

Exploring the decline in youth drinking using creative, participatory research methods with young people.

Whitaker, V; Curtis, P; Fairbrother, H; Meier, P J; Oldham, M and Holmes, J

The Youth Drinking in Decline (Y-DiD) project

Background

Young people in the UK today are drinking much less alcohol than did previous generations of young people. However, we know little about which groups of young people are drinking less and little about what young people's perspectives on this decline, or how the place and role of alcohol in their everyday lives may have changed over time.

Study Design

Y-DiD is a four-year investigation of changing drinking cultures across recent generations. The project utilises both qualitative and quantitative (reported elsewhere) methods to address two research questions:

- How has youth drinking changed over the past three decades and how does this vary across the population?
- Can changes in alcohol's position within broader youth culture help to explain why drinking is declining?

| Cohort | Age | Number of | Type of interview | Number of |
|----------|-------|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Cohort 1 | 13-15 | 48 | Friendship group | 21 |
| Cohort 2 | 16-19 | 48 | Friendship group and individual | 30 |
| Cohort 3 | 20-25 | 24 | Individual | 24 |
| Cohort 4 | 30-35 | 24 | Individual | 24 |

Qualitative research element: takes an intergenerational approach that will foster insights into the changing place and role of alcohol within broader youth culture over time.

- 144 participants across four age cohorts.
- Creative, participatory interviews to explore changes and continuities in youth drinking practices and their intersections with other activities.

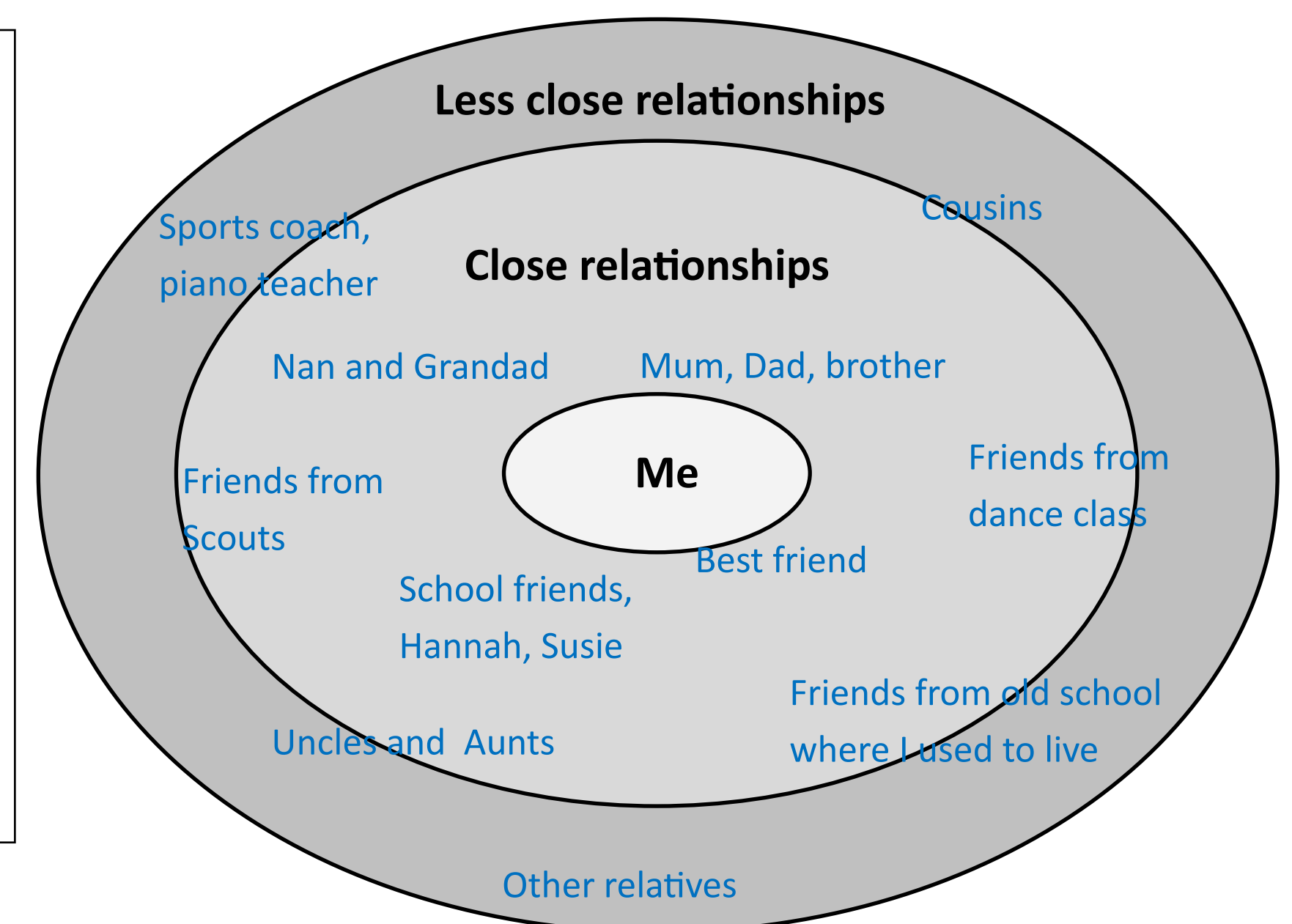
This poster reports on the methods used in interviews with age cohorts one and two, primarily within friendship group interviews.



Relationship map Young people documented relationships of significance to them on an A3 diagram.

- Close relationships were recorded toward the centre of the map; less-close relationships appeared towards the outside of the map.
- Young people noted the types of activities they engaged in with these people, where and when they interacted and how they kept in touch with one another.

Relationship maps captured the complexities of young people's personal relationships and friendship groups and how these relationships were experienced across time and space, providing a basis from which to explore the experience and role of alcohol within young people's everyday lives.



Visual aids were generated through three arts-based workshops with young people. An information designer then developed a series of fifteen visual aids depicting various aspects of contemporary youth culture.

- During interviews, young people articulated their perceptions of the people represented in the images, highlighting whether or not — and why — they felt they would 'fit' into their friendship group.
- Participants were asked to reflect on the health-related behaviours of the people represented in the images with a particular focus upon diet, physical activity, smoking, drug-use, stress and anxiety and social media use.

The visual aids provided a basis for exploring young people's values and identities as well as the broader contexts in which drinking practices were situated, and the extent to which alcohol clustered with, or related to, other health-related behaviours



Debate Young people debated the question 'Why are young people today drinking less alcohol?'

- Initial thoughts were shared and discussed within each friendship group.
- Young people then reflected on some of the postulated reasons for the decline in youth alcohol consumption and placed these in order of importance.

This method allowed us to access both young people's own understandings of why alcohol use is declining and their opinions on the resonance of a range of postulated factors that are debated in the academic and policy literature.

Debate Statements

- It's hard for young people to buy alcohol
- Young people are busy on social media or gaming
- Young people are aware of the health risks of alcohol
- Parents make sure children make good choices around alcohol
- Young people can't afford to buy alcohol
- Young people are taking drugs instead

Why are young people today drinking less alcohol?

Initial impressions:

- Children have complex social networks with multiple friendship groups: though this was less evident amongst children from deprived backgrounds, especially amongst younger children.
- Children could articulate traits and health relevant behaviours that they would/would not associate with their own friendship groups.
- Children were able to prioritise reasons for the decline in youth alcohol use.