems at all. She had been meaning to get back to swimming because she found it wakes her up after she feels weary at the end of a day's work, but she had not found the time.

She also occasionally sang in the choir at a local village, but again, that was a rather patchy involvement due to the lack of time.

Debbie's Story

Debbie was in her early thirties, was divorced with three children, only two of whom were living with her. She was at the time of interview doing a BA degree at the local college. She had however left school and gone straight into a job as a window dresser. Following this she had a series of jobs working in a children's home, as a waitress, and as a shop assistant. When she got divorced she decided that she was not going to be a housewife on social security for the rest of her life, so she decided she wanted to teach. Having got most of her 'O' levels and her 'A' levels she failed her maths, so started a BA degree instead of a B.Ed., however she had since got her maths. Being at college had broadened her outlook tremendously, but it also caused some problems between her and her boyfriend who feels that she thinks he is not good enough for her now. She feels though that her family are happy with what she is doing, as they apparently thought she had married out of her class in the first place. I met her through the keep fit which she had started because she thought it would be a good way of making contact with other people. Although she cycled to college, doing the keep fit was quite a change for her because school really put her off most sport and she had not done much since then. As a child she had loved ballet and had carried on with it until she was fifteen and her parents thought she should give it up. The fact that she had done so, was something that she regretted.

Christine's Story

Christine was married, in her early sixties and had spinal arthritis. I met her through the keep fit, where she had been going, with her sister in law for the previous three years. She kept going even though she had had some back trouble but her physiotherapist thought it would be good for her back to keep going. As a child she had been sports mad and her parents encouraged her. She went swimming every day and also went roller skating and ballroom dancing. As well as the swimming she and

four others did mass diving and played water-polo. In 1935 she did her roller skating exams and entered roller skating competitions until well after the war. She actually met her husband, who was in the navy, when she was roller skating. Her mother taught old time dancing, so she grew up being able to dance well, and then she moved into more modern dance. She travelled around competing in dance competitions.

After she left school she worked in an office doing clerical work, but then got put over by the Ministry of Defence to a bomb making factory. There she began to get cordite blackouts, and so got released from that. She then began work as a civilian clerk in the army. Following the war she got a job in the same engineering factory as her husband was working in. She had just retired from this factory some five years prior to the interview. When she was not doing things for herself in her leisure time, she was going round the country with her husband as he refereed at boxing matches. Her 'job' was to do all the paperwork. She enjoys sport so much that she watches sport on television. In addition to this she and her husband used to be key members of the local boat club, but they had recently had to sell their boat, because her arthritis made it increasingly difficult to handle the boat. She and her husband had also helped run the Sea Cadets as well as fostering two boys. Christine had a very positive view of life and was not going to be beaten by her arthritis, as she said some people have it ten times worse, and they cope.

Carol's Story

Carol was in her early forties and worked part-time teaching music at a local school. She was married and had one son, who was away at boarding school. As a child, Carol had not only been keen on music but was also quite physically active. She loved gymnastics at school and also went to ballet and horse-riding. As she got older her interest in these activities waned and she preferred to go walking with the family. She regarded her family as being fairly active as they always looked to go on walking holidays.

The major change in Carol's activity pattern came when she was in her late thirties:

I think it was one horrific morning when I looked in the mirror with no clothes on, I was thirty-eight, my son was twelve and I thought you are a slob, you eat

all the wrong things, you don't take any exercise, its no wonder you've fallen apart at the seams, you must do something about it.

This realisation prompted Carol to try various activities such as badminton and squash, neither of which she found particularly satisfactory in terms of getting her fit and losing weight. She saw advertisements for a gym, that had just opened up, and she went along to try it and found that she enjoyed it. She joined the club and has been a member ever since. Being able to get to the gym regularly was very important to Carol, so much so that she felt that her life revolved around her workouts. More than this she felt that her involvement in weight-training has led her to be more positive and assertive. It has also led her to becoming more concerned about living a healthier life-style and encouraging others to do the same.

APPENDIX 5

Overview of Women Involved with the Research

Table 3: Age of the Women

Age	Questionnaires	Interviews
16-25	15	0
26-35	36	9
36-45	29	5
46-55	24	3
56-65	24	4
66 + years	42	3
No response	2*	/
Total	172	24

* includes 1 returned completely blank for every question

Table 4: Personal Circumstances of the Women

Personal Circumstances	Questionnaires	Interviews
Single (no child)	18	1
Single (with child)	4	3
Married (no child)	21	8
Married (child at home)	57	8
Married (child left home)	41	2
Widowed / Divorced	29	2
No response	2*	/
Total	172	24

* includes 1 returned completely blank for every question

Table 5: Occupation of the Women

Occupation	Questionnaires	Interviews
Student	5	3
Housewife	34	6
Part-Time	31	7
Full-Time	37	2
Retired	50	5
Casual	9	1
Unemployed	3	0
Other	2	0
No Response	1*	0
Total	172	24

* returned completely blank for every question

Table 6: Personal Income of the Women

Income	Questionnaires	Interviews
None	32	8
up to £2,499	30	6
£2,500 - £4,999	18	3
£5,000 - £7,999	18	4
£8,000 - £10,999	6	1
£11,000 - £13,999	3	0
£14,000 - £16,999	3	0
£17,000 +	4	0
No Response	58*	2
Total	172	24

* includes 1 returned completely blank for every question

Table 7: Household Income of the Women

Income	Questionnaires	Interviews
None	7	1
Up to £4,999	12	2
£5,000 - £7,999	7	0
£8,000 - £10,999	8	2
£11,000 - £13,999	9	1
£14,000 - £16,999	9	1
£17,000 - £19,999	11	3
£20,000 - £22,999	9	1
£23,000 - £25,999	4	1
£26,000 +	14	1
Not Known	1	1
No response	81*	9
Total	172	24

* includes 1 returned completely blank for every question