

# WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HOW THE SOCIAL CLASSES ARE PORTRAYED IN THE NEWS MEDIA IN REGARDS TO THE DRINKING CULTURE IN BRITAIN TODAY?

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## ABSTRACT

*There exists a discrepancy between how the news media portrays the drinking habits of the lower classes namely the 'underclass' and the working class, compared with the middle class and celebrity culture in Britain today. Using critical discourse analysis this research explores why the social classes are portrayed differently, who decides on this portrayal and why, as well as the social ramifications of such portrayals. This exploration will extend to the wider social issues which affect the discrepancy in media portrayal. Firstly by looking specifically at the nineteenth century, the social history of Britain's drinking culture and the class struggle that exists, as this was a period which highlights middle class dominance and has transcended the generations. Secondly, the acceptability of alcohol in British society and how this acceptability differs, dependent on the social class you belong to, according to media construction. Thirdly, an examination of class in modern Britain and how immunity is granted to the middle classes from condemnation from the media and the processes of the Law due to their perceived respectability and use of private and public space. Finally, media influence and how the news media is a business which seeks to increase its profits by being used as a tool in the transmission of ruling class ideology.*

*This research focuses on the news portrayal from three newspapers; The Times, Daily Express and The Sun, as a means of examining the differences in portrayals dependent on the target audience of the newspaper. Societies reliance on the media to provide them with an insight into the world puts the media in a very powerful position. What this research aims to highlight is, that in order for there to be a cultural shift in Britain's relationship with alcohol, the middle class should no longer be able to hide behind the protection of the media, with all social groups needing to be open to scrutiny.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to explore how the drinking culture is portrayed in Britain today through newspaper coverage. It will seek to highlight the discrepancy in media coverage afforded to the lower classes, namely the 'underclass' and the working class, compared with the middle class and celebrity culture.

This research will look specifically at how the different social classes drinking habits are portrayed through the quality and quantity of articles published and how this may lead to cultural acceptability of alcohol use. It will concentrate on the coverage of Britain's drinking culture between the 5 June 2007 and 16 October 2007 and will look comparatively at three newspapers; *The Times*, *Daily Express* and *The Sun* in order to analyse if there are any differences in coverage presented of the alcohol issue. These dates have been chosen due to the nature of the coverage in this period. It was a period in which middle class drinking habits were being highlighted as problematic and a mass outcry was taking place about the drinking habits of the lower classes, with 'yobbish' behaviour in particular being portrayed as plaguing the streets of Britain. Articles however were used, which were outside of this time period and outside of the set newspapers, if they were deemed to be of particular relevance. The focus of this research was explored within the context of five chapters rather than a chronological study.

### **Chapter One - Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis**

This chapter provides an outline of the methodology employed in the writing of this research; Critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA as a methodology welcomes a vast array of differing opinion about its definition and use. Consequently, the research focuses on the central themes of CDA according to Fairclough (1989, 1995a, 1995b, 2001), as after a dissemination of the available literature, Fairclough (1989, 1995a, 1995b, 2001) provided the most comprehensive overview of CDA fitting to the aims of this research. The works of Jager (2001), Wodak (2001a, 2001b) and van Leeuwen (1987) were also utilised to provide a balanced understanding of CDA. CDA seeks to root out delusion and consequently produce enlightenment and emancipation (Wodak, 2001, pg 10). This can be accomplished through ideological work by showing how power relations are discursive and historicises the data (Fairclough, 1989, 1995a, 1995b). In relation to the aims of this research namely; to examine the difference in the reporting of the drinking habits of the lower classes compared with the middle classes, CDA will help to explore why the social classes are portrayed differently, who decides on this portrayal and why, as well as the social ramifications of such portrayals.

### **Chapter Two – A Nineteenth Century Look at Britain's Drinking Culture.**

In line with Fairclough's (1989, 1995a, 1995b) admission of the importance of historicising our data to fulfil the objectives of CDA, this chapter will aim to do just that. The nineteenth century has been chosen, with focus being in such detail due to the great policy changes that took place during this period. These policy changes, such as the 1830 Beer Act, most notably impacted on the leisure activities of the lower classes. This was due to dominance the middle classes had in society and the influence they had in dictating how members of society should live their lives in line with their ideologies. Consequently, hypocrisy existed between the classes in relation to the drinking issue of what the middle classes preached as acceptable to the lower classes and their reluctance

to curb their own drinking habits. This chapter aims to provide a historical perspective to the research and highlight the origin of the middle class dominance that has shaped the society we live in today by exploring the class struggle that existed, the dominance of middle class ideologies in shaping society, how these ideologies were transmitted and society's reliance on alcohol. These themes form the basis for discussion for the remainder of the research.

### **Chapter Three – Alcohol ‘our Favourite Drug’.**

As well as highlighting the class struggle which existed throughout the nineteenth century, chapter two also drew attention to Britain's love affair with the ‘demon’ drink, regardless of which class you belong. It also highlighted that, dependent upon which class you belong, society's reaction to alcohol use is remarkably different. Chapter three examines the acceptability of alcohol use in modern Britain and how this acceptability differs amongst the classes. It explores the British culture of ‘working hard and playing hard’ and how this feeds society's story telling tradition of sharing amusing stories about drunken antics to highlight the fun nature of your personality, and social stigma of not engaging in this culture. This chapter does however highlight how certain rules need to be adhered to in order to make an individual's alcohol consumption socially acceptable, and the possible consequences of not adhering to these rules. It also aims to explore the conflicting messages we are subjected to in the media regarding acceptable alcohol use, whether it be the life enhancing qualities of alcohol use or the possible health problems which can occur as a consequence. The theoretical approaches of both Young (1971) and Matza (1964) according to Cohen (2001), will be examined to help in the understanding of the possible delinquency which can occur as a result of alcohol abuse, how this is reported and how societal reaction differs dependent upon your social position. This chapter aims to highlight the complexities of alcohol use and how the media feeds these conflicting messages.

### **Chapter Four – Class in Modern Britain.**

This chapter aims to explore how the different perceptions of social class affect how the media chooses to represent Britain's drinking culture. Chapter three explored the complexities associated with the social definitions of acceptable alcohol use; this chapter will take this theme further and highlight how the media grants immunity to the middle classes' alcohol use from social and legal condemnation compared with their treatment of the “hyper-visible” (Richardson, 2007, pg 137). A topic for exploration is the effect that public and private space can have on the representation of the differing classes and how this would link with the criminalisation of the poorer classes. The notion of respectability will also be examined and how factors such as an individual's status in society through their job, their inheritance or their celebrity status can neutralise the negative stigma of ‘alcoholism’ and grant them immunity from public scrutiny, and even prosecution. This chapter will also examine what happens when the Government attempt to place sanctions on the drinking habits of the middle classes. It will look at how the media choose to interpret Government reports which threaten their class position and the difference in reporting between the broadsheets and tabloids when these reports also threaten the class position of their audience.

### **Chapter Five – Media Influence.**

Chapters two, three and four have all aimed to highlight the difference in coverage afforded to the lower classes compared with the middle classes and even the celebrity culture. This has been explained through a number of means namely; middle class dominance, transmission of ruling class ideologies, social acceptability of alcohol use

and the difference in media reporting; Chapter five aims to explain the possible reasons behind the media's decision to grant immunity to one class but not another. This will be explored by questioning whether the news media's role is to transmit objective facts about the world around us, and if so why they appear to favour one class over another. The question will be examined by considering who owns and controls the media, whether this power is hidden and from whom how this affects media reporting and consequently how this impacts on society. Cohen's (2002) moral panic thesis will be utilised to highlight how the media can create social problems by playing on the concerns of an anxious population, which leads to class tensions as a distinct 'other' is identified. This chapter will also examine whether hegemonic ideology is engrained within media discourse and how this affects our understanding of how the social classes interact in society, how this affects their drinking habits and the perceived threat to society, which exists as a consequence.

### **Conclusion.**

The conclusion aims to highlight the complexities of the media portrayal of the social classes drinking habits. What has become apparent during the course of this research is that the middle classes are favoured by the media. Consequently stories relating to their misdemeanours are rare and when their behaviour is questioned they receive a sympathetic media stance. This is compared with the exploits of those considered to be part of a distinct 'underclass' who do not share the immunity granted to the middle classes and face social condemnation as a result. The celebrity culture on the other hand have their exploits made visible by the media, yet the consequences of such coverage can quite often enhance their careers and not hinder them. This favouring of the middle class is an inevitability of the capitalist system in which British society exists. The media operates as a business; as such its primary aim is to sell newspapers and increase profits. What the conclusion attempts to draw out is that this disparity in reporting, though inevitable, creates a class conflict and confusion about acceptable social practice. Whilst middle class frustration about their private lives being possibly open to Government interference is understandable, what needs to be understood is that in order to implement changes to the bottom of the class structure a cultural adaption needs to be made, which will affect all of the social groups. The middle class should no longer be able to point the finger of blame solely at the 'underclass' which they have created, instead they need to look introspectively to examine how their own actions are contributing to this societal problem.

## CHAPTER ONE

### METHODOLOGY – CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

#### Definition of CDA

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) looks at discourse as a circular process, where the context and mode in which text are produced can help influence society by shaping the viewpoints of those who read them (Richardson, 2007, pg 37). Fairclough (1995a) argues that using a critical approach to discourse analysis tries to make visible the connections between properties of texts and social processes and relations, which are not obvious to the actual producers and interpreters of these texts (pg 97). Discourse in this sense refers to the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view (Fairclough, 1995b, pg 56), whether it be written or spoken language (Fairclough 1995a, pg 131). Discourse, as argued by Jager (2001), is not created by one individual; it is a historical process which evolves through time (pg 37). According to this view the values and norms and laws and rights, which are based in analysis, are the historical outcome of discourse (Jager, 2001, pg 34). As such, Jager (2001) suggests that the analyst must not forget that any possible bias they may have is not based on truth, instead it is a position that is the result of a discursive practice (pg 34). By calling the approach critical, according to Fairclough (1995b), is recognition that our use of language and social practices have causes and effects which may not be visible under normal conditions (pg 54). CDA, as argued by Wodak (2001b), analyses opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as shown in language (pg 2). Wodak (2001b) continues to say that language is not powerful on its own, it is powerful people who give it the power and make use of it, and manipulate it (pg 10-11). As a consequence Wodak (2001b) argues that CDA seeks to produce enlightenment and emancipation, through not only describing and explaining it, but through rooting out a specific type of delusion (pg 10). This has led to academics such as Fairclough (2001) suggesting that CDA is in the middle of social controversy, as it chooses to focus on certain areas of social life as problems (pg 125).

Wodak (2001a) argues that CDA must be; multi-theoretical, multi-methodological, critical and self reflective (pg 64). Only inter-disciplinary research can make the complex relationships more transparent such as who influences who and how these influences are directed (Wodak, 2001a, pg 64). Wodak (2001a) also highlights the importance of intertextual analysis (pg 90). Comparing texts from different genres can help to make some of the issues clearer (Wodak, 2001a, pg 90). Intertextual analysis, according to Fairclough (1995a), should complement linguistic analysis, as it highlights the dependence of texts upon society and history, as well as mediate the connection between language and social context (pg 189-90). It also looks beyond the moment of reception to explore how media messages are used and transformed in various spheres of life such as the family or work (Fairclough, 1995a, pg 200). In the context of this research, intertextual analysis was utilised when comparing newspaper articles with the original reports; where the reporter obtained their information from. For example a comparison of the report “Indications of Public Health in the English Regions” by Deacon, Hughes, Tocque and Bellis (2007) compared with the newspaper article in *The Times* which followed “Hazardous drinking the middle-class vice” by Brown (2007). Fairclough (1995a) argues that textual analysis often fails to discuss what has been excluded from a text and concerns itself solely with what has been included; whereas in the production of a text choices are made and as such what has been excluded is just as important as what has been included (pg 210). With this in mind, the comparison of

original reports with newspaper articles should help to highlight what the reporter chose to focus on in his/her article and what he/she chose to exclude, which could help explain the intent behind the reporters article. The moment of reception however was not explored, as for this particular research it was deemed unnecessary. The focus instead was on the possible intentions the journalist had when writing an article for their assumed audience and the methods involved in the processing of information to make a story suitable to print.

### **Central Ideas to CDA**

Jager (2001) summarises the issues that are central to CDA based on Foucault's discourse theory. These include: what knowledge consists of; how this valid knowledge evolves; how it is passed on; what function it has for the shaping of society and finally, what impact this knowledge has on the development of society as a whole (pg 32-33). Knowledge in this context is the makeup of meanings, which are used by historical people to help shape reality (Jager, 2001, pg 33). CDA has been developed and expanded since Foucault's initial ideas and Fairclough and Wodak (1997, in Scollon, 2001) highlight some of these ideas to help explain exactly what CDA is, namely, discourse is historical, discourse does ideological work and power relations are discursive.

Firstly, **discourse is historical**. A problem highlighted by Fairclough (1995a) is that critical discourse analysts often fail to historicise their data (pg 19). In doing so they fail to identify how their data was shaped by particular historical conditions and what part it plays in the wider historical processes (Fairclough, 1995a, pg 19). In order to address this, this research has provided a historical background in the form of chapter two – A Nineteenth Century look at Britain's Drinking Culture, in order to provide a historical background to the changing nature of Britain's drinking habits. It also provides a basis for the discussion of how the class system works in British society, and how the different classes work with and against each other.

Secondly, **discourse does ideological work**. Assumptions are embedded in forms of language and these assumptions are ideologies (Fairclough, 1989, pg 2). Ideological assumptions are a way of legitimising existing social relations and power differences through the recurrence of familiar ways of behaving, which take for granted the social relations and power differences (Fairclough, 1989, pg 2). The media play an important role in the transmission of ideologies and it uses these ideological assumptions to position their readers (Fairclough, 1995b, pg 107). For example, arguably an article such as "Britain needs moral revolution to beat drunks, yobs and killers" (McKinstry, 2007) is helping to perpetuate a feeling of panic and fear amongst its readers. Through the transmission of certain ideological assumptions, terms such as 'yob' have become engrained in societal discourse, depicting a group to be feared. As such the reader's position is that of being united with the writer of the article, living in fear of the 'other'. Fairclough (1995a) discusses the tying of ideology to the idea of power and domination. In Fairclough's (1995a) view the representations and constructions of the world are instrumental in the reproduction of domination and the concept of ideology is utilised in order to highlight and critique these processes (pg 17). The concept of ideology can also be explored in terms of the idea of hegemony.

According to Fairclough (1995a), the concept of hegemony implies the development in a variety of domains in society of practices which naturalise certain ideologies (pg 94). These naturalised discourse conventions help sustain and reproduce cultural and

ideological dimensions of hegemony (Fairclough, 1995a, pg 94). As a consequence of naturalised discourse conventions, practices which appear to be universal and common sense have actually originated in the dominant class; they as Fairclough (1989) explains, function ideologically (pg 33). Fairclough (1995b) argues that news reports include mechanisms for ordering voices, which is subjecting them to social control (pg 84). Ordinary people, for example, are not used as news sources. They are allowed to give their reaction to news and as such can share their experience, but not their opinion; the result being, according to Fairclough (1995b), an establishment's view of the world (pg 49). For example, the article "Shops to face restrictions on cut-price alcohol deals" in *The Times*, discusses how the Government has released figures suggesting that there are 8.2 million people dependent on alcohol in Britain, and how this will affect the sale of alcohol (Ford, 2007a). According to Ford (2007a), ministers are to examine whether pushing up the price of alcohol could reduce heavy drinking amongst those on low incomes and young people. The discussion in the article is formed around the opinions of Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker, Public Health Minister Caroline Flint, experts in liver diseases, as well as professors from prestigious universities. According to Fairclough (1989) this is because the balance of perspectives is in favour of existing power holders, which has led Fairclough (1989) to observe that the media operates as a means of expression and reproduction of the power of the dominant class (pg 51). Fairclough (1989) explains that this power is hidden from the audience and even the media workers themselves (pg 54); it is implicit in the practices of the media, rather than explicit (pg 51). As this power is hidden, it has meant that the media can reproduce the ideologies of the dominant class under the guise of relating to their audience. A claim made by Fairclough (1989) is that the more 'mass' the media become, and as a result the less in touch they become with their audiences, the more the media profess' to relate to their audience as individuals who share common ground (pg 195). This solidarity creates a veil of equality of which beneath the inequalities of a capitalist society continue (Fairclough, 1989, pg 195).

Thirdly, **power relations are discursive**. Foucault (1984) argues "as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized" (in Fairclough, 1995a, pg 248). This power, within capitalist countries, is arguably exercised through consent rather coercion (Fairclough, 1995a, pg 219). According to Fairclough (1995a) the mass media is the most important social institution in transmitting ideologies and teaching practices, meanings, values and identities; through which consent is achieved (pg 219). Though we undoubtedly have control over what newspaper we decide to buy and read, we have no control over the content. What happens on a daily basis in our society is re-created in stories we are told by the media, stories which shape as well as reflect on cultural, political and social events (Bell, 1998, pg 64-5). Van Dijk (2001) maintains that our socially shared attitudes, ideologies, norms and values are obtained through the everyday discourse, such as the media, that we are subjected to (pg 114). This is unsurprising if you consider Jager's (2001) view that the media regulate everyday thinking by packaging, focusing and sensationalising everyday discourse into a populist, digestible form (pg 49). This however, makes the journalists position seem simplistic, whereas the reality, as argued by Van Leeuwen (1987), is much more complex and contradictory (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 86). What Van Leeuwen (1987) calls "production of descriptions" can be seen as impartial but also as entertainment and social control (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 86) and makes the journalists role very complex. Journalists have to provide narratives which report past events, however, they also have to interpret

and explain events that make people see things and act in certain ways, as well as entertaining them (Fairclough, 1995b, pg 91). Van Leeuwen (1987) argues that in a sense journalists are creating stories, which suggest fictional entertainment rather than factual information, this however varies dependent on the newspaper and the intended class of the audience (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 91). A claim made by Van Leeuwen (1987) is that for working class audiences the stories in the news are more story-like (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 91). The working classes, according to Van Leeuwen (1987) are denied the power of exposition, as this is reserved for those who have a right to contribute to the debates which may change society (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 91). In this sense the journalist's position is problematised as they are going against their own establishment's view of the world and presenting a story to an audience of whom they are possibly unable to relate to. For example, a journalist writing for *The Sun* is by their very job title, middle class, but presenting news to those considered as lower class. As such they have to make presuppositions about their assumed audience and how they would like the news to be presented.

Fairclough (1989) states that when looking at relationships of power within modern society you cannot afford to ignore language, as the exercise of power is achieved through the ideological workings of language (pg 3). Ferdinand de Saussure (1966) assumed that language is homogeneous and unitary, with everyone within a community having equal access and command of its 'langue' (in Fairclough, 1989, pg 21). However, according to Fairclough (1989) access to and command of standard languages is unequal (pg 21), with language contributing to the domination of some people by others (pg 1). This inevitably leads to a class struggle but, as argued by Fairclough (1989), is necessary (pg 35). The maximisation of the power and profits of one class is dependent on the exploitation and domination of another (Fairclough, 1989, pg 35). As Fairclough (1989) argues, this can clearly be seen within the mass media (pg 35). The media plays a significant role in social control, something which most people are subjected to on a daily basis (Fairclough, 1989, pg 37). Newspapers, for example, are designed for mass audiences, and the producer has no way of knowing who this audience will be, instead they create the news with an ideal subject in mind (Fairclough, 1989, pg 49). Fairclough (1989) argues that this relationship between ideal subject and producer needs to be negotiated (pg 49). The power however, very much lies with the producers, as they have sole producing rights, they decide what is to be included and excluded, how events are represented as well as the subject positions of their audience (Fairclough, 1989, pg 50). A problem explains Fairclough (1995b), is that media producers lack simultaneous feedback, as their audience do not contribute to the communication, they are merely passive readers (pg 40). What Fairclough (1995b) fails to recognise, however, is the audience's power as a consumer. If the audience/consumer are unhappy with how certain stories are being presented they have the right to either not buy the newspaper or decide to buy a different one. The media institution relies on the audience to stay interested in the stories they present and consequently continue buying their newspaper. What is unclear is whether the audience's views are as such because they have been shaped by the media, or whether the media has been shaped by the audience's beliefs. According to Fairclough (1995b) the media make certain assumptions about what they believe the audience wants to read about and in this sense they hold the power (pg 40). Fairclough (1995b) believes this is an inevitability as the only way of gaining the truth is through representations of it, yet all representations are the result of different views and values (pg 47). Media texts do not mirror reality according to Fairclough (1995b) instead they compose versions of reality, which fits in with the objectives and social position of the producer (pg 104). In

this way, it could be argued that a journalist acts in very much the same way as an analyst. Both have their own objectives and as such they will write in a way which fulfils their objective; as a consequence they structure their arguments to fulfil their own goal, or the goal of their managers.

### How to use CDA

Media analysis, according to Fairclough (1995b), is about comparing what the media chooses to include and exclude, what they foreground and background, as well as where they come from and what factors influence their formulation and projection (pg 47). In this sense, the quantitative aspect of discourse analysis is always of less significance than the qualitative analysis (Jager, 2001, pg 52). In the course of this research the quantitative aspect of the analysis included the collection and organisation of newspaper articles. The dates of analysis were between 5 June 2007 and the 16 October 2007, from which time 63 articles were collected from *The Times* and the *Daily Express*. The articles were then organised into their separate months, for example all the articles from June, all the articles from July and so on, this meant that the issues of that particular month were grouped together to help with ease of analysis when looking at the differences in how the newspapers dealt with the same issues. Of the 63 articles collected, 42 were collected from physical copies of the newspapers. To ensure that all the relevant articles had been found, a simple keyword search was completed on *The Times* online ([www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk)) and *Daily Express* website ([www.express.co.uk](http://www.express.co.uk)). As a result of the keyword search 'alcohol' 21 extra articles were found from the set time period. As the research progressed it became obvious that a third newspaper was required that provided a definite tabloid perspective, as a consequence articles were collated from *The Sun* newspaper. All the articles from *The Sun* were found online ([www.thesun.co.uk](http://www.thesun.co.uk)) by completing a simple keyword search of the dates in the set time period. Once collected the articles, as with *The Times* and the *Daily Express*, were organised chronologically. Every article was printed and filed and all the headlines for each month and the newspaper they appeared in were recorded in a contents page and placed at the beginning of each month for ease of reference. This quantitative aspect of the research was important as it helped to keep the research process organised and efficient, as well as helping with the preparation for the qualitative analysis. Though it is important to be able to quantify, in the case of newspaper analysis the amount of articles to be examined, it is more useful to look at the more qualitative aspects through Fairclough's (1989) three stages of CDA: description, interpretation and explanation (pg 26).

The **description** stage involves identifying and labelling of the formal features in a text (Fairclough, 1989, pg 26). This however, is not as simple as it may appear on first glance. In the case of newspaper articles there are many ways in which a journalist can report an event. The way in which the journalist chooses to interpret the opinion of their sources can affect how they choose to write the story (Fairclough, 1989, pg 26). In order to explore this in more depth three questions will be focused upon.

Firstly, what relational values do grammatical features have? (Fairclough, 1989, pg 125). The media use of pronouns will be looked at specifically. Pronouns do have relational values and are used in many ways. For example, the use of 'we' in certain contexts can be inclusive of the reader as well as the writer (Fairclough, 1989, pg 127). Vine (2007) as a case in point, in her article "Oh, do stop wining ..." which refers to the Government interference into middle class drinking habits, uses a number of pronouns to show how she and the reader are a united force. Such as: "And now they ... come

into *our* heavily mortgaged homes and tell *us* how much *we* can drink” (Vine, 2007, pg 4, my italics). According to Fairclough (1989) with the use of pronouns Vine (2007) is claiming that she is not only able to speak for herself, she is also able to speak for her readers and all “right-minded” British citizens (pg 128). The use of pronouns within a text is important in the process of ascertaining what the journalist is trying to portray and what his/her intent is.

The second question is what expressive values do grammatical features have? (Fairclough, 1989, pg 128). Fairclough (1989) identifies the use of categorical modalities being used by the media to represent reports as a truth (pg 129). An example of this can be seen in Bannerman and Ford’s (2007) article “Police chief calls drinks industry to account for yob culture” in *The Times*. The opening paragraph states “communities are under siege from a hardcore of anti-social, under-age drinkers” (Bannerman and Ford, 2007, pg 1). The verbs “are under siege” are in the present tense and present this view of the world as being transparent, without a need for any interpretation (Fairclough, 1989, pg 129). Fairclough (1989) asserts that the end product of a news report disguises the complex process of collecting information and the ideologies which are embedded in the process (pg 129).

The third question to be explored is, what larger-scale structures does the text have? (Fairclough, 1989, pg 137). This includes the discussion of the order in which a text appears. This ordering of newspaper articles is based upon the level of importance to certain aspects of a report. The headline and first paragraph state what is regarded to be the most newsworthy parts of a story. For example, the headline for a story by Porter (2007) in *The Sun* is “Yobs told: Pay as you binge” and this explains the gist of the story. The first paragraph “Binge drinkers will be made to pay for damage they cause and treatment they need for injuries when drunk, it will be announced today”, summarises the most important aspects of the story, deemed by Porter (2007). The four short paragraphs which follow simply draw out certain details such as the age of those in focus. Generic structures are used within media reporting and after the headline and first paragraph; satellites are used to elaborate on certain aspects of the story (Fairclough, 1995b, pg 85-6). This according to Fairclough (1995b) shows how any event can be reported in such a rigid format (pg 85-6).

The **interpretation** stage explores the relationship between text and interaction (Fairclough, 1989, pg 26). The text is seen as a product in the process of production and a resource is the process of interpretation (Fairclough, 1989, pg 26). As such Fairclough (1989) discusses the use of presuppositions used by the media, which can be either sincere or manipulative. For example, the term ‘yob’ is used frequently in the mass media, as this particular expression is repeated on a regular basis, it helps to naturalise contentious propositions which have been presupposed, in this case that young people in the streets are a threat (Fairclough, 1989, pg 154). How a text is interpreted, especially in the case of the mass media, is an important issue to be addressed. For the purpose of this research the interpretation will solely be that of the researcher, with no input from participants. As such it is important to note that “strict” objectivity cannot be obtained by discourse analysis (Meyer, 2001, pg 30). A researcher must be aware that values and norms they hold are a historical outcome of discourse (Jager, 2001, pg 34). Any possible bias the researcher may hold is not based on truth; it is instead the result of a discursive process (Jager, 2001, pg 34). Therefore the beliefs and ideologies held by the analyst prejudice them towards the analyst’s preconceptions (Meyer, 2001, pg 30). This is unavoidable however, the focus should be self reflection

with the analyst being wary of the position they hold within the research (Wodak, 2001b, pg 9).

As Fairclough (1995b) suggests, being critical is making visible the causes and effects of language, but as Wodak (2001b) highlights, it is also about having distance from the data of which you are studying (pg 9). It is also important, according to Wodak (2001b); to embed the data you are dealing with in the social, to take a political stance (pg 9). However, taking this kind of approach is not without its critics. Widdowson (1995) for example, argues that CDA is an ideological interpretation and as a result is not actually an analysis; instead it is a biased interpretation (in Meyer, 2001, pg 17). Widdowson (1995) continues to say that CDA chooses texts to analyse which supports the interpretation favoured by the researcher as the researcher will, from the beginning, be prejudiced towards their chosen ideological commitment (in Meyer, 2001, pg 17). These criticisms however, were not accepted by Fairclough (1996), who argues that unlike most other approaches, CDA is always open about its own position and commitment (in Meyer, 2001, pg 17). Though criticised, CDA theorists make no attempt to hide the fact that strict objectivity is not achievable through discourse analysis. Meyer (2001) asserts that each 'technology' of research potentially has the beliefs and ideologies of the analyst embedded into it and, as a result the analysis is prejudiced towards the analyst's preconceptions (pg 30). This however, is not necessarily a negative aspect of CDA; van Dijk (2001) asserts his position on the matter as, "CDA is biased and proud of it" (pg 96).

The **explanation** stage looks at the relationship between interaction and social context. The objective of the explanation stage is to show how discourse is part of a social process, how it is determined by social structures and then how discourse can affect these structures (Fairclough, 1989, pg 163). For the purpose of this research the focus will be on how power relationships determine discourse and how these relationships are the outcome of struggles and are established by those in power (Fairclough, 1989, pg 163). As such, for this stage the analyst must draw upon social theory (Fairclough, 1989, pg 167). Fairclough (1989) states, that self consciousness is necessary in order to avoid using un-theorised assumptions about society (pg 167). As a consequence the work of Matza (1964), Cohen (1972, 2002), Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts (1978) to name but a few, will be utilised within the course of the research to provide a theoretical background to examples drawn from the media.

### **Method for Conducting CDA**

Jager (2001) offers a possible method for conducting a simple discourse analysis as follows. Firstly, a brief characterisation of the discourse plane, such as printed media. Secondly, processing the chosen material base, for example the particular newspaper articles in question. Thirdly, completing a structure analysis by evaluating the processed material. Fourthly, conducting a fine analysis of either one or several articles which represent the discourse position of the newspaper. Finally include an overall analysis of the newspaper concerned where all the results are reflected upon (pg 53-54). This method developed by Jager (2001) provides a useful basis for analysis and was utilised in this research once the articles had been collated and the writing stage had begun.

In regards to the second point of processing the chosen material base, there are a number of suggestions made by Jager (2001) of how to do this effectively. These include, contextualising the chosen articles by exploring the general characterisation of

the newspaper, such as political affiliations and readership (Jager, 2001, pg 54). Jager (2001) also advises providing a list of relevant articles and noting where they appear in the newspaper as well as notes on the themes addressed in the articles (pg 54). Where the article appears in the newspaper was a point of interest within this research. The amount of importance a newspaper places on a particular story can be shown by where they choose to place the article within the context of the newspaper as a whole. For example, in relation to middle class drinking being highlighted as problematic by the Government, *The Times* chose to place this report on the front page “Hazardous drinking, the middle class vice” (Brown, 2007, pg 1). In contrast the *Daily Express* printed their article relating to the same subject, on the same day at the bottom of page 6: “Middle-class drinkers damaging their health” (Fletcher, 2007a, pg 6). Arguably, this could be due to what the newspaper believes will be of most importance to their target audience. On the other hand this could say more about the reporter and the newspaper as a whole and their intentions of choosing to portray the news in a certain way to their audience.

A qualitative evaluation of the article is also required and exploration of what themes have been included, what themes have been excluded and the timing of the themes addressed (Jager, 2001, pg 55). This was of particular relevance with the analysis of the articles relating to the drinking habits of the middle classes. By using an inter-textual analysis approach a comparison of what the original Government report revealed and how the newspaper chose to report these findings highlighted the included and excluded themes within the article. The examination of included and excluded themes allows for discussion about the possible reasons for the journalist portraying a story in a certain way, and what they are trying to achieve within their article.

In terms of the forth point of conducting a fine analysis, Jager (2001) explains what is required to enable production of a thorough analysis. A justification needs to be provided for the choice of article as well as a look at the function of that particular article to the newspaper, the cause of the article and the section where the article appeared (Jager, 2001, pg 55). For example in relation to *The Times* newspaper, any articles that provide a critique to some of the stories featured in the main body of the newspaper appear in *Times 2*. It is within *Times 2* that journalist Richard Morrison criticised the mass media for only printing articles that wallow in “hopeless despair” instead of occasionally acknowledging some of the positives (Morrison, 2007, pg 7). Morrison’s (2007) article appeared on page 7 in *Times 2* and not in the main body of the newspaper, which can guarantee the maximum amount of *The Times* readers. By allowing such a critical article to appear at all however, shows some commitment by *The Times* to try and redress some of the problems of fear mongering engrained in the media ideology, or at least it will give the impression of redressing the problems to the reader. It will however, take more than one critique to change the culture of media reporting

Jager (2001) also explains that vocabulary, style, form of argumentation, symbolism, players, implications and insinuations all need to be explored (pg 55). From an ideological perspective, what the article conveys about human beings and society should be examined and what future perspective is set out by the article (Jager, 2001, pg 56). All of these suggestions as to conducting a thorough analysis were taken into account in the writing of this research, especially that which relates to the ideological perspective. Due to the subject matter of the representation of the social classes portrayed in the article by the news media, the focus of the analysis was on the message and what were

the possible reasons behind it. As such a detailed analysis of the vocabulary, for example, is of less significance than the function and cause of the article.

Critical discourse analysis aims to critique ideology and raise awareness through which lies the possibility of empowerment and change (Fairclough, 1995a, pg 83). The researcher however, must always be wary that his/her critique of particular practices is not just naturalising a different set of ideologies (Fairclough, 1995a, pg 83). We are all subjected to the historical outcome of discourse and as a consequence nobody holds the key to the 'truth', instead we all hold different versions of the 'truth'. As such, the self reflection of the researcher is vital as it cannot be arrogantly assumed that he/she is enlightening his/her readers with the 'truth', but is instead simply providing an alternative voice to engrained media ideology. This research aims to highlight how the social classes are treated differently by the news media in regards to Britain's drinking culture. The media are a powerful institution in the transmitting of ideologies which inform society about the acceptable way to live your lives. What this research aims to do, with the help of CDA, is to root out who decides what is acceptable and why.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A NINETEENTH CENTURY LOOK AT BRITAIN'S DRINKING CULTURE.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the social history of Britain's drinking culture, beginning with The Beer Act of 1830. The main argument of this chapter is that; society has lived with a "legally sanctioned presence in their midst", a substance when considered objectively is a dangerous drug; alcohol (Edwards, 2004, pg 14). However, though the majority of the general populace intoxicate themselves, it is only when the working-classes become involved that sanctions are put into place, a bias which has existed for centuries. This class struggle, according to Fairclough (1989), is necessary and is inbuilt into a social system in which the power of one class depends on the exploitation and domination of another (pg 35). This chapter will explore this class struggle and how it affected the lives and leisure of the middle and lower classes.

#### **1830 The Beer Act and the Reformers**

As Plant and Plant (2006) argue heavy drinking has been a social problem for centuries (pg 11). However, according to Plant and Plant (2006) it was "during the nineteenth century that a scientific medical perspective began to emerge" due to men such as Drs Trotter (1804) and Sullivan (1899) (pg 11). Medical evidence more than ever was beginning to be taken into account when looking at the problem that Britain had with alcohol (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 11); gin was where much of the political and public attention was placed (see appendix 1). In 1830, as Plant and Plant (2006) explain, the Beer Act was passed to encourage people to divert from gin to beer, ale or cider (pg 12). This Act came in place of the sixteenth century statute which gave control over the licensing of brewers and publicans to local magistrates (Mason, 2001). According to Mason (2001) the Act stipulated that a new type of drinking establishment, the beer shop or the beer house, could now be opened in England and Wales by any rate-paying householder. In England the rate payer could now procure a license to brew and vend from their own residence, with an annual licensing fee of only two guineas (Mason, 2001). The Act freed up the sale of beer and created new competition by "liberating the market", cutting the powers of the big brewers and making life easier for the small businesses (Brown, 2003, pg 114-115). As a result, Brown (2003) argues that the Act reduced the demand for gin and the price of cereal crops was boosted (pg 114-115). The fall in beer prices however, led to an increase in alcohol consumption and the licensed premises flourished, this almost "doubled the number of premises selling alcoholic drinks" (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 12) and consequently "drunkenness increased" (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 12).

Free licensing did not last and by 1869 it had ended, much to the relief of the Temperance Movement (Pickwell, 1886, pg 8). In 1886 the City of York published a Jubilee Volume of the Temperance Society in which they discuss the 'evils of drink'. According to the York Volume, before the Beer Act there had been 187 inns and public houses in York, one for every 142 inhabitants, after the Act there were 30,000 "new centres of demoralisation" established around the country (Pickwell, 1886, pg 8). Pickwell (one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society) sums up his feelings of frustration surrounding society's reliance on alcohol as such: "If you visited a friend, the decanter was brought out; at market, in bargaining, the preliminary move and finishing stroke was drink. At christenings, drink; at marriages, drink; at funerals, drink! Drink! Drink!" (1886, pg 8, see appendix 2). According to Plant and Plant (2006), during the nineteenth century the Temperance Movement became a "powerful force" (pg 13). The Temperance Society managed to gain middle-class approval through its "strongly

religious leadership and attitudes” (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 13). This however, was not always the case. Pickwell states that before 1832 when John Livesey wrote and signed the first public Total Abstinence pledge, there was a British Foreign Temperance Society (BFTS) which failed to denounce the actions of the higher classes (1886, pg 11). It condemned only the “instruments of drunkenness” such as ardent spirits, but beer, cider and wine could be taken in moderation (Pickwell, 1886, pg 10). Strange logic to the York Temperance Society who did not understand why they chose to condemn alcohol in water (as beer and wine are simply a little more diluted than other alcoholic beverages), but allow alcohol in wine (1886, pg 10). The British Foreign Temperance Society, with the Bishop of London at the head and eight bishops and many of the nobility and high officials *as* vice-presidents (Pickwell, 1886, pg 9), safeguarded the drink of the rich, and forbade the “poor and squalid and miserable” (Pickwell, 1886, pg 10). Whilst the higher classes wished the poorer ones would give up drink entirely they refused to give it up themselves. Pickwell (1886) uses the example of the man who likes his whisky saying “Ah, its all very well for you, gentleman, to denounce spirits whilst you enjoy yourselves with wine. Give me your wine and I will give up my rum” (pg 10). As such a great prejudice was formed against the class that they actually intended to reach and who they hoped would benefit (Pickwell, 1886, pg 11). The working-classes did not appreciate any interference from the higher classes and it soon became obvious that the BFTS were full of contradictions.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1832 Joseph Livesey wrote and signed the first public Total Abstinence pledge (Pickwell, 1886, pg 11). This meant total abstinence from all intoxicates. The pledge also included all classes; “from the upper classes with their wine, to the middle classes with their brandy, whisky or rum, and the working classes with their beer and gin”; none could escape (Pickwell, 1886, pg 12). The very foundation of the pledge seemed to be more in tune with the very people they hoped to reform, as the advocates were men of the middle and working classes, who were, according to Pickwell (1886) “intelligent, talented, earnest Christians” (pg 12). As such there was no prejudice, Pickwell (1886) claims that the advocates were “one of the people” and as a result very soon, there were “advocates in every town in the country” (pg 12) (it is important to note that these are the words of the Temperance Movement and as such their statistics are likely to involve bias).

According to Rowntree and Sherwell (1899) though intemperance is not the sole cause of poverty, it is the “most dominate cause” (pg 23). Poverty was to a large extent the result of the conditions within the workplace and as such, an “industrial disease” (Rowntree and Sherwell, 1899, pg 23). As claimed by Rowntree and Sherwell (1899) if universal sobriety would have come into force then the problems of poverty and unemployment would not have been instantly solved, but would have stimulated industrial progress by increasing the efficiency of the workers (pg 23). Rowntree and Sherwell (1899) highlight, that there was a direct correlation between drink expenditure and the “cost of efficiency” amongst working men (pg 29).

Gutzke (1989) argues that urbanisation made brewing “extremely lucrative”, but the social and economic consequences, such as “excessive drinking, disease, poverty and squalor”, had brought uneasiness (pg 5). Reformers during the Nineteenth-century tried to address these problems in four ways. Firstly, Free Trade Activists secured parliamentary approval for the 1830 Beer Act, as according to Gutzke (1989) they had been appalled by the increased consumption of gin amongst the working classes as well as the privileged status which the pub had (pg 6). Secondly, the social establishment

such as; “aristocrats, Anglican bishops and Quakers” promoted abstention from spirits (Gutzke, 1989, pg 6). Their aim was to popularise middle-class values and reaffirm abstention rather than reforming the drunkard (Gutzke, 1989, pg 6). Thirdly, was Teetotalism. Gutzke (1989) states that this movement was made up primarily of middle-class nonconformists and respectable working-class labourers who regarded their main objective to be social mobility and who believed that reforming the drunkard was vital (pg 6). The fourth temperance stage was built up when militants promoted prohibition in the 1850s. They concentrated on cutting off the supply for alcohol, rather than repressing the demand for it (Gutzke, 1989, pg 6). Attacks on Retailers and Brewers quickly turned into a campaign with Prohibitionist MPs repeatedly trying to introduce legislation banning sales of alcohol (Gutzke, 1989, pg 6).

Gutze (1989) argues that, as a consequence a national pressure group was organised in opposition to the reformers, known as ‘the trade’ for those wishing to voice the drink interest (pg 6-7). The trade consisted of anyone with an interest in alcohol from wholesalers and retailers to drink shareholders; with brewers, publicans and beer housekeepers showing the most commitment to the cause and “providing funds, activism and leadership” (Gutzke, 1989, pg 7). According to Harrison (1994) though the Temperance and Prohibition movements had created a panic, the trade need not have worried as they had little effect on society at large, although they would have you believe differently (pg 306). H. A. Bruce in 1872 was convinced that there had been an improvement (Harrison, 1994, pg 306). The belief according to Roebuck in 1856 was that: “It is a mark now that a man is not a gentleman if he gets drunk” (Harrison, 1994, pg 307). The influence that the temperance movement had on pledged teetotallers must have been significant but Harrison (1994) claims the “number of reformed drunkards who can be credited to the movement is extremely small” (pg 307).

### **Class Segregation**

Class segregation became obvious in the industrial North during the 1830s and 40s. According to Storch (1977); working-class leisure activities were viewed to be both a “nuisance and a threat to the rest of society” (pg 143). On rare occasions the different classes were brought together for a leisure activity. For example; “a ball was held in Bradford in 1839 on the eve of Bishop Blaize” (Storch, 1977, pg 143). This according to Storch (1977); was an occasion based on middle-class terms as a means to control working-class recreation (pg 143). However, “a great amount of drunkenness was observed” in the evening (Storch, 1977, pg 143). Edward Baines wrote in the Mercury describing the event “crowds of men and women ... drunk, surging up and down the streets, gurgling round the entrance of the ... beer-shops ...” (in Storch, 1977, pg 144). The working-classes were seen as “an alien being with alien customs” (Storch, 1977, pg 144) who became savages, leading many of the more respectable members of society to find solace in their beds in order to escape the “moral depravity” taking over the local streets (Storch, 1977, pg 144). Any seemingly harmless social occasion; “could turn into a riot or protest” (Storch, 1977, pg 144). Not just between the working-classes, but between different classes, where Storch (1977) claims rival social classes or neighbourhood groups could meet and fight (pg 144). It seems that the vicious working-classes brought out the worst in the respectable, mild mannered middle-classes.

Harrison (1994) states that the power of drink in English society during the 1870s was influenced partly from attitudes towards drink, but also from the power of drink manufacturers and drink sellers (pg 309). As such the drink seller had influence as the provider of recreation and meeting places, which inevitably led to class segregation

(Harrison, 1994, pg 309). The pub “served as an all-purpose service institution in working class life” (Storch, 1977, pg 145). This frightened the middle-classes. In “1849 the parliamentary committee reported that to have a class of houses thus established, frequented exclusively by the labouring population, who thus lose the benefit of some control from contact with persons of superior stations” (Storch, 1977, pg 145). As a consequence, the middle-classes believed that the working-classes needed tighter control and supervision.

According to Storch (1977) a new rational recreation scheme was set up as a prototype in the late 1840s by Rev. Sidney Godolphin Osborne who; introduced the reformed beer-shop (pg 150). Here it was “proposed that men could enjoy a good fire, cheese, coffee and bread as well as ‘a bit’ of beer and tobacco” (Storch, 1977, pg 150). “The beer was to be fetched from the beer-house to a maximum of a; quart per man, per evening” (Storch, 1977, pg 150). A steward, who had to be a “respectable inhabitant”, would supervise the evening and monitor the amount of beer being consumed (Storch, 1977, pg 150). The steward would ensure that “no gambling, swearing or indecent conduct took place, as well as no credit being allowed; to ensure ‘a well regulated place’” (Storch, 1977, pg 150).

Storch (1977) explains that mechanics’ institutes were also established to “try and moralise the working-classes by combining instruction with amusement” (pg 150-151). They even tried to lure people to the group with discounted trips and cricket matches, but this could not entice the working-classes from the pubs and beer-houses, and as such it was seen as a failure (Storch, 1977, pg 150-151). Many schemes were set up to try and improve the fabric of the working-class culture, but to no avail. Storch (1977) claims ideas of “creating new museums, cheap concerts and libraries by non profit shareholding companies” (pg 151) rarely came into fruition as the masses were not interested in these types of organisations. In the “1850s many middle-class Victorians wished to establish charities and cultural missions to help the lower classes” (Storch, 1977, pg 152), but by the 1860s enthusiasm started to wane as common thought turned to:

How to reach these masses with your manifold agencies is a problem, of which no one ..., has been able to give us a satisfactory solution. You establish schools – they are indifferent .... You publish cheap books – they will neither purchase nor peruse them .... Yet, in spite of everything, habits the most grovelling continue to flourish ... (in Storch, 1977, pg 152).

### **Violence**

Much of the violence in Victorian society could be explained through alcohol. According to D’Cruze (2000, pg 12) “both perpetrators and commentators repeatedly explained violence through drink released inhibitions”. “Alcohol was an important part of Plebeian and Elite leisure and an expression of masculinity” (D’Cruze, 2000, pg 12), as well as being the means which “robbed the poorer families of much needed income and releasing inhibitions on violence” (D’Cruze, 2000, pg 28). For the working-classes drinking was an everyday mundane activity. Life for the working-classes was described by Jones (1997) as “one long drudge” and as a consequence alcohol would provide them with some escapism and “who could blame them?” (Jones, 1997, pg 12). Exploitation in the workplace was rife and living conditions were extremely poor. As Jones (1997) explains homes for many were of “microscopic dimensions”, in the case of people

living in cellar dwellings, one room measured nine feet by ten feet four inches (pg 12). Jones (1997) gives the example, which unfortunately is not an extreme uncommon example of a couple living in a dwelling “where the ceiling and floor were giving way and was covered in dirt and soot, yet this is where they slept and ate” (pg 12).

In the 1870s in many institutions beer was the preferred staple drink, rather than water (Harrison, 1994, pg 292). Shaftesbury in 1871 claimed that “there was scarcely a pint of water in London which was not distinctly unhealthy, and ... a great deal was positively unsafe” (Harrison, 1994, pg 292). Technological changes began to improve the quality and supply of water. According to Harrison (1994) early Victorian water companies supplied only a small section of a town’s population, namely the ‘well-to-do’ customers, who could afford to have the plumbing in their houses connected to the main supplies (pg 291). In 1847 a mere 23% of Manchester’s population enjoyed a direct supply of water; 28% were supplied by taps in the street and 49% were not supplied at all (Harrison, 1994, pg 291). Even when the poor had access to a communal tap, they had no cisterns (unlike the rich) to store a day’s supply and as such, they lacked the time to get all the water they needed (Harrison, 1994, pg 291). Reformers believed that providing more water drinking fountains would “attack the drinking problem at the root”; Shaftesbury argued that if drinking fountains were established in the east end of London then “water would carry the day over gin, beer, or anything else of an intoxicating character” (Harrison, 1994, pg 292). By 1872 the London association had established 300 drinking fountains (Harrison, 1994, pg 292). However, Harrison (1994) argues that with a population of around 5 million, 300 drinking fountains will have only gone a small way to steering the poor from the evils of gin and beer (pg 292).

In order to escape the drudgery of their everyday lives, many men and women sought solace in their local pub in which “the dregs and sweepings of the underworld who engaged in drinking and brawling in licentious revelry” (Jones, 1997, pg 13) would meet. “Pubs were open for 21 hours a day; from 4am to 1am” (Jones, 1997, pg 12). Clarke and Critcher (1985) state that the pub became much more than a pleasurable place to be, it became a “location for political and economic activity” (pg 53). As a result publicans became the “main leisure entrepreneurs” and were expected to “organise animal and human sports” for their clients (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 53). Clarke and Critcher (1985) claim the pub became an escape route for many wishing to get away from the difficulties of their everyday lives; a place to not only have a drink but, also to have conversations with their peers, and enjoy both “outdoor and indoor” activities (pg 53).

According to Clarke and Critcher (1985), since the Beer Act of 1820, “many drinking saloons had emerged that catered for the ‘lower’ sort of customer” (pg 66). Publicans began to see potential for increased sales and introduced music based entertainment and by “1866 London had 33 music halls” (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 66). This did not please the authorities, who saw the spread of places for large crowds to engage in drunkenness and prostitution. As a result the “London Music Hall Proprietors Association was established to negotiate with licensing authorities” (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 67). Clarke and Critcher (1985) argue that this led to significant changes, namely “food, drink and prostitution” disappearing from the music halls (pg 67). “Rows of seats replaced; tables and chairs and full-time professionals replaced semi professionals” (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 67). The magistrates, police and music hall proprietors all worked together to ensure that any offensive material to either political figures or institutions was eliminated (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 67). As a

consequence “drinking saloons were refused licenses” if the authorities had reason to believe there could be any potential disorder (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 67). The working-classes craved entertainment and, as such, it made the most sense in “both public and private interests to promote organised and orderly forms” (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 67). Yet, according to Clarke and Critcher (1985), this was still not ideal to the authorities, as they would have preferred the working-classes to spend their leisure time in other ways other than “communal singing, watching comedy acts or acrobats” (pg 67). This form of “capitalised mass-based leisure, licensed by the State” however, provided some kind of order to chaotic working-class lives (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 67). Though drink was removed from the music halls, taking “drink from the lives of the working-classes was more difficult than ever, with drunkenness in the 1880s reaching; an all time high” (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 67).

“Slum dwellers” seemed to be most prevalent in Liverpool than in any other English city; “in 1851 nearly 25% of Liverpool’s population were Irish-born” (Behlmer, 1982, pg 49). As a consequence the stereotype of the “subhuman species, addicted to drink and bloodshed” was enhanced (Behlmer, 1982, pg 49). Behlmer (1982) argues, a shameful result occurred when Irish fathers “‘primed by liquor’” battered their wives and children and smashed what little furniture they had (pg 49). According to Cobbe (1878), Liverpool earned itself the reputation as the ‘kicking district’, where wives were subject to savage treatment and suffering (pg 59). However, Behlmer (1982) claims a worse consequence of this drink fuelled violence to Liverpool’s middle-classes was that these men made the streets “wholly impassable” (pg 49). Central Liverpool was filled with mayhem where threat of disorder from the slums was beginning to infect the casual labour force (Behlmer, 1982, pg 49). As such the middle class men felt obligated to try and influence the unruly poor and, as Behlmer (1982) proclaims; “the Englishmen began to organise in defence of the young” (pg 49).

Cobbe (1878) highlights some of the key issues surrounding the involvement of alcohol in matters of personal violence. According to Cobbe (1878) it was the “vile adulterations” that turns the brandy, gin and beer into “infuriating poisons” which “sting the wretched drinkers into cruelty” (pg 65). An experienced minister wrote to Cobbe (1878) explaining that “he has known many a wife killer who, during total abstinence, became kind and considerate husbands; it is the ‘brain poison’ which infects society and creates such brutality” (pg 65). *The Preston Guardian* published an article in 1875 regarding a man named Davidson who was charged with assaulting his wife. Davidson had kicked his wife and thrown her out of the house; whilst drunk. He was bound over to keep the peace for twelve months. Many commentators paint a picture of the husbands being drunk and idle and spending more time in the public houses than out working to provide for their destitute families (Cobbe, 1878, pg 66). However, this fails to account for the wife’s own drinking habits, which may have helped to aggravate a violent situation. As Cobbe (1878) explains, the women must not be idealised, “many of them were bad and cruel mothers who drank whenever they could acquire it” (pg 67). On many an occasion the husband would return home to find his wife lying on the bed, heavily intoxicated, with his children crying for their supper. Jones (2001) offers the example of a husband named “Craven Elgin, who could no longer tolerate his wife’s alcoholism” (2001, pg 52). They had six children together, five of which were under the age of sixteen. Mrs Elgin drank heavily and “pawned everything in the house”, including her husband’s bed clothes, to feed her habit. As a result Mr Elgin was granted a separation order, but told “he had to pay his wife eight shillings a week from his 38 shillings income” (Jones, 2001, pg 52).

Tomes (1978) argues that the “want of liquor” was often the source of “aggravation” amongst the working classes, even more so than when it was actually procured (pg 331). The pawning of furniture or clothing in order to buy drink caused much aggravation between husband and wife (Tomes, 1978, pg 331). Tomes (1978), provides the example of one Magistrate testifying in 1881 that “We frequently have instances of men beating their wives for refusing to take articles at a late hour in the evening to the pawnshop” (pg 331). Malcolmson (1981) claims that “pawning routines brought many women together in the pubs on Mondays”, which was when goods redeemed for the weekend were put back into pawn; this way women had some extra money (pg 11). For many poor married women the “Monday routine would consist of going to the pawn shop and onto the public house, this is where they could drink and gossip” (Ross, 1983, pg 11). Tomes (1978) states that alcohol seemed to loosen individuals self control and increase their aggressive behaviour towards others (pg 332). Many marriages were peaceful until alcohol became a factor, especially when both man and wife had been drinking. Very often the husband would give his wife his weekly earnings, with which she was expected to handle all the household expenses. Ross (1983) explains that the husband would retain some pocket money for himself, in order to spend on tobacco and beer (pg 7). Nevertheless, this process did not always run smoothly and women quite often had to “compete with the pubs for portions of their housekeeping money” as the husbands would often spend much of their earnings there (Ross, 1983, pg 16). However, this was not because many working-class men were alcoholics, according to Ross (1983), it was because they simply wanted to spend time with their “drinking mates” (pg 16). Women would often drag their husbands out from the pubs, arrange with the publican to limit the amount their husband could spend, or even pocket their change (Ross, 1983, pg 16).

### **Dependence on Opium**

It seems that much of the uneasiness surrounding the issue of a drinking culture is aimed at the unarmed working-classes. Problems surrounding middle-class leisure are simply ignored as they are not seen as an issue. It only seems that when the working-classes take an interest in alcohol or other drugs that it becomes criminalised. When looking at social attitudes towards drug taking in Victorian society Berridge (1999) argues that middle-class dependence to opium was much more acceptable than working-class dependence; this class reaction was typical during the nineteenth century (pg 97).

For those unfortunate creatures who daily resort of this baneful drug as a cheap species of intoxication, I have little sympathy or commiseration. Their weakness entails a severe punishment even in this world ... (however there were others) ... especially among the middle-classes of society, who resort to the use of opium, under the pressure of severe mental distress ... (‘Medicus’ writing in the Lancet in 1815, in Berridge, 1999, pg 107).

The assumption, according to Berridge (1999), was that the working-classes were turning to opium, as a “cheap alternative” to alcohol and not for medical reasons, unlike the middle-classes (pg 106). This however does not ring true as Berridge (1999) states, per capita spirit and beer consumption rose up until the 1870s, instead of decreasing when the use of opium was increasing (pg 108). There was a connection between alcohol and opium. Opium was often used by the working-classes as a means of “sobering up” (Berridge, 1999, pg 105). According to Berridge (1999), the Temperance

Movement picked up on this connection and believed that the consumption of drink would certainly lead to an increase in opium consumption (pg 105). Christison in 1831 analysed ten opium eaters and found that amongst the lower classes opium eating was often combined with excessive drinking (in Berridge, 1999, pg 107). As argued by Berridge (1999) the working-classes in fact used the drug as “self medication” (pg 108). According to medical professionals of the time, an opium eating working class was actually more preferable than a spirit drinking one, “as opium users were not violent but, spirit drinkers were” (Berridge, 1999, pg 108). Although opium was widely available in the factory districts it was also available in the rural areas; “all levels of society could be connected to the drug” but it was only the working classes who were scrutinised for it (Berridge, 1999, pg 108).

### **Drinking, Masculinity and Class**

Boys growing up in working-class communities in the nineteenth century were faced with a confusing image of what it meant to be a man. As Davies (1992) suggests on the one hand, men were the breadwinners of the family, providing for their wives and children (Davies, 1992, pg 74). Good, respectable husbands were classified as men who were dedicated to their families. On the other hand, a very different representation of manliness was presented by the working-class ‘hard man’ who believed that masculine virtues were based on: “toughness and the ability to drink heavily” (Davies, 1992, pg 74). Some men were clearly definable as respectable, others as rough, whereas some men were a mixture of the two, adopting different personas dependent on where they were and who they were with. As a result, working class boys were subject to confusing messages about the appropriate way for them to exert their masculinity. Davies (1992) claims that within the home boys were sometimes at the receiving end of adult male anger and aggression, as well as their mothers (pg 75). Not only did children experience male violence within the home, they were also witness to men fighting “fair fights” in public (Davies, 1992, pg 75). Such fights became “a spectator sport outside the pubs at closing time and at the weekends”, and provided a lesson to the boys about manliness (Davies, 1992, pg 75). According to Davies (1992) the fights were a means of the working-classes “settling grievances, and the men only fought with their fists”, as a result the boys learnt by example (pg 75). The newspapers were filled with articles relating to male on male violence. For example, *The Preston Guardian* reported two incidents on the same page of male aggression on the 23 January 1875. In the case of John Nuttall, he was charged with assaulting John Ward, by striking him on the face. Both had been drinking, but denied being drunk. The magistrate said it was evident that the case was the result of a quarrel in a beer shop, and dismissed the case. Another case was that of Henry Loynd, in *The Preston Guardian* on the 23 January 1875, charging Jonathan Clayton with assaulting him on the face and in other ways whilst he was at the Cross Axes public house. A witness stated that the complainant had held Loynd’s down. The case was dismissed. Without any severe consequences to such attacks, such male aggression became a normal, accepted part of working class culture and an example to the youths.

Clark (1992) argues that middle-class men promoted rationality and self control, rejecting the notion that “honour and hierarchy” can be defended through violence (pg 31). Manhood could be achieved through “hard work in the public sphere”, rather than aggression within the private sphere (Clark, 1992, pg 31). The middle-classes upheld the sanctity in their own homes, as the integrity they showed in their public, political lives transcended into their private morality (Clark, 1992, pg 31). Consequently, the middle classes were granted immunity from not only public condemnation but

prosecution as well. According to Chapman (1968), the streets they occupied were not as heavily policed as working class areas and the private space they owned protected them from the gazing eyes of the Law.

This immunity meant that they believed it their duty to interfere in the private lives of the working-classes, as “the perceived crime and disorder in working-class families threatened the whole of society and the private space which they enjoyed” (Clark, 1992, pg 31). The platform the middle-classes chose to use to voice their concerns were the daily newspapers. By the beginning of the Nineteenth century there was a mass reading public. Jones (1999) argues; it is no surprise that the newspapers were instructed and staffed by the middle-classes (pg 106). Convinced that the working-classes were lacking refined cultural, social and moral influence; the middle-classes began a campaign of redemption (Jones, 1999, pg 107). Images of “drunken savages lurking in dark alleyways, prostitutes trawling the streets for custom and habitual criminals preying on the respectable” were created through social investigations and editorials (Jones, 1999, pg 107). The Manchester newspapers in 1871 reported on the threat of disorder and the need to civilise the unruly working-classes. One Guardian reporter published an article about a notorious pub ‘Up the Sough’ on Whittle Street, he wrote:

Men and women, quite drunk and half clad, sitting and lying about in all directions. Of liquors, albeit there was no licence, there was no lack. Some of the occupants of this den were quarrelling, some were singing ribald songs, and all the wretchedness of vicious intoxication was rampant and unchecked... (Jones, 1997, pg 13).

The Bishop of Manchester called for “something that would bridge over these prodigious chasms which separated the high from the low, the learned from the ignorant, the refined from the coarse and brutal” (in Jones, 1999, pg 107). Jones (1999) states, that by labelling the working-classes as “disreputable” within the Manchester newspapers, they were making the assumption that the readership was those who had already obtained respectable status and those who could aspire to it (pg 107). This is not to say that this ‘evangelical zeal’ was simply accepted and unquestioned by its audience.

Middle class ideology permeated through society during the nineteenth century. The belief being that the working classes were in need of redemption and it was the responsibility of the middle classes to civilise this ‘brutish’ class. The working classes alcohol use was a cause of great uneasiness to the ‘respectable’ middle classes who believed that the activities enjoyed and abused by the working classes were in danger of infecting the rest of the ‘civilised’ society. With beer and gin being the safer staple drink to water and the working classes perceived need for intoxication to escape the drudgery of their everyday lives, the middle classes stood little chance of reforming them. Alcohol played a major part in people’s lives, not only amongst the middle classes but the working classes too. Alcohol is a source of great enjoyment and great resentment, a drug which has remained a societal issue throughout the centuries. Its use is a socially accepted practice as long as that use does not fall outside the societal parameters of social acceptability, an issue which is as true today as it was in the nineteenth century.

### CHAPTER 3 – ALCOHOL ‘OUR FAVOURITE DRUG’

The aim of this chapter is to explain the state of Britain’s drinking culture, namely; how alcohol affects society, society’s dependence on the substance and how this is socially constructed in the news media. This chapter will examine the theoretical approaches of both Young (1971) and Matza (1964) according to Cohen (2001). Young’s (1971) approach will be utilised to show how much societal resentment is aimed at those who use alcohol and drugs to bring themselves pleasure, yet they do not deserve them as they have not earned them through hard work. This universal societal reaction highlights the perceptions of acceptable alcohol use amongst some social groups but not others, as dictated by the Government and more obviously by the media. Matza (1964) highlights the techniques of neutralisation which are used by delinquents in order to protect themselves from feelings of self blame and blame by others. It is Cohen’s (2001) interpretation of the techniques which will be utilised to show how by neutralising the wrongfulness of their deviant act, an individual can convince themselves and maybe others that they are not to blame. Alcohol provides an opportunity for delinquency to occur and can be used as an appropriate excuse for unacceptable behaviour. Misdemeanours whilst drunk are an accepted part of British culture to the point that amusing stories about celebrities delinquent behaviour whilst intoxicated helps to sell newspapers. This chapter will explore the idea of the acceptability of this potentially lethal drug; alcohol, and how the media feeds this acceptability.

#### **Public Health Issue**

“Alcohol is the major public health issue of our time”, which overshadows the problems of tobacco use and illicit drug abuse (Bewley, 1986, pg ix). Alcohol is a recreational psychoactive drug used in most countries (Plant, Single and Stockwell, 1997, pg 3). Though most are able to drink moderately, some drink heavily and inappropriately, which can lead to, in some cases, tragic consequences (Plant *et al.*, 1997, pg 3). Due to the popularity of alcohol any attempts to control its use become highly politicised and controversial (Plant *et al.*, 1997, pg 3). However, this reluctance to place sanctions on it ignores the many problems caused by its use. Plant *et al.* (1997) highlight some of these problems; ill health, premature mortality, injuries, social, family and economic difficulties, behavioural problems and public order offences (pg 3). Yet alcohol is an accepted, recreational activity in British society, and has been for centuries. Brownlee (2002) explains that alcohol is a substance which defines our culture; it transcends barriers and unites people (pg 7). Eighty five percent of adults drink alcohol and Brownlee (2002) claims that they never drink alone (pg 7). This however, is questionable, though alcohol is a very sociable activity it is also a drink that can be consumed privately whether as a simple means of enjoyment and relaxation, or as a means to aid a depressive state. Brownlee (2002) argues that although alcohol has caused much distress and killed millions of people, a relatively relaxed societal view is shared about it (pg 12). This, according to Brownlee (2002), is because alcohol use is engrained in our culture (pg 12). We drink to celebrate births, marriages, new jobs; we drink at parties, funerals, sporting events; we give it as gifts to friends and family and toast their health with it (Brownlee, 2002, pg 12). We see it advertised everyday in the newspapers, on the television and on billboards (Brownlee, 2002, pg 12). As a consequence, Brownlee (2002) argues that whether you drink or not, alcohol is a subject that affects your life (pg 9).

Public and political attention, according to South (2007), tends to focus on illegal drugs

as being the cause of many social problems, instead of looking at the significant part legal drugs can play (pg 811). Alcohol is the most widely used and misused drug (South, 2007, pg 811). Problems associated with alcohol are usually treated separately to other kinds of drug use (Kilfoyle and Bellis, 1997, pg 7), yet deaths associated with alcohol are much higher than those from illegal drug misuse and complications (South, 2007, pg 811). As Ashton (1997) notes:

Alcohol ... It is a drug. It is a dehydrating agent. It is a poison, it is a narcotic. It is an anaesthetic ... I'll say it again: it is a drug; it is a mind altering drug; it is a dependency forming drug; it is a depressant. It is legal and it is readily available and relatively cheap. (Ashton, 1997, pg 54).

Plant and Plant (2006) argue that tabloid stories tend to focus heavily on sexual activity, drinking or illicit drug use (pg 28). In the case of drinking there is, according to Plant and Plant (2006), sufficient justification for media interest; most people drink and the negative effects caused by its use are a real problem (pg 28). Yet, there appears to be a paradox. On the one hand, the negative effects of the minorities drink abuse are reported regularly, on the other hand amusing stories about individual's misdemeanours are also reported.

### **Jock Young**

Young (1971) argues that drug taking is a means of trying to solve problems that have been created in advanced industrial societies where there is a system of work and leisure (pg 55). According to Young (1971) if these problems cannot be solved through legal drugs such as alcohol, nicotine, caffeine or medically prescribed amphetamines, barbiturates or tranquilisers, then illegal drugs are resorted to (pg 55). Both the cause and the reaction of drug use are rooted in the structure and culture of modern society, a society in which both high productivity and high consumption are encouraged. Young (1971) states, that the ideal citizen is one who is disciplined in his work and hedonistic in his leisure (pg 55). A lot of resentment is built around those who appear to be using something which brings them such pleasure, though by conventional rules they do not deserve it as they have not earned it through hard work (Young, 1971, pg 55). The media representations of drugs, drug dealers and drug users are, according to Osborne (1995, pg 43) irrational. On the whole reporting regarding drug use is exaggerated and the real drug problem is buried underneath media stereotypes (Osborne, 1995, pg 44). Young (1971a) proclaims that: "the media have learnt that the fanning up of moral indignation is a remarkable commercial success" (pg 443). As a result, they play on and continue to use distorted imagery (Young, 1971a, pg 443). Alcohol, though a drug, is portrayed in a much different way than class A drugs. The social drinker who is relaxing after work or the middle aged barbiturate addict who needs drugs in order to sleep are generally ignored or treated lightly by the media (Young, 1971b, pg 327). The individuals who are condemned are those who do not use drugs for productive reasons and gain undeserved pleasures from such use (Young, 1971b, pg 327). This resentment can be created through media representations of certain groups. Social segregation and the mass media introduce into the relationship between deviant groups and society, the element of misperception. The deviancy amplification process is initiated because of incorrect perceptions (Young, 1971c, pg 36). Osborne (1995, pg 43) argues that media representations of drugs and drug users fits "the demonology that communism used to occupy", that it is an evil force which aims to destroy the social fabric of society from

within.

This one dimensional 'figure of evil' however, appears to be exclusive to the lower classes. Kate Spicer (2008) from *The Times* discusses the effect of drinking too much and eating too little, in her article "Drunkorexia – too much booze and too little food – is affecting more and more women". Spicer (2008) quotes a nutritionist, Ian Marber, as saying "It's socially acceptable to be drunk, but it's not okay to be fat". The problem being that, women feel under increasing pressure to be slim and look "fabulous" (Spicer, 2008). By women however, Spicer (2008) means middle class women. References are made throughout the article to "posh mummies" and those who enjoy having a "relaxing glass of wine or champagne" (Spicer, 2008). One example is offered of a woman who has a glass of champagne at lunch and another when her husband comes home, another at dinner and one when she is putting the children to bed (Spicer, 2008). The article does not highlight any possible social problems such as, the effect this could have on the children of these "drunkorexics" and the possible social ramifications. Instead, "drunkorexia" is shown to be a personal, psychological problem, as Sam, a financial broker jokes: "It's just an eating disorder is a whole lot more fun when you're drinking" (Spicer, 2008). Attaching humour to a topic such as this shows the writer trying to engage with their audience directly. This is a subject that may affect the potential audience of *The Times* and this light mocking enables the reader to identify with the sources used within the article and help negate any feelings of shame they may hold as a result of their behaviour being highlighted. The picture insert is of a cocktail glass; a middle class drink (see appendix 3). Comparatively, in articles relating to lower class drinking, pictures are often shown of the negative effects of heavy drinking (see appendix 4). This is important to note, as Fairclough (1989) argues, visual language is used to provoke a reaction in its readers. Often the tone of the article can be alluded to within a picture without even having to read the written content.

No negation of feelings or shame is offered to members of the lower classes. The *Daily Express* for example featured the article "Get tough with teenage yobs, not the law-abiding". This article highlights some of the fears held by society about drinking amongst the young. Terminology such as "out-of control teen gangs", "yobbish", "unruly teenagers" and "feral teenagers" are used in the article (*Daily Express*, 2007d). The main complaint expressed in the article is that responsible drinkers are at risk of being penalised because of out of control teenagers "And what a nonsense it would be for a middle-aged couple to be banned from having a glass of wine with a summer picnic in their local park because of unruly teenagers" (*Daily Express*, 2007d). The "feral teenagers" (*Daily Express*, 2007d) are presented as the 'other'; a distinct group to be feared, as they threaten the freedom of members of the civilised society. The presentation of this group is one dimensional, there is no discussion about any pressure they may be under, or the fact they may use alcohol as escapism from the difficulties they experience within their lives. Any sympathetic tone is reserved for the middle classes, a class which is portrayed as carrying a social burden whether that be the pressures they face in the workplace, or the pressure to stay looking beautiful. These burdens are, according to media representations, more in need of our sympathy and understanding than those faced by the lower classes. This differential treatment of the classes creates societal confusion about the socially acceptable way to live your life; this confusion is extended to the amount of alcohol which is acceptable to drink.

### **Acceptable Alcohol Use**

The amount of units of alcohol which is acceptable to drink is a heavily debated topic.

Moderate alcohol use is not usually harmful and can even provide some health benefits (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 58). As a result alcohol does not have to be treated in the same way as tobacco, as smoking kills approximately 120,000 people a year in the UK (Jarvis, 2004 cited in Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 58). Plant and Plant (2006) claim that, those who drink heavily and surprisingly those who abstain are likely to die prematurely rather than those who drink a little (pg 58). Abstainer's early mortality can be explained in a number of ways. Some abstainers are 'sick quitters' meaning they are people who used to drink heavily and have now stopped. Others may not drink because they are in poor health, or have religious views which prevent them from consuming alcohol (Plant and Plant 2006, pg 58). As a result of not drinking some abstainers may have a restricted network of social contacts compared with those who do drink (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 58). For example *The Times* printed the article "How a drink after work can increase your rate of pay" on 10 October 2006, which details how social drinkers earn on average up to 14% more than teetotallers (Rose, 2006, pg 15). According to Rose (2006) drinking outside the office advantages employees, as social drinking builds social capital (pg 15). It is an opportunity for networking, building relationships and adding to their contacts. Drinkers tend to be more social than abstainers; they are usually more outgoing, gregarious and use their ability to mix well to great effect in their work (Rose, 2006, pg 15). Alcoholism and heavy drinking has a dangerous effect on people's lives, whereas moderate drinking is shown to make some people more successful (Rose, 2006, pg 15).

Moderate drinking also helps protect people from coronary heart disease and ischaemic stroke (stroke caused by a blood clot in the brain cutting off the blood supply to the surrounding area) among the middle aged and the elderly (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 58). Red wine is thought to be life enhancing. In 2002 BBC News reported that another health benefit has been attributed to red wine which is, fighting off the common cold. According to the article, experts at five universities found that people who drank more than two glasses of red wine a day had 44% fewer colds than teetotallers (BBC, 2002).

The health benefits however, from moderate drinking are easily forgotten when we are reminded of the potential fatal harm alcohol use can cause; there appears to be a fine line between acceptable use and harmful abuse. On 9 August 2007 David Rose's article "Deadly cancers on the rise as Britons ignore lifestyle advice" was printed on page 21 of *The Times* newspaper. In this article Rose (2007a) explains that there has been some concern over the increase in the number of deaths caused by cancer and that some of these cases are avoidable through simple precautions and changes to lifestyles (pg 21). There has been an increase in the number of cancers associated with lifestyle factors such as alcohol, smoking, obesity and exposure to the sun, according to figures published by the charity Cancer Research UK (2007). Research suggests that around half of all cancers could be prevented by changes to lifestyle (Cancer Research UK, 2007). The example is offered of mouth cancer which occurs in most cases in people who smoke, chew tobacco or drink alcohol regularly. This causes great confusion about what is acceptable alcohol use. As Plant and Plant (2006) explain moderate wine drinking reduces mortality, whereas moderate spirit drinking has the opposite effect (pg 58). Many people in the UK however, are willing to pay the price for a night's heavy drinking. Hangovers, as argued by Plant and Plant (2006), are regarded as acceptable "battle damage" (pg 64) and are worn like a badge of honour. Even those who have experienced adverse effects after a night's heavy drinking still view their drinking as being enjoyable (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 64). Yet, as shown in the last three media examples, news reporting on the societal effect of alcohol is varied, from examples of

how alcohol can positively enhance your life to how this dangerous drug can prematurely end your life. Jancis Robinson, a wine writer notes that to drink is normal and to abstain is abnormal, and as such our attitudes about alcohol are not as relaxed as we like to think (in Brownlee, 2002, pg 13). Drinking habits, according to Robinson, are not scrutinised enough due partly to the reluctance about what that scrutiny might reveal (in Brownlee, 2002, pg 13).

### **Matza's Neutralisation**

This lack of societal scrutiny about the drinking habits of the masses has meant that the opportunity for delinquency is greatly increased and even accepted. According to the British Beer and Pub Association, around 15 million people socialise in pubs every week (2009). Plant and Plant (2006) claim that the number of young people drinking in nightclubs is around 3 million (pg 51) and these figures do not include the increased number of people who now drink at home. Consequently the more people who drink, the more neutralised people become to its effects and the more likely they are to become involved in a delinquent act. Matza (1964) discusses the idea of neutralisation in relation to delinquency. There are millions of opportunities for delinquency to occur. Apart from the occasions in which there is high surveillance, virtually every moment presents an opportunity for delinquency (Matza, 1964, pg 69). However, delinquency only occurs in a small proportion of these moments, as for the most part the delinquent is distracted and restrained by convention (Matza, 1964, pg 69). During the times when the delinquent is released from the bind of convention, he/she is free to drift into delinquency, for example when an individual is intoxicated (Matza, 1964, pg 69). After the act has occurred the delinquent uses a technique of neutralisation in order to protect themselves from self blame and blame by others; it may be used before the act to weaken social control and make delinquency possible (Cohen, 2001, pg 60). Matza's techniques of neutralisation have become a popular explanation of the delinquency drift and have been adopted by many academics, including Cohen (2001), who provides an explanation of the five techniques.

Firstly, **denial of responsibility**, in which the delinquent can appeal to accident and claim "I didn't mean to do it", this according to the individual may be due to forces beyond their control (Cohen, 2001, pg 60). For example, as according to Dr Vivienne Nathanson (Head of Ethics at the British Medical Association), "people are getting into accidents and going over the limit because they had no idea what the drink is" (Fletcher, 2007b). As such, posters in pubs are being demanded by leading doctors warning drinkers how much alcohol they are consuming (Fletcher, 2007b). As a consequence the drinker claimed they did not mean to do their delinquent act as they were completely unaware about how much alcohol they had drunk and it was purely the fault of the pubs who failed to make them aware of the amount of units they had consumed. On the 21 June 2008 *The Times* reported that the Appeal Courts judges have ruled that the "irresistible cravings" of an alcoholic may be used as a valid defence for murder (pg 4). In a "landmark case" it was decided that Clive Wood who "hacked" his friend to death whilst drunk in Walsall, West Midlands should have a murder conviction quashed as he did not know what he was doing (*The Times*, 2008a, pg 4). Denial of responsibility can also be used as a defence for 'unknowing' parents whose children become involved in illegal acts. For example, *The Sun* reported the story of Jack Strom, a 13 year old boy who was fighting for his life after drinking a litre of vodka (Bell, 2007). The mother of Jack absolved all responsibility for the incident claiming that she had no idea that her son drank spirits and that the alcohol had been bought for him by a friend of a friend

(Bell, 2007).

Secondly, **denial of injury**, in which the delinquent tries to neutralise the wrongfulness of the act by minimising any hurt or injury which may occur as a result (Cohen, 2001, pg 60). Jacqui Smith, Home Secretary, was at the centre of a scandal in July 2007, when she admitted to having smoked cannabis whilst at university (Webster, 2007, pg 7). Though she has concerns about young people's mental health as a result of smoking the drug, in relation to her own drug taking "I have not done for 25 years ... so actually, I think that in some ways I have learnt my lesson" (Webster, 2007, pg 7). Interestingly, when asked about his opinion on the matter Home Office minister, Tony McNulty, stated that "Anyone who went to university in the late 70s or early 80s would have encountered and may have consumed cannabis. I certainly did ... I think people would be more surprised if you managed to avoid it" (Webster, 2007, pg 7). In this view as 'everyone' was smoking cannabis it was acceptable practice, especially as it happened at a time in the past; the same view would not be taken of this behaviour in the present. Vine (2007) from *The Times* argues in relation to the criticism of middle class drinkers in June 2007 that policy should not be formulated on the basis of people that take their drink too far (pg 94). According to Vine (2007), most people are capable of drinking without developing liver failure or beating up their children. The interference by the Government into the drinking habits of the middle classes was taken as a gross invasion of their privacy. As Vine (2007) states: "And now they have the audacity to come into our heavily mortgaged homes and tell us how much we can drink" (pg 4). As a consequence, writers such as Vine (2007) tried to argue why this interference was unnecessary by minimising any hurt or injury which may result from heavy drinking.

Thirdly, **denial of the victim**, this can be achieved by blaming the victim for the original wrong doing and as a result the victim "only got was coming to him" (Cohen, 2001, pg 61). For example *The Sun* published an article on 8 June 2007 regarding the television programme Big Brother. The article details how the Big Brother housemates requested some alcohol as they had had a long day and needed to get "s\*\*\*-faced" (Cheeseman, 2007). After disappointment of only receiving a small amount of alcohol an argument ensued (Cheeseman, 2007). One of the housemates started the fight with another housemate, because she believed that he had consumed more alcohol than the rest (Cheeseman, 2007). As such, the aggressive stance taken against the accused housemate was justified because they believed he was responsible for deceiving the other housemates, the result being he apologised to the group (Cheeseman, 2007).

Fourthly, **condemnation of the condemners**, in which the delinquent tries to deflect attention away from their wrongful act to the character of their critics, who are presented as disguised deviants (Cohen, 2001, pg 61). For example, after the Government released figures highlighting a drinking problem amongst the middle classes, the intent of the Government in doing so was brought into question by the *Daily Express*. In the article "Are you what Nanny State calls a 'problem' drinker?" Milland (2007) quotes Matthew Elliott from the Taxpayer Alliance "The Bureaucrats behind this are trying to expand their budgets". The Government is also criticised for apparently developing a strategy to tackle drinking amongst the middle classes without effective consultation (Milland, 2007). According to Elliott, if the bureaucrats went out for a drink now and again they would become more relaxed on the issue and would leave the middle classes alone (Milland, 2007). The attention was deflected away from the middle classes being scrutinised to those scrutinising them, as such the actions of the middle classes appear to be justifiable.

Lastly, **appeal to higher loyalties**, in which immediate loyalties to intimate groups are favoured over the wider society's social control (Cohen, 2001, pg 61). These loyalties can be seen when considering the behaviour of the young or at least the portrayal of some young people's behaviour by the media. The depiction is of "an occupying army loose in the streets" who stick together as "drunken yobs" (*Daily Express*, 2007c). The portrayal is of youngsters who cause mayhem and fear in the streets without any thought about how it would affect wider society and without wider society having any control over them. However, once caught even these loyalties may become dispensable. In the case of two teenage boys aged 13 and 16 who were found guilty of killing a young woman, Helen Maughan, and throwing her body into a river after drinking all day, they blamed each other when being questioned by the police (*The Times*, 2008b).

An article which highlights four of Matza's techniques of neutralisation is that by Rudd (2007) in *The Times*. Rudd (2007) spent a month drinking over the limit in order to investigate what effect alcohol would have on his body in light of Government claims that middle class drinking is causing major harm. In order to test the effect alcohol had on his body Rudd (2007) subjected his body to blood, urine and electrocardiogram tests before and after. During the course of the month Rudd (2008) had around 45 units of alcohol a week (hazardous drinking for men is classified as 22-50 units a week). The only negative aspect for Rudd (2007) in completing such a task is that at the beginning, in order to allow his liver to recover from years of drinking alcohol consistently, he needed two months without alcohol. In reality he lasted 7 weeks with less than 5 units a week, which he described as "no fun at all" (Rudd, 2007). Rudd (2007) remains very jovial throughout the article regarding his alcohol intake and the escapades he becomes involved in as a consequence. To Rudd (2007) his drinking habits, even when pushed to the limits, are "civilised" and as such he does not welcome interference by the Government and would even classify it as unnecessary. Rudd (2007) denies responsibility for his alcohol intake, as keeping a track of the amount of units being consumed "is a challenge for many drinkers" as glass sizes and alcohol strengths vary. A denial of injury is shown in Rudd's (2007) discussion of the lack of harm alcohol has caused him within the month; he very rarely suffered from hangovers and the "month's boozing had not had the slightest impact" on his blood, urine or liver. This however, was not strictly true as there was a change with his liver function, not enough to cause significant damage within the month, but if he was to continue drinking at the same rate it could prove problematic. Rudd (2007) shows condemnation for his condemners by describing Dawn Primarolo (the Health Minister behind the government plans to highlight middle class drinking as problematic) as an "Obergruppenführer" (translated as a senior group leader for the Nazi party), he even questioned her facts, as according to Rudd (2007) units "have no basis in science". An appeal to higher loyalties are shown in Rudd's (2007) description of his train journey from London to Kent as a "drinking den on wheels" on which everybody drinks, "you're weird on my train if you aren't drinking". Rudd (2007) on many occasions throughout the month drinks with friends, at which time they appear to defend and justify each other's actions as, "If you think of what you used to drink when you were a student ...". Rudd (2007) appears to make light heart out of an issue that is being regarded as extremely serious by the Government and in doing so fails to take any responsibility for his actions and what the future consequences of such actions could be. Rudd (2007) also fails to acknowledge the societal impact of excessive alcohol use and how it can lead in many cases to not only personal health consequences but physical harm being caused to others.

## Violence

Alcohol lessens inhibitions as well as weakening a person's self control; this can directly lead in some cases to violence and crime (DHSS, 1981, pg 14), however, the issue is less simplistic than it would appear on first glance. Articles such as "Fixing a broken society" featured in *The Sunday Times* on 15 July 2007, focuses on the pitfalls of having a society rife with drink and drugs. The articles discuss the idea that Britain's broken society surrounds us all, with youths roaming the streets looking for trouble and children becoming addicted to drink and drugs (*The Sunday Times*, 2007). According to the article, this broken society inevitably "intrudes on our comfortable lives, sometimes brutally" (*The Sunday Times*, 2007). Examples are provided of innocent people murdered by thugs, such as, John Monckton, who was killed in his home by two "thugs" who had grown on up on a life of drugs and crime (*The Sunday Times*, 2007). The Conservative Party leader of the time, Iain Duncan Smith, argued that the main problems centred on the fact that one million children have parents who are alcoholics and many are living in poverty (*The Sunday Times*, 2007). Lives, according to Smith, are being blighted by drugs, alcohol, crime and violence, leading to a cycle of deprivation (*The Sunday Times*, 2007). As explained by the Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists a criminal offence is rarely committed for one isolated, simple reason (1986, pg 76). The example is offered of a woman who steals from a shop whilst drinking, she is also depressed and has become impulsive; either that or she wants to be caught to enable her to get help. She is obviously drunk and "shabby" in appearance and as the shop employs a store detective, she is soon caught (Special Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1986, pg 76). To say that the drink caused the crime would be oversimplifying the problem (Special Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1986, pg 76). However, the newspaper portrayal of such crimes or anti-social behaviour where alcohol is a factor is often treated on a simplistic level; this can also be seen in the depiction of drug dealers and drug users in the news.

## Tax

Attempts are sometimes made by the Government to affect change in a society that is heavily dependent on alcohol. The problem being however, that recommendations are made by Government advisors yet they rarely come into fruition. This could be due to the Government's reluctance to alienate the electorate as well as the complexity of affecting change, which has no guarantee of altering the mindset of the population. This however, does not stop the media reporting any potential alterations to Government policy. On 20 July 2007 the senior medical adviser to the Government, Sir Liam Donaldson, advised that tax rises on alcohol should be imposed in order to reduce the damage caused to health (*Daily Express*, 2007b). Sir Liam stated he would "strongly commend" the use of tax as a deterrent to excessive drinking as well as a ban on drinks companies sponsoring sporting events which link alcohol with fitness and glamour (*Daily Express*, 2007b). The price of alcohol has fallen relative to the cost of living and as a result it is more affordable to young people and children, according to Sir Liam (*Daily Express*, 2007b). The World Health Organisation's European Charter on Alcohol proposes that each Member State should "promote health by controlling the availability for example for young people, and influencing the price of alcoholic beverages, for instance by taxation" (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2008). Even though in the UK alcohol is relatively highly taxed compared with other European countries, tax is no longer deliberately used as a means to control levels of alcohol consumption and related harm (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2008). However, a range of studies have found that increasing the price of alcohol can reduce road accidents and fatalities, deaths from cirrhosis of the liver, various violent crimes and workplace injuries (Institute of

Alcohol Studies, 2008). The British Medical Association (2008) argues that the Government's failure to increase alcohol tax reveals its lack of commitment to the promotion of good health (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2008). According to the Institute of Alcohol Studies there is evidence that alcohol consumption is responsive to price (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2008). The Institute of Alcohol Studies suggest that many studies have concluded that heavy drinkers are said to be more responsive to price than non-heavy drinkers, young males on lower incomes are more susceptible to price elasticity than those on higher incomes (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2008). However, in terms of whether tax changes are necessary depends on the harm caused by alcohol consumption, whether it is individual harm or harm which falls on others (Godfrey, 1997, pg 32). The subject of harms causes some dispute amongst economists. On the one hand some harms' such as; physical damage are tangible, whereas pain and grief are intangible (Godfrey, 1997, pg 32). Premature loss of life could be argued as a private cost; if a rational individual takes into account the possible risks their actions are causing then they have weighed up the risks verses the benefits. However, others argue that premature deaths have an impact on wider society such as causing a loss of labour in the workforce (Godfrey, 1997, pg 32). Changing policy can incur costs that need to be set against any potential benefits. There will not only be gains from a tax increase, as it may reduce the alcohol abusing population, but also potential losses from the loss of consumption benefits to the non-abusing population (Pogue and Sgnotz, 1989 in Godfrey, 1997, pg 33). This makes any Government decisions about how to control alcohol use complex. It is not, however, helped by the media, who seek to protect their own interests and print news which ties in with the engrained societal ideology of alcohol use being an accepted part of our society. In the same way the Government works to ensure they do not alienate their electorate, the media works to ensure they do not alienate their readership. As such, articles which glamorise alcohol use, feed into this societal perception that alcohol use amongst the 'civilised' is to be accepted, sanctions are only necessary when the 'underclass' abuse the substance. As a consequence newspapers act as an effective means for drinks companies to advertise their products and ensure that the general public still allows alcohol use to be an accepted practice within their society.

### **Newspapers as Endorsers for Drinks Companies**

Newspapers often act as endorsers for drinks companies without needing to have a standard print advertisement. Articles such as "Fizz for ever: Summer drinks come and go, but we all love a glass of bubbly" (MacQuitty, 2007, pg 4) and "Excess liquidity" (Anderson, 2007, pg 11) bring glamour to alcohol use. "Excess liquidity" featured in *Times 2* on 19 June 2007, discusses the introduction of a new type of whisky, Johnnie Walker 1805 which the "bonus-rich City types can't get enough of ..." (Anderson, 2007, pg 11-13). The article talks about the fact that this new whisky has a rare blend of nine rare whiskies but, is the world's costliest. A review of other whiskies is printed as well as a discussion about the dress code for men expected in bars compared with pubs (Anderson, 2007, pg 13). "Fizz for ever" was published on 17 August 2007 in *Times 2* by Jane MacQuitty, who explains why champagne is the "top of the tipples" for every occasion (MacQuitty, 2007, pg 4). A picture is shown of £35 million lottery winner Angela Kelly choosing to drink Veuve Clicquot champagne to celebrate. Advice is offered of the best champagnes for different occasions; 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays, weddings, summer parties, to just have in the fridge, as well as advice for how best to drink it "don't kill your fizz by serving it in those silly saucer-shaped glasses"(MacQuitty, 2007, pg 4). Both articles are appealing to the middle classes where this type of alcohol use is acceptable, and even more than that, encouraged. Whether supping champagne with a

Friday night takeaway pizza, or having a posh picnic, champagne has the “ability to rise to every occasion and to bring the best out in everybody” (MacQuitty, 2007, pg 4). Whisky on the other hand is a gentleman’s drink and “what better to do with your wealth than slosh it around in a whisky glass at a grand a pop?” (Anderson, 2007, pg 12). Here hedonism is encouraged and both authors choose to end their article with “I’ll drink to that” (Anderson, 2007, pg 12; MacQuitty, 2007, pg 4).

Articles which draw attention to the celebrity drinking culture can also help to endorse certain alcoholic beverages amongst the lower classes. For example, *The Sun* reported in the article “Noel’s a rock and roll tsar” how Noel Gallagher, from rock band Oasis, performed at a gig for alcohol brand Red Square and was hoping for some free alcopops (Smart, 2007). In Smart’s (2007) showbiz supplement, *Bizarre*, he details how Noel celebrated his sell out gig with a marathon drinking session of Russian vodka (Smart, 2007). The after party was described as a “typical Russian affair, lots and lots of vodka” (Smart, 2007). In June 2008 Peake and Hagan (2008) printed the article “Rooney’s stag do kicks off”. Here Peake and Hagan (2008) report that Wayne Rooney, a Manchester United and England football player, was going on his stag do. Rooney’s villa was said to be stocked with hundreds of pounds worth of pre-ordered strong Stella lager (Peake and Hagan, 2008). The stag group, according to Peake and Hagan (2008), was also hoping to “down WKD vodka alcopops”, these however, could not be found by the villa staff and so they settled for Smirnoff Ice. Although for both of these articles the focus was not the celebrities drinking habits, their actions were shown to be both ‘normal’ and fun. In the case of these two celebrities, Noel Gallagher and Wayne Rooney, both were born into relative poverty and are depicted by the media as someone who can relate to the lower classes. As a consequence, articles such as these, which neutralise their behaviour, sends a clear message to their admirers that their actions are ‘normal’ and acceptable. It is also a subtle means of promoting certain alcohol brands by showing what the celebrities choose to drink; something which will be copied by their many fans.

Ashton (1997, pg 56) argues that in the consuming of alcohol individuals are doing nothing wrong they are simply following the norm of society. The contradiction according to Ashton (1997) lies in the fact that we accept that alcohol is our favourite drug yet, as soon as the drug impacts on the brain and develops behaviour which we do not approve of we go along the law enforcement route (pg 56). According to Don Shenker, the Chief Executive of Alcohol Concern, the problem still exists that unskilled men are between 10 and 20 times more likely to die from alcohol-related causes than those with a professional background (Alcohol Concern, 2008). Although the government pledge to provide some extra money for areas with the highest rates of alcohol-related hospital admissions (Alcohol Concern, 2008) whilst there is still a cultural acceptability of its use amongst all sections of society, little progress will be made to reducing the amount of harm caused. As Ashton (1997) proclaims “Alcohol does have a place in our society. It enhances socialisation”, which means people are reluctant to give it up (pg 56). This reluctance to give it up exists throughout the social classes and although lower class drinking is generally regarded as the most problematic, the habits of the middle class have also been highlighted as a cause of Government concern. How this concern is portrayed by the media is a point of great interest, especially when compared with the concern expressed about lower class drinking habits.

## CHAPTER 4 - CLASS IN MODERN BRITAIN

The aim of this chapter is to explore how the different dimensions of social class affect how alcohol is portrayed in the news media. In order to conduct this exploration three concepts will be focused upon: respectability, space and alcoholism in social context. The theme which will be brought out of all three concepts will be the idea of immunity. In terms of respectability, this chapter will show how a person's perceived respectability within a community can result in the likelihood of them being granted immunity from both the law and media. In regards to space, the discussion will surround whether the use of private or public space can create immunity for the individual, and how this translates into a class issue. The focus on the final concept, alcohol in social context, will be to look at how the media react when they believe that the Government are threatening to place policy sanctions on middle class drinking habits; a class usually immune from such criticism as they are allowed to remain invisible in the eyes of the law and the media.

The definition of social class that will be used and utilised within this chapter and the research as a whole is the "grouping of people into categories on the basis of occupation" (Reid, 1977, pg 15). According to Reid (1977) the defining of social classes is treated with extreme caution by academics as it is a multidimensional concept involving invisible categories (pg 15). However, for the purpose of this research Reid's (1977) definition is adequate, and its simplicity will enable the discussion not to be detracted away from the central issue of how the social classes are portrayed in the news media in regards to today's drinking culture. It is however, important to acknowledge the complexity of defining the social classes, evident when considering the depth of debate amongst academics (Eric Olin Wright, Ralph Miliband and Anthony Giddens). Westergaard and Resler (1975) highlight the problem with using such a simplistic definition, by arguing that grouping individuals into social classes on the basis of their occupational position in relation to the rest of the population obscures the nature of capitalism as it; "veils the pinnacle of power and wealth from clear sight" (pg 29). Monk (1970) summarises his thoughts on the complexities of defining the social classes as such; "social class is a concept readily understood by the average man, but relatively difficult to define" (in Reid, 1989, pg 27). Monk (1970) discusses the importance of recognising that social class is not a simple concept (in Reid, 1989, pg 27). It is instead an "amalgam of many factors" which operates in many ways, in many differing circumstances (Monk, 1970, in Reid, 1989, pg 27).

The classes focused upon in this research are the 'underclass', the working class and the middle class, as these are the three groups which appear most frequently in the media headlines under analysis. In research there is a tendency to group the middle class as everyone beyond the working class. Westergaard and Resler (1975) argue that this nonsensically means the middle class are defined "between a lower group and a vacuum" (pg 29). Consequently for the purpose of this research the discussion of the middle classes will focus on those classified as professionals, as this is the focus of the newspaper articles under analysis, seen in articles such as; "Doctor 'abused police' after she drank two pints at football match" (Sanderson, 2007, pg 22). The lower classes on the other hand are defined according to Richardson's (2007) concept of visibility, with a media tendency to make the working class "invisible" and the 'underclass' "hyper-visible" (pg 137).

### Respectability

People considered to be respectable are treated more favourably by the law than those who are considered to be rough (Baumgartner, 1992, pg 136). Baumgartner (1992) argues that with encounters before the law those with unblemished reputations tend to fare better than those who have been morally stigmatised, whether they are appearing as complainants or defendants (pg 136). According to Baumgartner (1992), people who have prior records and are known by the police are more likely to be arrested, and the cases against them more likely to be pursued vigorously (pg 136). It is not however, just a person's prior record that can bring them to the attention of the law. Baumgartner (1992) asserts that more aggressive legal action is carried out on offenders whose clothing, hairstyle and posture are seen as unsavoury by officials (pg 137). Anyone thought to be disrespectful, rude or uncooperative to authoritarian figures are more vulnerable than those who show respect (Baumgartner, 1992, pg 137). Moral stigmas, Baumgartner (1992) claims such as drug addiction, alcoholism or homosexuality, are also factors which can affect how the offender is treated by the law (pg 137). This prejudice does not just exist for offenders, but for victims too. According to Baumgartner (1992), officials throughout the criminal justice process act more aggressively against those who have harmed the respectable victims, than against those who have been accused by the "morally compromised" (pg 137). For example, if the victim is a prostitute or an alcoholic the prosecutors are less likely to vigorously proceed with the case (Baumgartner, 1992, pg 139). An issue which has been brought to the public attention in recent months is that rape victims who had been drinking before an attack were given reduced compensation (O'Grady, 2008). According to O'Grady (2008) from the *Daily Express*, 14 women in the past year have received lower payments from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA). Lisa Longstaff, of Women Against Rape, argues that in the past women were blamed if they were wearing a short skirt, now it is if they have been drinking (O'Grady, 2008). CICA however, admit that mistakes are sometimes made and that is why there is a review process in place to allow the victim to challenge the decision (O'Grady, 2008).

Baumgartner (1992) stresses that the actions of the legal professionals towards those considered to be respectable are predictable, because respectability determines how officials decide to exercise their powers of discretion within various contexts (pg 141). As such, it predicts how police officers, prosecutors, judges and juries will behave towards either the complainant or the defendant (Baumgartner, 1992, pg 141). Judges for example are widely considered to embody the impartial force of 'the Law', and as such they have the power to dramatically affect the structuring of public opinion (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 32). The media tends to focus on court cases and consequently centre their story upon the judges definitions of the particular deviant act summarised in their closing speeches (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 32). Despite the power the judiciary has in shaping public opinion, they are shielded from individual criticism by the institutional sphere within the State to which they belong (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 33-34). This inevitably allows them to exist relatively anonymously (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 34). However the fact that the judiciary is supposed to embody impartiality is described by Hall *et al.* (1978) as "judicial fiction" (pg 33) as, of course, members of the judiciary are subjected to the discursive process in the same way as the police officer, journalist, analyst and every member of society. As such the bias which appears to exist in favour of the middle classes can be clearly shown from conviction through to media reporting, with enforcers at each stage demonstrating the class imbalance which permeates throughout British society.

For example, on the 30 August 2007, Sanderson (2007) reported in *The Times*, “Doctor ‘abused police’ after she drank two pints at football match” (pg 22). Sanderson (2007) describes how a high profile female doctor swore at police officers after being arrested at a football match (pg 22). According to Sanderson (2007), the doctor admitted to having had two pints of beer at the match, an amount which equates to approximately four units of alcohol dependent on the strength of beer (British Beer and Pub Association, 2008). The doctor was accused of shouting at the officers “I’m a f\*\*\*\*\*g doctor. I want your f\*\*\*\*\*g names and numbers” (Sanderson, 2007, pg 22). However, when brought before the General Medical Council, it was ruled that her behaviour did not fall “sufficiently below acceptable standards” and she was admonished without a warning (Sanderson, 2007, pg 22). When Dr Lester stood trial at Highbury Corner Magistrates Court the case was dismissed because no close-circuit television footage could be found and she was bound over to keep the peace for 12 months (Sanderson, 2007, pg 22). A degree of uncertainty about the validity of this story is expressed by Sanderson (2007) with the use of “allegedly”, “accused of” and “claimed to” (pg 22). This uncertainty afforded to a case about a middle class doctor does not transcend the classes to cases about lower class crime. More definite language about the guilt of the lower classes is expressed in articles such as: “Yob rule on the streets of Britain” (Whitehead, 2006, pg 7). Whitehead (2006) claims “violent yobs have taken control of the streets, making a mockery of Tony Blair’s pledge to make us safer” (pg 7). Here Whitehead (2006) expresses no uncertainty, the article is clear that these violent yobs are plaguing Britain. As stated by Baumgartner (1992) wealth and prominence play a significant part in the legal process, leading to a more sympathetic stance being taken when dealing with the middle classes than the lower classes (pg 142). The chances however, of a member of the middle class being caught committing a deviant act are relatively low, as they enjoy the privilege of physical barriers from the prying eyes of the law granting them immunity, immunity they do not share with the lower classes.

### **Immunity from Prosecution and Power**

A problem, as observed by Chapman (1968), is that relative immunity and, in some cases absolute immunity, is granted to the professional and higher middle and upper middle class groups from the processes of the law (pg 54). Chapman (1968) argues that this occurs for many reasons, one being the dominance of the middle and upper classes in the control of ideology (pg 54). However, as stated by Chapman (1968), this is not to say that the middle and upper class are a single, unified group, instead there are many grades and immunity is different between each grade (pg 55). There are many origins of immunity; Chapman (1968) highlights four (pg 55). Firstly, differential policing of working class and middle class areas; Secondly, differential distribution of privacy; Thirdly, availability to the middle class of institutional immunity and lastly, the fact that the police and courts treat middle class crime differently than working class crime (Chapman, 1968, pg 55). The result of these origins of immunity, according to Chapman (1968), is the reduced likelihood of the middle classes being prosecuted (pg 55). Chapman (1968) claims that there is an element of self fulfilling prophecy (pg 55). The police explain the intensity of policing of different areas as a policy which simply reflects the incidence of crime (Chapman, 1968, pg 55). Chapman (1968) however, explains that there is a correlation between the presence of a policeman and the detection of a crime and as such, areas which are rarely patrolled by the police, offers greater immunity to its residents, and hence there is an element of self fulfilling prophecy (pg 55). Another factor which can affect the degree of immunity is the ownership of house property (Chapman, 1968, pg 59). This offers a privileged position as many proscribed behaviours are only forbidden if they take place in a public place

(Chapman, 1968, pg 59). A building can be adapted to ensure a variety of behaviours are possible with a high degree of immunity (Chapman, 1968, pg 60). In the same vane the ownership of land can provide immunity, providing a physical barrier to ensure the owners are not under the gaze of the police (Chapman, 1968, pg 60). The security of a house and/or land surrounding it can help protect the private space of the occupants.

It is, according to Chapman (1968), the amount of time a person spends in public which will quantitatively affect his chance to break the law and be detected in the act (pg 56). The middle classes tend to spend their leisure time in private social areas compared with the working classes who are more likely to spend their leisure time in public areas (Chapman, 1968, pg 70). Chapman (1968) argues that any delinquencies taking place in these private areas inhabited by the middle classes, such as tennis clubs, gentlemen's clubs, golf clubs and so on, are very rarely investigated and almost never brought to the attention of the police (pg 70). Even in cases where the actions of the middle classes are brought into question by the law, they are not only more likely to be immune from prosecution than the working classes, but if apprehended the consequences are likely to be less severe (Chapman, 1968, pg 75). Chapman (1968) explains that this leniency towards the middle classes is because there is an assumption engrained within the police force, prosecution, magistrates and judges that the wealthy do not need to commit crimes, especially theft. As a result, if the middle class do commit a crime it is because they are suffering from physical ill health, a mental illness or have an evil influence (pg 75). This effectively takes any responsibility away from the actions of the middle classes and places it on external forces outside their control.

This immunity appears to be extended to a distinct class in itself; the celebrities. The media obsession with celebrities has meant that a story is more likely to make the news if a well known name is associated with it (Jewkes, 2004, pg 49). As such, as argued by Jewkes (2004), the level of deviance required to gain newspaper coverage is much lower than for offences committed by 'ordinary' people (pg 49). However, though the misdemeanours of celebrities are printed in the national newspapers this rarely impacts negatively on their careers and as the famous quote suggests 'there is no such thing as bad press'. For example, the singer Amy Winehouse is notorious for heavy drinking and drug taking and has received hundreds of newspaper columns dedicated to her private exploits. Even broadsheet newspapers such as *The Times*, cannot resist the opportunity to increase their sales by discussing such a high profile figure. Articles such as "Winehouse pulls out of gigs after 'exhaustion' puts her in hospital" (Hamilton, 2007, pg 5) and "How do we stop Amy becoming the next dead young rock star?" (Sherwin, 2007, pg 9) offers sympathy to the troubled star. Winehouse is described as electrifying the music industry "unlike any other artist in her generation" (Hamilton, 2007, pg 5). Although Winehouse admits to being an "ugly drunk" and even beating up her partner whilst under the influence of alcohol, the authors of the articles give the impression that they admired this behaviour (Plant and Plant, 2006, pg 23). The one dimensional figure of the drunk in the street, or the drug addict committing crimes to feed their addiction, is not supplied for celebrities. Whatever their appalling behaviour, the talent that made them famous is always highlighted, even if it is, as in the case of Amy Winehouse, their addiction which keeps them famous. Although celebrities may not be immune from the gaze of the media, they still receive the same immunity from the law that the middle classes enjoy. This has meant that Amy Winehouse, though arrested for drug possession, was never prosecuted; her less profile husband however, received a prison sentence.

Jewkes (2004) explains that it is not just those involved in show business whose actions

are made visible by the media (pg 51). High-status individuals in 'ordinary' life are also considered newsworthy such as Britain's former most senior police officer, Sir Ian Blair. Figures such as Sir Ian are often used by the media to provide a more personal angle to stories otherwise deemed not newsworthy (Jewkes, 2004, pg 51). For example, at a time when supermarkets were being accused of providing cut-price alcohol that was fuelling binge drinking, Sir Ian's own actions were called into question. Sir Ian was accused of being drunk at official functions, however The Metropolitan Police response was that Sir Ian "was unlikely to comment" (Hills, 2007a, pg 7). This was indeed the case and nothing more was mentioned about it. Though not a criminal offence, the admission that the head of the Metropolitan police has been seen to be intoxicated at official functions should have been explored more thoroughly, as it is these leading figures which are criticising similar actions of the lower classes. Instead Sir Ian's respectability was not brought into question; his status meant he was immune from any further action.

Respectability tends to breed immunity and as a consequence the lower classes do not enjoy the same immunity as that granted to the middle classes and high status/profile figures. The majority of members of the lower classes are however, immune from the media spotlight, but not all. Richardson (2007) observes that there is a tendency to either make the working class invisible or hyper-visible (pg 137). The invisible are those who are deemed to be unworthy of recognition such as cleaners, and the hyper-visible are those who are viewed with ridicule, disdain and/or fear (Richardson, 2007, pg 137). Munt (2000) describes the hyper-visible as the bad working class who are also known as the "lads and tarts, yobs and slags ... fat, cigarette-smoking, beer-drinking men who have become a drain on the social body" (in Richardson, 2007, pg 140). The hyper-visible can also be known as the 'underclass'. The 'underclass' according to Young (2002) have become a target for resentment (pg 479). As such public attention tends to centre upon the stereotype of the 'underclass', which has been presented by the media, namely "the undeserving poor" and the "welfare scrounger" (Young, 2002, pg 479). Murray (1996) claims that the term 'underclass' does not refer to a degree of poverty but to a type of poverty and that these people do not just lack money, they are defined by their behaviour (pg 121). Young (2002) proclaims that it cannot be accidental that all the stereotypes associated with the 'underclass' such as idleness, dependency and hedonism, as well as its teenage pregnancies and drug use, represent the traits that 'respectable' people suppress in order to maintain their own lifestyle (pg 481). There is a three-layered process for demonising the 'underclass' as presented by Young (2002, pg 482). Firstly, a sense of economic injustice; dislike and fear is fuelled by the sense that the 'under-classes' live on taxes unfairly and commit "predatory" crimes against us. Secondly, crisis of identity, in which the binary "them" and "us" is created, with "us" meaning normal, hardworking and decent citizens, whereas "them" means the opposite. Thirdly is the situation of restraint. This is all the supposed ideas of underclass life such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and the criminogenic cultures, which help supply this content of demonization (Young, 2002, pg 482).

The media play a major part in making the definition of the 'underclass' universally known. Hall *et al.* (1978) argue that the media create public images and it is the presence of such images in public and journalistic discourse which informs the treatment of a particular story (pg 118). This is where some members of the lower classes become invisible and other hyper-visible. Stories about ordinary people are not interesting enough to become as newsworthy as the stories that demonstrate the negative attitudes and behaviours characteristic of 'them' (Fowler, 1991, pg 53). As a

consequence 'them' become hyper-visible. As such, the newspapers fill their columns with stories about rape, murder, anti-social behaviour and problem youths, rather than with the more familiar 'us'. Newspapers perceive the threat as real and serious and committed by an identifiable minority (Jewkes, 2004, pg 70). By reporting it, as such, the press are implying that in their condemnation of a particular anti social act, they are representing the majority and this is the consensus view (Jewkes, 2004, pg 71). They are appealing to a conservative ideology in which the members are nostalgic and are of the opinion that "“thing's aren't what they used to be”" (Jewkes, 2004, pg 71). For example, the *Daily Express* printed a story "Binge-Drink Youths 'Wrecks at 30'" on Thursday September 6, 2007. The article discusses how teenage binge drinkers are more likely to use drugs as adults, become alcoholics and acquire a string of convictions (Daily Express, 2007a). This article came after the publication of a long-term study which involved 11,000 British children and found that teenagers who drank heavily suffered many problems by the age of 30. Such stories in the media generate feelings of fear and anxiety in its readers (Kidd-Hewitt, 1995, pg 10). Yet these stories regard an identifiable minority. It is this minority that is, in part, discovered simply due to them being visible within public spaces, whereas the middle classes are free to engage in deviant acts in more private spaces.

### Space

Class conflict can be seen when exploring definition of space. There has been some "disjunction" between the state's ideal of public space and the conception of public space which is rooted in working class culture (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 152). Use of working class public space has been undermined. Historically, the street has acted as a place for social interaction, with gossiping taking place with the neighbours on the doorstep. The working classes have been fighting to legitimise their use of urban space since the nineteenth century, when the new police forces began to patrol the working class neighbourhoods more heavily (D'Cruze, 2000, pg 8). Today even more radical alterations have been made to working class public space with the creation of the tower blocks and the design of housing estates, shopping centres and sports facilities; all designed to prevent gossip in the streets, children playing and teenagers hanging about (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 152). As a result, the working class has had to accept a more 'private' notion of space. The home is now the source of security, whereas outside is full of insecurity and the "strangeness of the streets" (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 152). The public space provided for them in the form of museums, libraries and botanical gardens are all alien and often require payment for admission (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 152). The use of space once enjoyed by the working class and endured by the 'civilised' society are, reminisced by some, such as Richard Hoggart (1957) in his paper *The Uses of Literacy* (in Pearson, 1983, pg 19). Here Hoggart (1957) discusses the inferiority of the "candy floss" post war entertainment, in comparison with the older working class, back street traditions (in Pearson, 1983, pg 19). Hoggart (1957) recollects the oral traditions once intrinsic to working class culture such as the brass bands, free-and-easy nights at the local pub and pigeon fancying, which have now been replaced with pop songs, hairstyles and clothing and espresso bars (in Pearson, 1983, pg 19). Essentially Hoggart (1957) believes that the new traditions are Americanising British society, and social British traditions are being replaced by high speed living, urban anonymity, television violence and consequently endangered streets (in Pearson, 1983, pg 20). As people retreat into their homes for safety, the outside world comes to be seen as a dangerous place to be cautious of.

Not all accept this private notion of space and continue to congregate on the streets, they

do however, when in groups, face the wrath of the police force and their “boozebuster” initiative as reported by Eileen Fairweather (2007) in her article “On patrol with the ‘boozebusters’ breaking up teenage street parties”(2007). Fairweather (2007) explains Operation Athlete in which dedicated police patrols are sent out in Brighton and Hove to clamp down on underage drinkers on the city’s streets, beaches and parks. One incident which shows Operation Athlete in action is described by Sergeant Rob Leet. There was an area in Hove which was once colonised by noisy, drunken youngsters, then one night a “paddy wagon” arrived and two police men chased two boys. Within minutes the crowd panicked and ran, the square was then calm. According to Leet this is theatre policing, “If you’ve got a big group, you can’t deal with them all so you target the known troublemakers” (Fairweather, 2007). However, as Sergeant Chris Lane states: “The kids who drink aren’t particularly bad, they do their homework, go to school. It’s just the culture, what they think is normal on a Friday night” (Fairweather, 2007).

The middle classes tend to partake more in ‘private’ leisure activities such as gardening, but also appear more frequently at ‘public’ venues; for example, the theatre and restaurants (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 148). Compared with the working classes the middle classes have more material resources, which allow them more access to the leisure market and more time for charity work (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, pg 148). However, the Government and as a result the media have begun to highlight the middle classes relationship with alcohol. Drink has been held responsible for the self inflicted poverty, as well as the misery of the working class (Pearson, 1983, pg 166). The impact alcohol has on the lives of the middle classes is an issue not often explored, because the middle classes are traditionally thought to be able to control their own actions. However, with alcohol related illness amongst the middle classes threatening to lead to a strain on National Health Service (NHS) resources, the privacy once enjoyed by the middle classes is being threatened as the Government attempt to invade their private space.

### **Alcoholism in Social Context**

Plant and Plant (2006) explain that most people enjoy drinking alcohol and even though it may cause them problems they still regard it as ‘a good thing’ (pg 46). According to Plant and Plant (2006) adults from higher income households are more likely to drink than those from lower income households (pg 50). This can be seen when looking at figures produced by The Department of Health in 2001. Table 1 (see Appendix 5) shows the percentage of men and women who drank more than the recommended daily allowance of alcohol (classified as binge drinking) on at least one day of the week before the data was collected (Department of Health, 2001). Table 1 shows that 22% of men in managerial and professional roles binge drank compared with 21% of men in routine and manual roles (Department of Health, 2001). In regards to women, table 1 shows that 11% of women in managerial and professional roles binge drank compared with 9% of women in routine and manual roles (Department of Health, 2001). These figures challenge our preconceived ideas, as presented by the media, of lower class drinking habits. Stories such as “drunken yobs behaving like ‘an occupying army loose in the streets’” (Daily Express, 2007c) feed this perception that it is the lower classes in society which cannot control their drinking habits and this impacts negatively on the rest of the civilised members. Table 1 however, and studies such as “Safe. Sensible. Social: The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy” (Department of Health, 2007) and “8: Alcohol: Indications of Public Health in the English Regions” (Deacon, Hughes, Tocque and Bellis, 2007), have begun to challenge this deeply engrained media

ideology and threaten the immunity the middle classes have traditionally held from the law and the media.

**“Safe. Sensible. Social: The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy”**

On the 5 June 2007 a report was published by the Department of Health entitled “Safe. Sensible. Social: The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy” (2007). According to the report, public opinion on alcohol suggests that the root of the problem lies in the English ‘drinking culture’ where people are too willing to accept and tolerate drunkenness and antisocial behaviour (Department of Health, 2007, pg 10). However, the report states that the majority do drink within the guidelines; it is the minority who drink outside the limits which puts themselves and others at risk (Department of Health, 2007, pg 10). These people are not just young adults, but slightly older drinkers, who drink regularly at home at levels which in 10 years time will cause or contribute to serious health problems (Department of Health, 2007, pg 10). The report highlights the need to increase awareness of how drinking too much can affect our health, family, friends and children (Department of Health, 2007, pg 10). The focus of the report is on three main problem groups: young people under 18, especially 11-15 year olds; young adults between the ages of 18-24 years and harmful drinkers, namely women who drink over 35 units a week and men who drink over 50 units a week; many of the latter group do not realise they are drinking in a harmful way (Department of Health, 2007, pg 14). A problem highlighted by the report is that many people feel confused about what a unit means and the relationship between units and glass sizes and drink strengths (Department of Health, 2007, pg 17). Another issue addressed in the report is that drinking over the sensible limits is most common in areas of high deprivation, with alcohol-related deaths being 45% higher in areas of high deprivation (Department of Health, 2007, pg 18). In relation to health, with drinking being socially tolerated and problems such as liver disease and high blood pressure not showing any symptoms until severe damage has occurred, the harm has often been established to health before any intervention has been made (Department of Health, 2007, pg 24).

As a consequence of these problems this Government research suggests that the NHS, local authorities, voluntary organisations and the police should work together to provide support, advice and in some cases protection to those most at risk (Department of Health, 2007, pg 47). As well as this, the alcohol industry and the media also have an important role to play (Department of Health, 2007, pg 48). Campaigns such as “Know your Limits” is a Government led campaign supported by information on drinks labels which should enable people to assess their own consumption (Department of Health, 2007, pg 44). The “Know your Limits” campaign also launched a series of adverts aimed at 18-24 year old binge drinkers to encourage them to drink responsibly (Department of Health, 2007, pg 33). The campaign focused on the vulnerability caused by binge drinking, and the physical and criminal consequences of drinking irresponsibly (Department of Health, 2007, pg 33).

In light of this report *The Times*, the *Daily Express* and *The Sun* all printed articles relating to the recent findings. *The Times* printed the front page story “Crackdown on middle-class wine drinkers” (Ford, Rose and Foster, 2007, pg 1). Here Ford, Rose and Foster (2007) detail how the Government aims to make drunkenness as socially unacceptable as smoking (pg 1). The article explains that the Government want to target older drinkers who may be drinking a couple of bottles of wine at home each evening (Ford *et al.*, 2007, pg 1). This scheme is described by Ford *et al.* (2007) as “an assault on Middle England’s drinking habits” (pg 1). The strategy to target under-age

drinkers and heavy consumption among the 18-24 year olds is also mentioned however, as stated by Ford *et al.* (2007) the focus “is moving beyond teenagers and the binge-drinkers to include those regularly sipping wine at home” (pg 1).

The *Daily Express* on the other hand chose to present the findings from the report in a different way, with a different focus. Two articles appeared in the *Daily Express* on 5 June 2007; “Now pubs told: show warnings on drink” (Fletcher, 2007b) and “New alcohol strategy targets drunks” (*Daily Express*, 2007e). The former article by Fletcher (2007b) details how doctors are demanding that pubs and restaurants should be forced to carry posters warning drinkers of how much alcohol they are consuming (Fletcher, 2007b). Within the article, Conservative MP Philip Davies condemned the new health offensive arguing:

... this is completely barmy, do they really think that people don't realise that drinking a lot of alcohol every night is not good for their health? It is blindingly obvious ... Every measure that is introduced will always lead to calls to go one step further. It is the Nanny State gone mad. (Fletcher, 2007b).

The argument which is presented by the British Medical Association (BMA) is that rather than thinking we are living in a Nanny State we should be encouraging an Information State. Customers, according to the BMA, have no idea how much they are drinking because drink measurements vary from pub to pub (Fletcher, 2007b). Dr Vivienne Nathanson, Head of Science and Ethics at the BMA states that “people are getting into accidents and going over the limit because they have no idea what the drink is, labelling enables people to comply with the law and comply with medical advice” (Fletcher, 2007b). However, MP Philip Davies argued this fails to give any responsibility to the drinker. Alcohol consumption for the majority is a choice and as such they have a choice as to whether they go and have a drink in the first place. It is their responsibility to understand the effect that alcohol is having on their physical and mental state (Fletcher, 2007b).

The second article to appear in the *Daily Express* on 5 June 2007, “New alcohol strategy targets drunks” (*Daily Express*, 2007e), explains that under new Government plans “drunken yobs” will be supplied with information about how to cut back on their “boozing” (*Daily Express*, 2007e). According to the article, the Home Office and Department of Health have held back from banning certain drinks promotions such as happy hours or buy one get one free offers (*Daily Express*, 2007e). The article discusses how an independent national review will examine the relationship between alcohol promotions and the harm caused by drink and its findings will be put up for discussion to see whether the public would support a ban on cut-price drinks (*Daily Express*, 2007e). As part of the plans, referral schemes will be introduced for “drunks” in the same way drug addicts are sent for compulsory counselling after being arrested (*Daily Express*, 2007e). The *Daily Express* also states that the new publicity campaigns will also be a turning point, in that it will attempt to re-educate the public about the effects of alcohol (*Daily Express*, 2007e).

*The Sun* also chose to focus on a different aspect of the Government report than *The Times*. “Yobs told: Pay as you binge” briefly discusses how a new “booze crackdown” will target both heavy drinking youngsters and middle-aged alcoholics (Porter, 2007). The scheme according to Porter (2007) means that binge drinkers will be made to pay

for any damage they cause and any treatment required for injuries as a result of being drunk.

All the articles focused on different aspects of the report. *The Times* focused on the middle class drinkers, the *Daily Express* on the “Nanny State” controlling our right to drink and the banning of drinks promotions affecting the ‘yobs’, and *The Sun* concentrated on the ‘yobs’ being warned they may have to pay the price for a night’s heavy drinking. It is however, *The Times* which chose to centre the article on a problem only briefly mentioned in the report. The report explains in great detail how age and gender are factors in drinking habits and even that the most deprived areas are the worst affected, yet *The Times* interpreted this as being a “Crackdown on middle class wine drinkers” (Ford *et al.* (2007, pg 1). The assumption being made here by Ford *et al.* (2007) is that people who drink at home are more likely to be from the middle classes, yet the report explicitly states that they aim to focus on “harmful drinkers”; they do not specify a social class. The report is more age and gender orientated, than class orientated. *The Sun* and the *Daily Express* also appear to make certain assumptions about who the Government are aiming to focus their attention on. With the use of the term ‘yob’ it would seem that the assumption is being that when the Government state they are aiming to target the heavy drinking youngsters they are in fact referring to the media created term ‘yob’. Again, this term is not used at all within the Government report, but the journalists have chosen to use it in order to explain their version of the content of the report.

The day after the report was published the *Daily Express*, *The Sun* and *The Times* all printed follow up articles. The *Daily Express* reported “Are you what Nanny State calls a ‘problem drinker’?” (Milland, 2007). Here Milland (2007) explains that according to Government figures there are eight million problem drinkers in Britain and as a result this is costing the health service £1.3 billion a year (Milland, 2007). In response to this the Government said that over £10 million will be targeted at adult Britons who health experts deem to have a problem with alcohol use (Milland, 2007). The article explains that those who are believed to be over indulging will be told to get counselling or treatment. Critics however, according to Milland (2007), argue that ordinary people who like a drink in their home will be thrown under the same category as young binge drinkers and that is just another example of a “Nanny State attack”. Milland (2007) quotes Matthew Elliott of the TaxPayers’ Alliance as stating that: “The bureaucrats behind this are trying to expand their budgets. Perhaps if they got out for a drink every now and again, they would take a more relaxed view and stop meddling in our lives” (Milland, 2007).

*The Sun* printed the story “Booze peril facing one in six” (Porter, 2007). In this article Porter (2007) reveals “shock figures” which shows that one in six adults are problem drinkers and that this is costing the NHS a “massive” 1.3 billion pounds a year. The Government, according to Porter (2007), are planning a “huge” advertising campaign to change attitudes to binge drinking. The target of which will be 18-24 year olds who cause damage to property and others (Porter, 2007).

*Times 2* (a supplement to *The Times* newspaper) on the other hand, launched an attack on the new Government plans (Vine, 2007, pg 4). The tag line to the article is “Oh, do stop wining ... as the middle classes face a barrage of Government hectoring over how much alcohol they should drink, Sarah Vine launches a fightback” (Vine, 2007, pg 4). Vine (2007) argues that most are more than capable of “enjoying a glass or two of wine

without setting fire to their hair or beating up their children” (pg 4). On the issue of alcohol related health problems costing the NHS millions of pounds, Vine (2007) remarks to her reader that if you are thinking about finishing off last night’s bottle of wine “you will be branded a foul drunk, an irresponsible drain on health resources, a blot on society” (pg 4). Vine (2007), by addressing her audience directly, is making the assumption that they are not only middle class, but that they are as outraged as she is about this supposed attack by the Government of their right to drink how they like. In this sense the writer and the reader appear to be unified. According to Fairclough (1989), pronouns which are used in the media are often inclusive, as it includes the reader as well as the writer (pg 127-8). For example, Vine (2007) uses the pronoun “us” in “The battle is upon us”; in doing so Vine (2007) is speaking on behalf of herself and her readers. As a consequence Vine (2007) is making the claim that she has the authority to speak for others (Fairclough, 1989, pg 127-8).

Fairclough (1989) argues that producers of the media have an effective means of manipulating its audience by attributing to their experience things they want them to accept (pg 153-4). Presuppositions have ideological functions and Fairclough (1989) claims that they assume the character of common sense in the service of power (pg 153-4). In relation to the one report “Safe. Sensible. Social: The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy” (Department of Health, 2007), the reporters from *The Times*, *Daily Express* and *The Sun* have all made presuppositions whether it be that young people are ‘yobs’ or older people who drink at home are middle class, or that the Government is acting like a “Nanny State”. As a result these presuppositions have become naturalised and as a consequence it is possible that the audience will accept these presuppositions as a ‘truth’. These presuppositions are not limited to this one report, instead they appear to be engrained within journalistic discourse and be clearly seen within the content of the articles relating to the study “8: Alcohol: Indications of Public Health in the English Regions”.

### **“8: Alcohol: Indications of Public Health in the English Regions”**

A public health study commissioned by the Chief Medical Officer was released in August 2007. The study entitled “8: Alcohol: Indications of Public Health in the English Regions” was produced alongside “Safe. Sensible. Social: The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy” published in June 2007. “8: Alcohol: Indications of Public Health in the English Regions” by Deacon, Hughes, Tocque and Bellis (2007) found that there are huge differences in health consequences of alcohol use between the richer and poorer communities across all regions of England (Deacon *et al.*, 2007, pg 6). Factors such as life lost, rates of mortality, admission to hospital, incapacity due to alcoholism and visits to pubs or bars, were all taken into consideration, the result of which, it was found, was that there are higher levels of hazardous drinking in deprived regions compared with affluent regions (Deacon *et al.*, 2007, pg 6). The most deprived fifth of the population experience two to three times greater loss of life attributable to alcohol, three to five times greater mortality due to alcohol specific causes and two to five times more admissions to hospital because of alcohol, than more prosperous areas (Deacon *et al.*, 2007, pg 6). According to Deacon *et al.* (2007), in regions where levels of drinking in the population are highest, people are becoming ‘normalised’ towards heavier drinking (pg 7). This, as argued by Deacon *et al.* (2007), is evident when considering that those who classify themselves as moderate drinkers in these regions consume more units of alcohol than those classifying themselves as moderate drinkers in other regions (pg 7). The report however, stresses that alcohol does affect all of society (Deacon *et al.*, 2007, pg 4). Not only does it burden the NHS in regards to

hospital admissions and treatment in primary care, but it also creates an economic burden due to the loss of employment and reduced capacity to work, as well as negatively affecting the social and behavioural welfare of communities (Deacon *et al.*, 2007, pg 4).

This study was first reported about on the 14 August 2007 in *The Times* by David Rose entitled “Alcohol abuse undoing gains from curbs on smoking” on page 18 (2007b). The 191 word article printed in the bottom left hand column of the page details how findings from the study by Deacon *et al.* (2007) have shown that more than 3000 people a year in England are dying from alcohol abuse, with the North West suffering the most because of social deprivation (Rose, 2007b, pg 18). Rose (2007b) stresses in the article that it is in the “worst-off communities” that there are two to three times more alcohol-related deaths than in other more prosperous areas (pg 18).

The same study was reported about on the 16 October 2007 in *The Times*, *Daily Express* and *The Sun* they however focused on a different aspect of the report. *The Times* devoted their front page and 660 words to the story “Hazardous drinking the middle class vice” (Brown, 2007, pg 1). Here Brown (2007) explains that people living in affluent areas are more likely to be drinking above sensible levels than those living in deprived areas (pg 1). Brown (2007) quotes the Public Health Minister, Dawn Primarolo as saying that “Most of these are not young people, they are ‘everyday’ drinkers who have drunk too much for too long. This has to change” (pg 1). The long term problems associated with alcohol misuse are highlighted such as liver disease, circulatory diseases, cancer, brain damage, stomach irritation and skin and hair damage (Brown, 2007, pg 1). The article continues from page one to page six, where Brown (2007) states that those defined as ‘harmful drinkers’ tend to live in the most deprived areas, whereas hazardous and harmful drinking patterns are contributing to increasing alcohol-related ill health and pressure on the health service across the whole country (pg 6). Brown’s (2007) article focuses on the middle class drink problem, with the health of these middle class drinkers being highlighted as a major concern. As such, Brown (2007) offers a sympathetic tone with the focus being the protection of the health of these affluent people rather than the protection of the rest of society from these middle class wine drinkers.

The *Daily Express* on the other hand, dedicated a third of the bottom of page six to the article “Middle-class drinkers damaging their health” (Fletcher, 2007a, pg 6). Here Fletcher (2007a) explains in 381 words that millions of middle class drinkers are seriously damaging their health (pg 6). The focus of Fletcher’s (2007a) article is the fact that this is a “shock survey” leading to “fears that many people may be drinking too much without realizing it” (pg 6). Although more extreme in language use than the article by Brown (2007) in *The Times*, the tone is very similar in that it is the health of these unknowing middle class drinkers which is at issue, and that the new strategy should be set up to help warn and support them.

*The Sun* printed a 238 word article entitled “Middle classes booze shock” (2007b). The online reporter states that the experts have warned that people living in richer areas are more likely to be drinking at hazardous levels. Unlike *The Times* and the *Daily Express* articles the story is much shorter and more factual. The sensationalized headline “Middle classes in booze shock” is not matched in the content of the main article. Though the reporter highlights “so-called” middle class wine drinkers who drink at home are among the worst drinkers, the article does not offer the same sympathetic tone

of that in *The Times* and the *Daily Express*. The focus is not on the health of the drinkers, rather the strain on the health service.

In the days following the 16 October 2007 middle class drinking articles, both *The Times* and *The Sun* printed opposing articles to the research by Deacon *et al.* (2007). Norfolk (2007) from *The Times* in his article “How ‘safe drinking’ experts let a bottle or two go to their heads”, claims that the study by Deacon *et al.* (2007) has “no basis in science” (Norfolk, 2007). Norfolk (2007) argues that the study is based on limits that were set 20 years ago in a report by the Royal College of Physicians titled “In a great and growing evil: The medical consequences of alcohol abuse”. The report from 1987 was, according to Norfolk (2007) and leading experts such as Richard Smith (former editor of the *British Medical Journal*), lacking in sufficient data and the recommendations they made about how many units each gender can drink safely were not “based on any firm evidence at all. It was a sort of intelligent guess by a committee” (Norfolk, 2007). However, Bellis (a member of the committee which put the latest report together) claims that the recent study was able to say that anyone drinking over the limit was putting their health in danger (Norfolk, 2007). Norfolk (2007), however, was not satisfied by the reply by Bellis and argues that there are studies which show low mortality rates amongst those drinking between 20 and 30 units a week compared with teetotallers (a study conducted in Oxford by Sir Richard Doll, in 1993). *The Sun*’s reporter on the other hand provided a different perspective, one which was in line with the assumed position of the audience.

*The Sun* printed the article “It’s our poison ... leave us alone” on the 17 October 2007. This short article by Wostear (2007) opens with the question “What’s your poison? For middle class drinkers it seems to be a glass of wine or two ... or three or more”. This light mocking of the middle class drinking issues seems to be creating some distance between the reporter and her middle class subjects. Wostear (2007) is not presenting herself as a member of the middle class, unlike Norfolk (2007) who appears to take personal offence at the drinking habits of the affluent being questioned. Wostear (2007) does quote the views of *The Sun* wine columnist Brian Moores “we all deserve a well-earned glass or two - and reckons the busy bodies behind the research should mind their own business”. The “and reckons” presents the view of Brian Moores as his own, and not the views necessarily shared by the reporter.

Fairclough (1989) claims; that the producer’s position may be problematised when a discrepancy arises between the producer’s common sense (ideological) representation of the world and the world itself (pg 170). This is evident when looking at the articles relating to the study by Deacon *et al.* (2007). The journalist’s personal position as being part of the middle class, the group which is being criticised, places the journalist in a compromising position. As a consequence, Brown (2007), Fletcher (2007b) and Norfolk (2007) dealt with this predicament by identifying themselves with the group being criticised, namely the middle classes. This was done by foregrounding any information relating to the attack on the middle classes drinking habits and backgrounding the reports’ stance on lower class drinking habits (Fairclough, 1995b). In contrast the online reporter for *The Sun* in “Middle class booze shock” (2007b) and Wostear (2007) from *The Sun*, created a distance between themselves and the middle class under attack. In Fairclough’s (1995b) view, through conversationalism, those in power can recruit ‘ordinary people’ as an audience and manipulate them both socially and politically (pg 13). This is done, according to Fairclough (1995b), by naturalising the terms in which reality is represented; this can be seen with terms such as ‘booze’

and 'yob' (pg 13). However, as argued by Fairclough (1989), the more mass the media become the more the reporters claim to relate to their audience (pg 195). The journalists from *The Sun* are making the assumption that they are writing for a lower class audience. As such in articles relating to the middle class they have created a false solidarity, false because the journalists are in fact middle class (Fairclough, 1995b).

The middle classes have traditionally remained immune from any interference whether it is from the Government or the media. They have been protected by the sanctity of their private space, which has prevented them from being exposed to any kind of condemnation. When their private space has been threatened in the form of Government reports the media, especially the broadsheets have sought to protect the interests of their class and offered a sympathetic tone to the unapologetic middle classes. This however, has not prevented the 'respectable' interfering in the lives of those considered to be 'rough'; instead they appear to believe it their right to meddle in the lives of the arguably vulnerable lower classes. As such the media act as an instrument in the spreading of this middle class ideology. Accordingly the media appear to protect the interests of the middle classes and condemn the actions of the 'under class'. Why the media feed this class struggle is a point of great debate and interest and an understanding of which is necessary in order to have any hope of social enlightenment and emancipation, as sought by Fairclough (1989, 1995a, 1995b, 2001).

## CHAPTER 5 MEDIA INFLUENCE

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was the approach adopted to analyse how the media portrays the social classes in regards to the drinking culture in Britain. By utilising the CDA approach, this chapter will aim to explain why the media portray the different social classes in the way they do. In order to try to explain this question of why, the central themes which will be explored are: who owns and controls the media; who works for the media and how do they operate; what is the nature of power relations in discourse; is the hidden power of the media manipulative and from whom is the power of media discourse hidden. Fairclough (1995b) describes the media as a profit making organisation, which make its profits by selling audiences to advertisers by gaining the highest possible readership for the lowest possible financial outlay (pg 42). The media's relationship with its audience however is complex. As Fairclough (1995b) explains, the representations created in the media are thought to function ideologically, as they contribute to the reproduction of domination and exploitation (pg 44). However, as Fairclough (1995b) asserts, the concept of ideology often implies the manipulation of the truth for particular interests (pg 46). To apply this view to the media would be too simplistic, as the only way to gain access to the truth is through representations of it (Fairclough, 1995b, pg 46). This throws into question whether it is possible to ever know the truth, as we are all simply subjected to someone's version of it. This chapter will attempt to unravel these complex issues and how they effect and contribute to our view of society.

### **Who owns and controls the media?**

One of the problems society faces according to Marx and Engels is that the class that owns the means of production controls the current dominant ideas in society, either directly or indirectly (Saunders, 1990, pg 9). They argue that as a result society tends to view the world through the "distorting mirror of ruling class ideology" (Saunders, 1990, pg 9). Through the media, education and other agencies, the ideas of the dominant class are reproduced as if they are natural and obvious (Saunders, 1990, pg 9). News media has tended to concentrate on the criminal and deviant activities of the working class, as well as religious, ethnic and cultural minorities (Jewkes, 2004, pg 59). This, according to Jewkes (2004), has helped "to perpetuate a sense of a stratified, deeply divided and mutually hostile population" (pg 59). Much of what is reported in the newspapers is simply a diversion away from the real social problems in society. This negative reporting has been enhanced by politicians who, as argued by Jewkes (2004), have tried to gain the support of an anxious population (pg 59). By focusing on victims of serious crimes and by calling for tougher punishments, the politicians are promoting a conservative agenda and deflecting attention away from the serious social problems (Jewkes, 2004, pg 59). The Home Secretary Jacqui Smith for example, criticised television programmes which glamorise binge drinking (*The Sun*, 2007a). According to Ms Smith programme makers are sending the wrong message to young people, which show teenagers having fun whilst drinking (*The Sun*, 2007a). As a consequence Ms Smith launched a zero tolerance "booze blitz" at the Labour conference (*The Sun*, 2007a). This is the same Jacqui Smith who appeared in the news in July 2007, after being found to have smoked cannabis whilst at university. By placing blame on television programmes for helping to promote binge drinking, appears to be focusing on one aspect of the problem and deflecting attention away from wider issues of young people's drinking habits, or even the fact that this is not just a problem amongst the young.

Marx argues that the dominance of the ruling class operates because, as well as being the class which owns and controls the means of material production, they also own and control the means of “mental production” (in Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts, 1978, pg 59). They construct an image of society which represents a particular class interest, as the interests of the rest of society. Hall *et al.* (1978) claim that by controlling mental resources they are ensuring that they are providing the most powerful and most available definition of the social world (pg 59). Fairclough (1989) declares that universal practices that are engrained into society can actually be shown to have originated in the dominant class (pg 33). These practices have been transmitted through various institutions such as the media and have become naturalised. They are thought by Fairclough (1989) to be functioning ideologically and ideology is a key instrument to ruling by consent (pg 33-4). This, however, leads to a class struggle, though as argued by Fairclough (1989), this class struggle is necessary (pg 35). As Fairclough (1989) stresses, for one class to increase their profits and power, another class must be exploited (pg 35). This has meant that there has been a concentration within media reporting on the exploits of the lower classes, with the middle classes having immunity from any interference by the media. By reporting about the misdemeanours of the ‘other’, the attention is deflected away from the middle classes and any possible deviance they may partake in, or the role they play in the deviancy of the lower classes. This can be seen in the article “Government hands out booze” in *The Sun* (Wells, 2007). Here, Wells (2007) explains that the Government are providing vouchers towards food and other essentials to recovering alcoholics who are just re-entering the workplace but are instead using the vouchers in off-licences to buy alcohol. The Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Chris Grayling, expressed his disappointment at this revelation presented by *The Sun* and states that it would be very depressing if the vouchers were being used for alcohol (Wells, 2007). *The Sun*’s only evidence however, of this wrong doing is in the statement provided by one “punter” of an “offy”, who claims “my mates have done it too” (Wells, 2007). If *The Sun* has any other evidence they do not provide it in the article and consequently the misdemeanours of some members of the lower classes appear to be being brought to public attention due to the testament of one individual.

### **Who works for the media and how do they operate?**

Herman and Chomsky (2002) explain that the media is a tiered system; the top tier is measured by prestige, resources and outreach (pg 4). It is this top tier, as well as the Government and wire services, that define the news agenda and supplies much of the national and international news to lower tiers in the media, and as a result to the general public (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, pg 4-5). According to Herman and Chomsky (2002), the media relies on a steady reliable flow of raw material of news, as they have daily news demands and news schedules which must be met (pg 18). Resources are concentrated where significant news occurs, they cannot afford to have reporters and cameras everywhere (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, pg 18). Raw material must pass through filters “leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, pg 2). These filters fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, as well as the definition of what is newsworthy in the first instance. The claim by Herman and Chomsky (2002) is that the domination of the media by the elite and operation of these filters occurs so naturally that the people who work in the news media operate with integrity, and convince themselves that they are interpreting the news objectively and professionally (pg 2). Fairclough (1989) appears to be in agreement with Herman and Chomsky (2002) on this particular point and claims that power can be legitimised in

discourse by people without them being conscious of it (pg 41).

Chibnall (1977) declares that television producers and presenters go to great lengths to ensure their programmes appear to be politically balanced and that “the healthy dynamics of controversy are not permitted to degenerate into sterile propaganda” (pg 2). Strict impartiality is not required of newspapers. Reporting must appear objective, although a certain amount of political colouring is allowed (Chibnall, 1977, pg 3). According to Chibnall (1977) difficulties only seem to arise if the paper launches a deliberate smear campaign, which violates responsibility and objectivity, or if the paper shows overwhelming support for a particular political party (pg 3). On the whole reporters are expected to express opinions, provided they do not allow their opinion to “obscure or determine the reality of events” (Chibnall, 1977, pg 3). A problem however, highlighted by researchers seems to be, that an apparently wide range of opinion supposedly offered by the media is, in fact, very limited. Opinions are kept within the margins laid out by the mass parties of our parliamentary system. Any view which falls outside this margin receives very little representation and, as expressed by Hall (1973), the media are oriented within a framework of power (in Chibnall, 1977, pg 3). In other words there is a systematic tendency to reproduce definitions of reality, which actually derive from the political elite (Chibnall, 1977, pg 3). However, Chibnall (1977) explains that is not to say that journalists never report events in ways that are unacceptable to leading politicians, it just means that in the majority of cases their interpretations are in line with the liberal consensus (pg 4).

Occasionally reporters break away from the journalistic norm and write articles which highlight some of the problems associated with media reporting. For example, Richard Morrison (2007), wrote the article “Teenage culture can be safe, legal – and still thrilling” on the 22 August 2007, in light of the media reporting regarding the death of Garry Newlove by a gang of drunken youths (pg 7). Here Morrison (2007) likens the media representations used today of Britain’s youth with the mass hysteria depicted in Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (Morrison, 2007, pg 7). Morrison (2007) discusses a basketball game he attended in North London that takes place every Saturday night (pg 7). The event combines basketball with hip-hop and dance displays (Morrison, 2007, pg 7). The point Morrison (2007) is making is that too often the media depict a very negative picture of society and fail to highlight some of the positive work being done (pg 7). Morrison (2007) states and this “one-sided tale of woe fuels a lopsided view of youth” (pg 7). The basketball game attended by Morrison (2007) was evidence enough for him that as the headline suggests “teenage culture can be safe, legal – and still thrilling” (pg 7). The youth’s behaviour at the event was exemplary and there was a great party atmosphere, but with high security this party atmosphere was not enhanced by drink or drugs (Morrison, 2007, pg 7). Morrison (2007) asks at the end of the article for occasionally the positive to be acknowledged rather than “wailing in helpless despair” (pg 7). Even Morrison (2007) however, understands the difficulties of what he is asking of the media. With the use of the term “occasionally” Morrison (2007) is acknowledging that the media’s engrained ideology cannot be easily broken.

Fairclough (1995b) states that the media socially impacts society by not only how they represent the world, but how they project social identities and the effect this has on cultural values (pg 17). The media do not report events which are naturally newsworthy in themselves (Hall *et al.*, pg 53). News is the end product of systematic sorting and selecting of events according to a socially constructed set of categories (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 53). Chibnall (1977) argues that the journalist does not collect stories as if

they are fallen apples, he creates news by selecting pieces of information from the mass of raw data he receives and organising them in a conventional journalistic form (pg 6). As Curtis MacDougall (1968) states:

At any given moment billions of simultaneous events occur throughout the world...All of these occurrences are potentially news. They do not become so until some purveyor of news gives an account of them. The news, in other words, is the account of the event, not something intrinsic in the event itself" (in Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 53).

A reporter relies on his sources, as the reality of the event must be processed by others before the reporter can write his own account (Chibnall, 1977, pg 6). As such, Hall *et al.* (1978) argues that the media define what significant events are taking place for the majority of the population, and offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events (pg 57). Van Leewen (1987) claims that a complexity is born out of the many social constraints on journalistic practice (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 86). The purpose of journalism is not only to describe events objectively, but also to entertain, control and legitimise ideologies (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 86). Journalists need to ensure that they interpret and explain events to their audience, this is often done through the form of a 'story' (Van Leewen, 1987, in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 91). In terms of the 'story' this, according to Van Leewen (1987), varies dependent on the class of the audience (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 91). News 'stories' for working class audiences are more story like, Van Leewen (1987) argues that this is because the working classes are denied exposition (in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 91). Exposition is only available for those who are able to affect change by participating in debates (Van Leewen, 1987, in Fairclough, 1995b, pg 91).

Jewkes (2004) claims that the print media has been accused of dumbing down their news coverage and measuring newsworthiness by the amount of revulsion and amusement a story incites in its reader (pg 60). For example, Emily Payne (2007) from *The Sun*, wrote the article "Is your tippie making you fat?" on the 30 August 2007. Payne (2007) discusses in the text how we are used to seeing pictures of celebrities "falling out of night clubs". However, Payne (2007) warns that there are 200 calories in a pint of beer and even if you were to skip a meal your calorie intake for the day would be "sky high". This short article is ended with puns such as; "so *wine* not use our amazing booze calorie calculator to find out if your choice of bevvy could make you *lager* than life?" (Payne, 2007). The use of puns, colloquialisms such as "booze" and "bevvy" and the pronoun "we" are all used to unite the writer and reader, to show that the writer is 'one of you' and has a 'good' sense of humour. A photograph is also inserted, of familiar female celebrities on a night out, which helps reinforce the message of the article and shows how this can affect the famous as well as 'ordinary' people. This article could certainly be accused as Jewkes (2004) argues of 'dumbing down' and providing revulsion and amusement to its audience. However, whether this is a ruling class decision to control and exploit, or whether this is the journalist simply giving the public what they want is debatable. It must also be noted that a story such as that by Payne (2007) in *The Sun*, would not appear in every national daily. There is a difference in the reporting style between the broadsheets and tabloids. It could however, be argued that this gap is narrowing.

### **Media Outlet**

*The Times* of London largely invented elite journalism in the 1840s (Tunstall, 1999, pg [www.internetjournalofcriminology.com](http://www.internetjournalofcriminology.com))

193). This involves monitoring national and international politics and finance and doing so without funding from government, political parties or special interest (Tunstall, 1999, pg 193). *The Times* was looked to as the “ultimate journal of record” as it avoided vulgarity. Up until May 1966 the front page only had small adverts (Sampson, 1996, pg 203). It was taken for granted during the 1960s that broadsheets had separate yardsticks from the tabloids, measured by certain aspects such as prestige, influence, and their place in history (Sampson, 1996, pg 203). Many broadsheets were non-sensational with their ultimate aim being to write the “first draft of history” (Sampson, 1996, pg 203). However, since the 1980s the boundary between quality and popular newspapers has diminished. New technology has given broadsheet newspapers more opportunities to become profitable and as a result the competition has intensified (Sampson, 1996, pg 203). This has meant that broadsheet newspapers have looked for circulation downward and according to Sampson (1996) some of them have now learnt to make sensationalism look serious (pg 203). There are now 10 national dailies in Britain and this has created tense competition.

Jewkes (2004) argues that the news media tend to exaggerate and dramatise unusual events and ignore or down play events which affect the average person, as a way of pandering to the voyeuristic desires of its audience (pg 61). They also tend to sympathise with some victims, but blame others. This tabloidization of the news is, according to McNair (1998) and Manning (2001), a cultural expression of democratic development, as it is giving voice to new forms of political engagement with issues such as health (in Jewkes, 2004, pg 61). However, Tunstall (1996) argues that since the 1960s British newspapers have moved towards providing more column space for entertainment (pg 59). The ‘downmarket’ newspapers tend to focus on telling readers the latest gossip and scandals (Tunstall, 1996, pg 59). In the case of the *Daily Express*, they are trying to appeal to three-quarters of the population and as such has a broad readership to entice to their newspaper. Tunstall (1996) discusses that within tabloid newspapers there has been a re-emphasis of traditional themes, for example; celebrity news, sex, sport, crime and disasters (pg 200). With the human interest element being re-emphasised there has been an increased tendency for lower tabloids to lead the popular news agenda (Tunstall, 1996, pg 200). The tabloids, according to Conboy (2006), use a range of distinctive and identifiable dialects that enables the reader to use the newspaper as a ‘textual bridge’ between their own experience of the culture they live in and their attitudes within a range of language, which they would imagine themselves using if describing these events themselves (pg 11). Tabloids speak the language of the working-classes (Conboy, 2006, pg 11). This can be seen in the reporting style used in *The Sun*. Fairclough (1995a) states that *The Sun*’s representations of history are drawn in part from the world of common experience, as such the private sphere (pg 194). The experiences of the life world, as explained by Fairclough (1995a) become integrated within the mass media (pg 202).

### **Media control over society?**

Hall *et al.* (1978) highlight an assumption made by the media about what society is and how it works; this assumption is the consensual nature of society (pg 55). The assumption here is that we all exist as members of one society and as such we share a common stock of cultural knowledge with everyone; we all have access to the same maps of meanings (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 55). Hall *et al.* (1978) explain, we all want to maintain the same perspective on events and this is what unites us as a society. This consensual side outweighs what divides and distinguishes us as groups or classes from other groups (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 55). This perspective however, is ideological as this

view denies any structural discrepancies between different groups or different maps of meanings in society. Discrepancies which have become apparent in the differential reporting of middle class drinking compared with lower class drinking. It also assumes that we all share the same interests and we all have roughly an equal share of power (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 55). According to the consensual view, society has no major conflicts of interests between classes. There is a free market in opinions and the media is supposed to “guarantee the reconciliation of cultural discontinuities between one group and another” (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 55). In a democratic, capitalist society the media are an institution whose practices are predicated on the assumption of a national consensus (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 55). When the media maps out events into frameworks of meaning and interpretation, it is assumed that we all possess equally the ability to know how to use these frameworks; as all social groups share the same structure of understanding. Where there are disagreements, these take place within the broader framework of agreement – consensus (Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 56). Young (1971b) explains that the criticism of the mass media has centred upon the idea that journalists are biased, misinformed and even deceitful (pg 326). The impression is given that if the media were to remove its bias and rethink its ethics that the public would from then on receive only simple facts and they would be free to interpret them as they please (Young, 1971b, pg 326). However, Young (1971b) argues that facts are only giving meaning to the terms of reference provided (pg 326). The media portrays a model of society which is embedded in their notion of the normal and the deviant. The majority of society shares a common definition of reality and this consensus is functional to an organic system which they visualise as their society (Young, 1971b, pg 327). As such the media is just giving the public what they want and voicing their opinions which already exist. This view would not be shared by Gramsci.

Gramsci’s concept of hegemony can be defined as:

A ruling class’s domination of subordinate classes and groups through the elaboration and penetration of ideology into their common sense and everyday practice; it is the systematic engineering of mass consent to the established order. (Gitlin, 1980, pg 268)

Gitlin (1980) explains that no institution in a liberal capitalist society is devoid of hegemonic functions (pg 268). However, hegemony and coercion go together and is a process which both the dominators and those being dominated enter into (Gitlin, 1980, pg 268). Psychological and material rewards can be gained for both ruler and the ruled through confirming and reconfirming their inequality (Gitlin, 1980, pg 268). It is the cultural industry and educational system who specialise in the production and relaying of the hegemonic ideology. For the most part it is not the dominant economic class who produce and spread the ideology; that is left to the writers, journalists and teachers - the media and education system as a whole (Gitlin, 1980, pg 168-9). Jewkes (2004) argues that the media play a crucial role in the winning of consent for the social systems values and dominant interests or in the rejection of them (pg 16-17). Consent, according to Hartley (1982), is won by representing the real conditions in which people live in a way that makes sense, not by trying to convince them that black is white (pg 59). Editorial ideology within the news consists of objectivity, neutrality and balance. These are required in order to act alongside other agencies to neutralise dominant ideology and to win the consent for hegemony (Hartley, 1982, pg 61-2). According to Hartley (1982), the ideological meanings expressed through the media are deeply embedded, they are

not trying to deceive anyone; they are not part of any conspiracy (pg 62). Instead, Hartley (1982) asserts, the hegemonic ideology is engrained in the discourse through which we learn how to interact with the world and how we make sense of it, whether it be through the media, education or even the family (pg 62). Gitlin (1980) however, believes that the legitimacy of the news rests on the autonomy of its employees and that they have a responsibility to ensure the audience is not only interested in the news stories, but believes them as well (pg 271). The top media managers provide their news operations with the appearance of and considerable actuality of autonomy. Their forms of social control are indirect and subtle, though not necessarily conscious (Gitlin, 1980, pg 271). The editors and reporters which are employed tend to be upper middle class and although may have liberal views; they share the core hegemonic assumptions of their class (Gitlin, 1980, pg 271-2). As such, editors and reporters will protect their own class interests, which has been found in articles relating to the criticism of middle class drinking habits. The perceived interference into the private space of the middle classes sparked much hostility from the journalists who appeared to fear this would directly impact upon their own leisure time. Contrastingly such hostility is not met in articles relating to deviancy amongst the lower classes, a class who it appears in the media, to have lost their right to privacy; as their actions are visible to fearful respectable people in society.

### **Application of Cohen's Moral Panic**

According to Cohen (2002), "The media have long operated as agents of moral indignation" (pg 7). The reporting of certain 'facts' can be enough to create concern, anxiety or even panic (Cohen, 2002, p7). In "Folk Devils and Moral Panics" (2002, pg 7), Cohen cites Gusfield's (1967) work on public designation of deviance. Gusfield (1967) uses a problem drinker as his example in which he/she may change from 'repentant' to 'enemy' to 'sick' (in Cohen, 2002, pg 7). With feelings of anxiety and panic comes a perception that certain values need to be protected and it is at this time that news rules can be created and social problems defined (Cohen, 2002, pg 7). This is not to say that such a concrete process of rule change or enforcement of existing rules will take place instead, as shown in Gusfield's (1967) example, there is a change in public perception and a general vague feeling of anxiety about a situation "something should be done about it" (Cohen, 2002, pg 7). By playing on such concerns the media can create social problems "suddenly and dramatically" (Young, 1971 in Cohen, 2002, pg 8). Working-class 'yobs' are a suitable enemy (Cohen, 2002, pg viii), which is why much of the coverage regarding drinking habits in Britain surround them; "Police chief calls drinks industry to account for yob culture" (Bannerman and Ford, 2007, pg 1), "Supermarkets and drunken stars blamed for fuelling yob culture" (Ford, 2007b, pg 26). The middle-classes on the other hand go largely unanalysed and unquestioned. When issues surrounding middle-class drinking habits are reported, the tone is sympathetic. On the whole they are seen as responsible drinkers and as such are not criticised, they are simply guided to make some changes to their lifestyle which may be beneficial to their health, it is not seen as a societal issue. Drawing upon Cohen's (2002) theory of moral panic is useful when examining how the different social classes drinking habits are portrayed by the media. This process of applying Cohen's (2002) theory needs to be done with caution as this research is restricted to newspaper articles. Within these articles moral panics may be hinted at, but a full investigation of other evidence is unrealistic due to the time limitations on this research. The focus of this examination is the murder of Garry Newlove in August 2007. Garry was murdered after confronting youths on his driveway in Warrington. The teenagers responsible for his death were found to have been drinking alcohol at the time. As a result of Garry's death a media

campaign was launched, calling for parents and the drinks industry to be held to account for alcohol fuelled violence amongst the young.

Cohen's (2002) moral panic model follows this structure;

- a. An initial deviance that leads to
- b. The inventory (and)
- c. Sensitisation
- d. An over-estimation of the initial deviance that produces
- e. An escalation in the control culture

The **initial deviance** consists of the drunken acts or criminal behaviour reported by the newspapers, for example "police officers were fighting a 'constant battle' against anti-social behaviour and alcohol-fuelled violence" (Byers, 2007). The media **inventory** of an initial incident can be analysed under three headings: exaggeration and distortion, prediction and symbolisation (Cohen, 2002, pg 19). As part of the first of the three headings; exaggeration and distortion, the media exaggerates the seriousness of an event and tends to over-report the event (Cohen, 2002, pg 19). Phrases such as "anti-social behaviour", "violence", "beaten to death", "gangs", "cause nuisance" (Byers, 2007), leaves an image of a society which has lost control of its young. The article "Police chief: bad parents cause youth violence" (Byers, 2007), details how three teenage boys beat a father of three, Garry Newlove, to death after an alcohol binge. The actions of three boys "reopened the debate about antisocial behaviour" (Byers, 2007), this is not classed as an isolated incident; it is instead a problem which is plaguing society. Secondly, prediction, which is an assumption placed in the article that what has happened is going to happen again (Cohen, 2002, pg 26). "The police cannot do it alone. We are doing everything we can, within our resources and powers, but it is not enough" (Byers, 2007); with the presence of predictions comes the inevitable problem of self-fulfilling prophecy. This claim by Peter Fahy, the chief constable of Cheshire that "... it is not enough" (Byers, 2007), highlights the assumption that incidents such as the murder of Garry Newlove are creating huge social problems and the police are struggling to prevent them, as a consequence they will continue happening. The last stage of inventory is symbolisation. According to Cohen (2002), the mass communication of stereotypes relies on the symbolic power of words and images (pg 27). Through symbolisation and other types of exaggeration and distortion "images are made much sharper than reality" (Cohen, 2002, pg 30). For example, the terms "gangs culture" and "young people" (Byers, 2007), stirs a reaction within its readers of concern about what havoc they have caused now. In relation to the article "Police chief: bad parents cause youth violence" (Byers, 2007), as well as the language used, an image of the murdered father of three, Garry Newlove, smiling is printed above the article with the insert written underneath "Garry Newlove, who was beaten to death outside his home in Warrington, Cheshire" (Byers, 2007). Such negative reporting of "disaffected young people" (Byers, 2007), combined with a family photograph of the "best dad" (Byers, 2007), helps to create a feeling of social disorder to be feared. Journalists do not have instruction manuals informing them of what is newsworthy, instead there is a reliance on their intuitive hunch to find and report on a good story which will 'give the public what it wants' (Cohen, 2002, pg 32). As a consequence stories such as that of the murder of Garry Newlove provides a definite victim and a definite villain which can capture the imagination of its audience, who will likely not have any direct experience of an incident of this sort, yet will be able to identify with the victim enough for it to cause them distress and keep them interested in the story.

The third element of Cohen's (2002) flow model is **sensitisation**. Sensitisation involves the reinterpretation of neutral or ambiguous stimuli as being potentially or actually deviant (Cohen, 2002, pg 59). This involves not only the redefinition but also the assignment of blame towards those thought to be responsible; consequently this leads to control measures being directed at that particular group (Cohen, 2002, pg 59). Headlines in the days surrounding the police chiefs condemnation of parents for turning a blind eye to their children's under-age drinking and anti-social behaviour (Byers, 2007) include "supermarkets and drunken stars blamed for fuelling yob culture" (Ford, 2007b, pg 26), "supermarkets' £112m cut-price booze binge" (Hills, 2007b, pg 7), "Savaged by 'wild man': Judge blasts drinking culture" (Hall and O'Keeffe, 2007, pg 1) "police chief calls drinks industry to account for yob culture" (Bannerman and Ford, 2007, pg 1 and 2). Not only are the youths blamed; parents, supermarkets and pop stars are also blamed for these uncontrollable yobs. Negative stories have the same cue effect towards deviant symbols as positive stories (Cohen, 2002, pg 62). Cues are not missed by an anxious population who have become sensitised to them, which can lead to a tendency to over-react (Cohen, 2002, pg 62).

An **over-estimation of the initial deviance** that is produced is the fourth stage of Cohen's (2002) flow model. The issue is not whether the event was real or not, but the actual process of reinterpretation (Cohen, 2002, pg 63). A snow balling effect can occur that is identical to deviance amplification, this is characteristic of moral panics at their height (Cohen, 2002, pg 63). As a result of the death of Garry Newlove, *The Times* has printed 37 articles in relation to his death and Britain's yob culture between 13 August 2007 and 17 September 2008, the *Daily Express* has printed 33 articles and *The Sun* printed 59. As Cohen (2002) describes with the Mods and Rockers, even when the actual incident had tailed off, the media keep the story alive and exciting with other types of reports such as non-stories and opinion statements (pg 63). For example, "Last Orders: Alcohol outlets need to enforce the law or face more draconian measures" (*The Times*, 2007). This article discusses how the "appalling" death of Garry Newlove should not be the basis for changing legislation. Articles such as this, which appear in the comments section of the online newspaper, give the journalists an opportunity to express their opinion without a need for objectivity. Though the opinion may appear sensible and sympathetic to your own stance, the overwhelming feeling is of one where the journalist is being given a chance to influence an already fragile, fearful society with their own (middle-class) opinion. In some cases however, it can be seen that the writer is providing a balance to the overwhelming coverage in the main pages of the newspaper. This repetition of reporting of the same event incites the reader to keep discussing the topic and as result they have a constant reminder of how a horrific event, such as the death of Garry Newlove, can happen to anybody; whilst they are afraid they will continue to buy newspapers to find out any new developments.

The last element of Cohen's (2002) flow model is an **escalation in the control culture**. Control agencies become involved in times of mass hysteria, this involvement may move from the local police to regional to national levels and to the Home Office becoming involved or even parliament and the legislature (Cohen, 2002, pg 66). If the assumption is that a situation is 'catastrophic' and likely to happen again then excessive precautionary measures are deemed to be justified (Cohen, 2002, pg 67). Cohen (2002) cites an example used by Isidor Chein *et al.* of the relationship between belief systems and social control with drug addiction:

If the addiction problem can be inflated to the proportion of a national menace, then, in terms of the doctrine of clear and present danger, one is justified in calling for ever-harsher punishments, the invocation of more restrictive measures and more restrictions on the rights of individuals. (1964, in Cohen, 2002, pg 67).

This can clearly be seen in the case of the death of Garry Newlove. As a consequence of his murder a national debate about the availability of alcohol to those under the age of 18 was sparked (*Daily Express*, 2007f). Conservative leader David Cameron became involved and stated that ordinary citizens should do more to discipline juveniles “this is a disaster for our society and we need to reverse it” (Elliott and Frean, 2008). Cohen (2002) discusses the idea of innovation, with control agents changing or proposing to change the institutionalised limits through legislation (pg 68). With the case of Garry Newlove, the chief constable of Cheshire argued for a change of the legal age of drinking alcohol to 21 (Bannerman and Ford, 2007, pg 1). Doctors and campaigners called on the Government to drive up the price of alcohol (Bannerman and Ford, 2007, pg 1). A murder of a respectable family man such as Garry Newlove, by drunken ‘yobs’ is perfect media bait. From one incident a national outcry was created with many citizens feeling fearful about an event they did not witness, but simply read about in the national newspaper.

### **What is the nature of power relations in media discourse?**

Fairclough (1995b) argues that audiences are constructed as consumers rather than citizens (pg 51). As such, the producers exercise power over the consumers (Fairclough, 1989, pg 50). According to Fairclough (1989), as the producer has sole producing rights they can decide how events are represented, what is included and excluded, foregrounded and backgrounded, as well as the subject position of their audience (pg 50). This raises the issue of who is it that is exercising this power. Fairclough (1989) discusses the complexity of this issue. The power could perhaps lie with the journalist who wrote the article, however, the journalist works under editorial control (Fairclough, 1989, pg 50). This would suggest it is the editor who has the power, or as Fairclough (1989) suggests it could be said to lie with the newspaper as an institutional collective (pg 50). Another issue to be kept in mind are the sources used by the journalist. Fairclough (1989) states that the sources used in media reporting do not equally represent all social groupings (pg 50). For example, Government officials are more likely to be given a voice than the unemployed (Fairclough, 1989, pg 50). Though it is clear who is chosen to be interviewed for particular stories, Fairclough (1989) highlights that it is less clear whose perspective is taken within the article (pg 50). For example, in the case of articles relating to warnings being shown on drinks, being described in the media as “completely barmy” and a “Nanny State” attack, whose voice is this; that of the journalist, the editor, the newspaper as a whole or the sources used?

### **Is the hidden power of the media manipulative?**

Fairclough (1989) contends that in some cases the hidden power of the media is manipulative and in some cases it is not; it is not a straightforward concept (pg 54). The power of media discourse, as claimed by Fairclough (1989) is exercised cumulatively through the way they position the reader and the repetition of ways of handling causality and agency (pg 54). The repetition of the term ‘yob’, for example, and the images associated with such a term are engrained in the audiences’ consciousness due to the repetition of the term by the media. Due to the high level of exposure society has to the media, the media is able to exercise a great deal of power and influence, especially

because the exposure is mainly homogenous output (Fairclough, 1989, pg 54). However, as Fairclough (1989) suggests, the assumption cannot be made that the audience will accept everything which is claimed by the media, the media's power does not exist mechanically simply because it exists. Some may struggle against the views presented in the media others may keep it at arm's length (Fairclough, 1989, pg 54). According to Fairclough (1989), it could also be questioned, from who is the power of discourse hidden (pg 54). There is an assumption that it is simply hidden from the audience, however, Fairclough (1989) declares, it could also be hidden from the media workers themselves (pg 54). It could be that the facilitation of the exercise of media power by media workers is regarded as professional practice (Fairclough, 1989, pg 54). As asserted by Fairclough (1989), this professional practice could be manifested through the internal standards of excellence and factors such as the belief they are giving the public what they want (pg 54). Fairclough (1989) stresses that the beliefs and assumptions made by the media workers are crucial at enabling this power of media discourse to be kept hidden from the audience (pg 54). It must not be assumed however, that the audience does not question that which they read about in the newspapers.

Societies reliance on the media to provide them with an insight into the world puts the media in a very powerful position. The media acts as an instrument in the spreading of ruling class ideology. This is true of both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers as the journalist, regardless of what newspaper they write for and their target audience, still belong to the class which owns and controls the means of "mental production" (Marx, in Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 59). The class struggle that exists as a consequence however, is necessary to a capitalist society in which the power of one class depends on the exploitation of another (Fairclough, 1989, pg 35).

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to explore how the drinking culture is portrayed in Britain today, through newspaper coverage by highlighting the discrepancy in media coverage afforded to the lower classes, namely the 'underclass' and the working class, compared with the middle class and celebrity culture. Through critical discourse analysis this discrepancy in the media treatment of the hyper-visible compared with the middle classes and even the celebrity culture is clear and obvious, with the media actively protecting the interests of their own class. Yet the argument is complex and these complexities throw up more questions than it answers. To try and gain an insight into the hows and whys behind the differing media portrayals, four themes were explored; A nineteenth century look at Britain's drinking culture, alcohol 'our favourite drug', class in modern Britain and media influence.

### **A Nineteenth Century Look at Britain's Drinking Culture**

The nineteenth century was a period which clearly highlights the class divides that exist within British society. A time in which middle class dominance plagued the lives of the unarmed working classes. During this period the middle classes launched a crusade to reform the 'rough' working classes, through not only changes to legislation but also changes to their recreational activities such as the reformed beer-shop and the mechanic's institutes. The fact that these schemes proved to be unsuccessful is unsurprising, as the middle classes failed to deal with the root causes of the lower class reliance on alcohol as an escapism. This reliance was bred out of poor working and living conditions, a problem created by the owners of these businesses and landlords of these properties; the middle classes. Consequently, the working classes turned to drink to escape the drudgery of their everyday lives. In creating social institutions without alcohol, the middle classes were removing the few pleasures enjoyed by the working classes. Yet it must be highlighted that in spending their much needed wages on alcohol, the working classes were depriving their family of much needed essentials and in some cases causing physical or emotional harm to family members. A point of frustration however, must have come for the working classes in the hypocrisy which existed within their society. The middle classes preached reform yet they were unwilling to change their own drinking habits. It appeared that acceptability was bred out of respectability, with the 'respectable' middle classes believing they had the right to try and reform the 'rough' working classes. Respectability also brought with it private space and as such physical barriers to shield the middle classes from prying eyes of the Law and social condemnation. A barrier not enjoyed by the working classes whose private space was non-existent due to the close living quarters they shared with their neighbours. What is notable about this period is that middle class dominance and class division existed as well as a societal reliance on alcohol, yet it did so with very little media interference, without celebrity role models and without huge marketing campaigns. What did exist was differential policing, a difference in the use of public and private space and the fact that immunity was granted to the middle classes through the Criminal Justice System.

### **Alcohol 'our Favourite Drug'**

Alcohol is the most widely used and misused drug (South, 2007, pg 811), whether you are exploring the nineteenth century or modern Britain one issue which does not change is the availability or the lust for this potentially lethal drug. Another issue that does not change is the conflicting messages society faces about this culturally accepted practice. As Ashton (1997) explains, we accept that alcohol is our favourite drug until it impacts

on the brain and develops behaviour we do not approve of (pg 56). Consequently, the news media subjects its audience to a number of contradictions. Namely; the condemnation of lower class drinking, the sympathetic tone offered to middle class drinkers, the health implications of excessive drinking, the social positives which can be gained such as possible job promotions and the jovial tone regarding celebrities misdemeanours. This serves only to confuse an anxious population, as inevitably what is deemed newsworthy are the extremes of alcohol use, whether it be the highs of improving your job prospects or the lows of the delinquency which can occur. The portrayal of this delinquency however is limited to the hyper-visible and as such this creates a social stigma about the 'other', a class to be feared, perpetuating the myth that 'they' are out of control jobs and 'we' are civilised members of society.

### **Class in Modern Britain**

The creation of this 'other' enables the exploits of the middle class to go widely unquestioned and unanalysed. This occurs because as well as the middle class owning the means of material production they also own and control the means of "mental production" (Marx in Hall *et al.*, 1978, pg 59) and consequently they have control over the news agenda. In doing so they are able to create a distinct 'other' which deflects attention away from their own misdemeanours. At times when their private space is threatened, such as with the Government reports "Safe. Sensible. Social: The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy" (Department of Health, 2007) and "8: Alcohol: Indications of Public Health in the English Regions" (Deacon, Hughes, Tocque and Bellis, 2007), they are able to control the way in which they are reported to protect their own class interests. This was achieved in relation to these Government reports by not only openly criticising the Government for interfering, but by also providing a sympathetic stance to the hard working middle classes who deserve the right to conduct what little social time they have in any way they please. This immunity transcends to the Criminal Justice System and ensures that the middle classes are able to live their lives with little interference or condemnation. Similarly, the celebrity culture also enjoys immunity, though their actions are held to account by the media there are rarely any significant consequences to this interference, a point which does not go unnoticed by the lower class. Even when showcasing their exploits in public the celebrity culture is portrayed in many instances of being above the Law and their misdemeanours serve to entertain a celebrity obsessed society.

### **Media Influence**

The capitalist system in which British society exists thrives on exploitation. This exploitation ensures that one class will triumph over another; it does not, however, imply a conspiracy. We are all subject to the historical outcome of discourse; as such our views are shaped not only by the media but through our experience of the world around us. The news media is a highly skilled profession, which by its nature attracts well educated members of the middle class to work within its institution. By attracting often like-minded people with similar backgrounds and experiences ensures that the news media remains an instrument in the spread of ruling class, hegemonic ideology. Ultimately, the news media is a business and in order to ensure they have the highest possible readership information received is adapted in a way which not only informs but also entertains their audience. This adaption to the perceived needs of the audience ensures that there is a distinction between the portrayal and focus of news stories between the tabloid newspapers and the broadsheets. However, though newspapers such as *The Sun* are appealing to a lower class audience the media workers remain in line with the general consensus, ensuring that the ideologies of the middle class are

transmitted by creating a false solidarity with its audience. Each newspaper presents the news in a digestible form to their audience to ensure ideologies that are core to the story they are presenting appear natural and obvious. The inevitable problem becomes the position of the audience as receivers of this media created information. The assumption is made, that the audience are merely passive readers who fail to question the information being presented to them, this however underestimates the power and intelligence held by the audience. In the same way the journalist is able to manipulate information to write an account of an event to suit their own objectives, the audience is also capable of manipulating what they read to fit in with their own ideologies. In order to examine this thoroughly, an exploration would be required which looks beyond the moment of reception to discover how such media messages are internalised by their audience. Such an indepth examination was not deemed necessary for this research but would provide an interesting basis should this research be developed further.

This sense of manipulation of information is a criticism which is also levelled at critical discourse analysts. Widdowson (1995) is not wrong when he states that during analysis a researcher chooses texts that support the interpretation which is favoured by the analyst, as such the result is a biased account (in Meyer, 2001, pg 17). This however, is inevitable of any social research. It would be impossible for a researcher in this sense to remove their beliefs and ideologies and be completely impartial. In the same way as it would be impossible for a journalist to report on a story without any bias. What is important is that everyone is aware that this bias exists and that the 'truth' is always someone's representation of it. No two people see the same situation in the same way, as the realm of experience we all have is completely different. It is also crucial that alternative voices are put into the public domain to give people a chance to make individual decisions about their values and beliefs and that these do not always have to be in line with the general consensus.

### **Recent Developments**

In recent months there have been some significant developments in how alcohol consumption is tackled, highlighting the Government's perceived dedication to changing the culture of Britain's love affair with this dangerous drug. The Know Your Limits campaign (NHS, 2008), which initially began with a series of adverts concentrating on 18-24 year old binge drinkers, has shifted its attention to the over 25s regularly drinking at home. The adverts use ordinary family situations to warn people how too much regular drinking can damage their health (BBC News, 2008a). Public Health Minister, Dawn Primarolo, stated that the campaign is aimed at the over 25s who are less aware of what a unit of alcohol is compared with the younger generation (BBC News, 2008a). The significance of this campaign is that it acknowledges the problems with drinking habits amongst those who drink at home, predominantly the middle classes. The aim of the campaign is to make everyone aware of the amount of alcohol they are consuming and not just the lower classes that have traditionally been portrayed as the class lacking in self control.

Another interesting development has been the banning of alcohol on public transport in London. Boris Johnson, the new London Mayor, introduced the ban as a way of curbing antisocial behaviour and violence and to make journeys more pleasant (Gadher and Watt, 2008, pg 7). Johnson's ban was announced on 7 May 2008 and was met with a great deal of criticism, with many raising concerns that the ban would be virtually impossible and, if implemented, it could endanger the staff having to deal with drunk passengers (Hamilton, 2008b, pg 15). Despite the criticism the ban went ahead with

posters appearing around the capital to warn passengers (see appendix 6) and, after the initial influx of press attention, the ban appears to be working affectively. It is a ban that aims to change the culture of Britain's drinking habits and protect passengers from any violence which occurs as a result of drinking on public transport. The ban was seen as an infringement of a passenger's right to have an alcoholic drink, another "Nanny State" attack. The ban in London is being seen as a blueprint for changes that should be made all around Britain (Hamilton, 2008a).

Alcohol is an engrained social tradition in British culture, which has existed for centuries. It has existed with and without the help of the news media supporting its place within society. This is not to underestimate the influence the media has in shaping today's society. We look to the media to inform us about events we cannot experience for ourselves and to help shape our understanding about the world around us. Alcohol is a freedom we enjoy in our society and the benefits of its moderate use are plentiful. The problem lies with the fact that the definition of moderate use is debatable, what is considered to be moderate amongst one social group is not considered to be moderate in another. Another problem is born out of the fact that the middle class look to the Government to place sanctions on the drinking habits of the lower classes, yet do not accept any kind of government interference with regard to their own misdemeanours. Although this may seem inevitable, as statistically middle class involvement in antisocial behaviour and delinquency is much lower than the 'underclass', in order to affect change their needs to be a cultural shift in society's relationship with alcohol. The argument is not that individuals should not have a right to drink alcohol; the argument is that whilst they fail to take responsibility for the health consequences and any possible delinquency that become a drain on society as a whole, the problem will continue. These are issues which affect all the classes and as such it is everybody's responsibility to affect change, starting with the media acknowledgement that the drinking habits of the middle classes are problematic and helping to perpetuate the problem and it is not just a problem amongst those considered to be 'rough'.

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## Appendices

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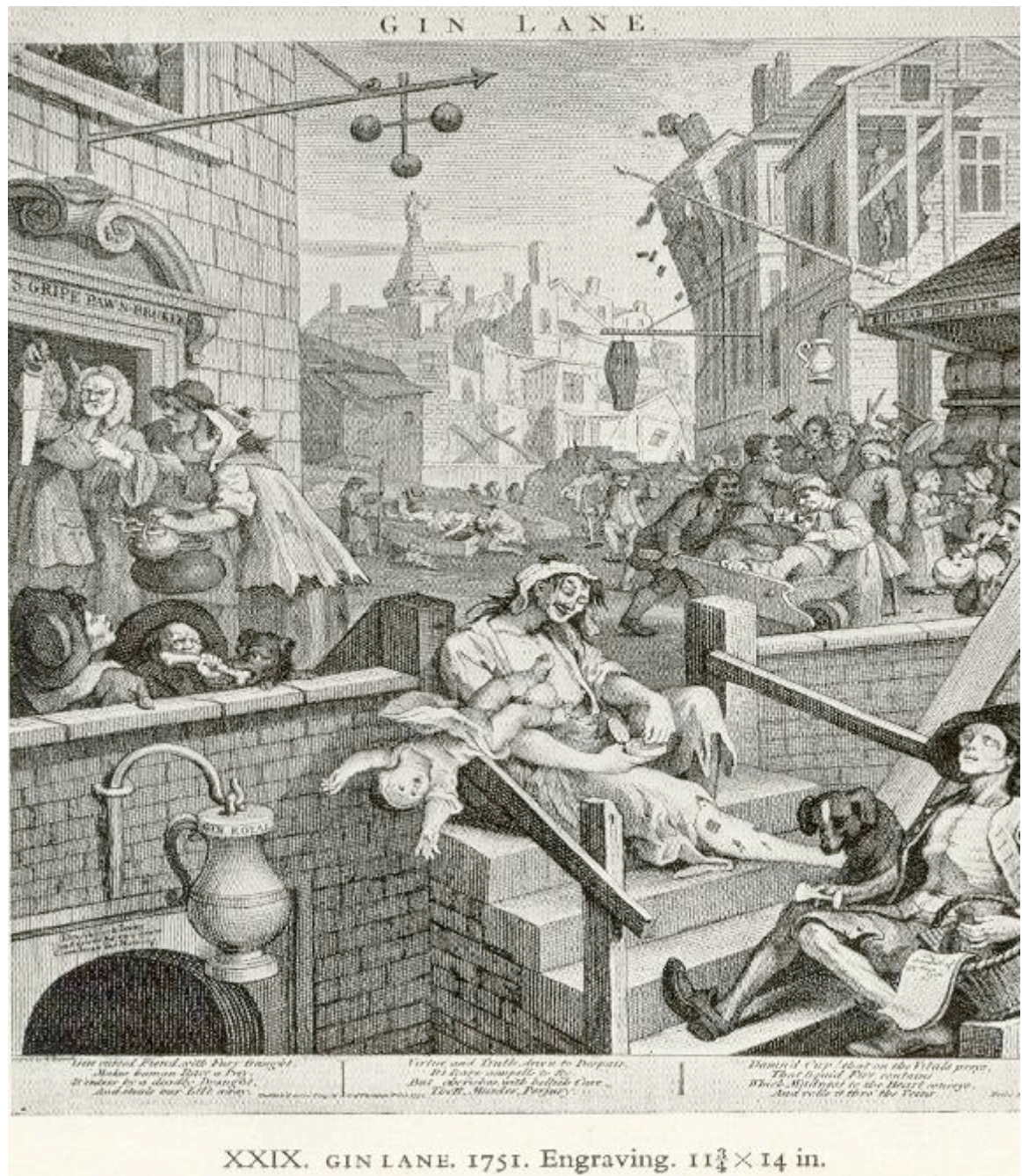
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## Appendix 1



Gin Lane (Hogarth, W, 1751)

## Appendix 2

### Excuses for drinking

*Some drink to make them wide awake,  
And some to make them sleep;  
Some drink because they are merry,  
And some because they weep.*

*Some drink because they're very hot,  
And some because they're cold;  
Some drink to cheer them when they're young,  
And some because they're old.*

*Some drink to give them an appetite,  
And some to aid digestion;  
Some, for the doctor says it's right.  
And some without a question.*

*Some drink when they a bargain make,  
And some because of loss;  
Some drink when they their pleasure take,  
And some when they are cross.*

*Some drink for sake of company,  
While some drink on the sly;  
And many drink, but never think  
About the reason why.*

**“Excuses for Drinking: Temperance Poem 1880s” (Plant and Plant, 2006).**

### Appendix 3



**“Drunkorexia - too much booze and too little food - is affecting more and more women” (Spicer, 2008).**

#### Appendix 4



**“Binge drinking’ killed barman”, (Daily Express, 2008).**

## Appendix 5

**Table 1:** Department of  
Health (2001)

**Percentage who drank more than 8 units (men) and 6 units (women) on at least one day last week, by sex, and socio-economic classification based on the current or last job of the household reference person**

<i>Persons aged 16 and over</i>		<i>Great Britain: 2001</i>	
Socio-economic classification of the household reference person*	Men	Women	Total
Percentage who drank more than 8/6 units on at least one day last week			
Managerial and professional			
Large employers and higher managerial	22	11	16
Higher professional	21	9	15
Lower managerial and professional	22	11	16
Intermediate			
Intermediate	21	9	14
Small employers/own account	23	8	16
Routine and manual			
Lower supervisory and technical	21	10	16
Semi-routine	19	10	14
Routine	21	8	14
Total*	21	10	15
<i>Weighted bases (000's) = 100%†</i>			
Large employers and higher managerial	1,328	1,277	2,606
Higher professional	1,997	1,730	3,727
Lower managerial and professional	4,407	4,953	9,359
Intermediate	1,340	2,079	3,420
Small employers/own account	2,012	1,889	3,901
Lower supervisory and technical	2,823	2,502	5,325
Semi-routine	2,409	3,243	5,653
Routine	2,726	3,105	5,831
Total*	19,837	21,839	41,675
<i>Unweighted sample</i>			
Large employers and higher managerial	498	495	993
Higher professional	725	673	1,398
Lower managerial and professional	1,591	1,903	3,494
Intermediate	465	784	1,249
Small employers/own account	719	708	1,427
Lower supervisory and technical	987	916	1,903
Semi-routine	849	1,233	2,082
Routine	955	1,152	2,107
Total*	7,030	8,248	15,278

\* From April 2001 the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) was introduced for all official statistics and surveys. It has replaced Social Class based on Occupation and Socio-economic Groups (SEG). Full-time students, persons in inadequately described occupations, persons who have never worked and the long term unemployed are not shown as separate categories, but are included in the figure for all persons (see Appendix A).

† To be revised in Spring 2003 following the 2001 census revisions of population estimates. See Appendix D

## Appendix 6



**“Johnson bans drink on transport” (BBC News, 2008b)**