

**Gender, Class and 'Binge' Drinking:
An ethnography of drinkers in
Bournemouth's night-time economy**

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In early 21st-century Britain there is a focus by media, government and academia on young people's consumption of alcohol – often using the term 'binge' drinking – and how this should be understood and regulated. This thesis argues that contemporary forms of alcohol regulation can be seen as part of a broader neo-liberal mentality of government, encompassing the creation of a classed and gendered figure of the self-disciplined, responsible, ideal citizen. This ethnographic study of the night-time economy in Bournemouth, a town on the south coast of England, considers how young people's drinking practices and discussions relate to these discourses to *constitute* gender and class. The location and analytical focus of the study complement previous research, which has tended to be based in formerly industrial cities and has either emphasised similarities amongst young people or focused on how drinking practices *reflect* people's gender and class backgrounds. Interviews were conducted with 20 professionals alongside 45 hours of participant observation resulting in interactions with 113 drinkers. Drawing on the work of Butler and Bourdieu, this study conceives of gender and class as norms that structure people's perceptions of the world and possibilities within it; drinking practices and understandings are both part of these structures and also actions that lead to individuals being consequently classified. Young people's various 'drinking styles' can be arranged on a continuum from the everyday to the carnivalesque. The everyday style draws on the figure of the responsible individual noted in government discourses and oppositional figures such as the 'chav', which distance the speaker from problematic 'binge' drinking in class terms. Other participants labelled such views 'stuck up', as part of a symbolic struggle. In terms of gender, themes of safekeeping interacted with these discourses, as certain practices were considered unfeminine and not 'classy', for example. The thesis argues that, as well as reflecting class and gender, these styles can be seen as discursive resources that authorise accounts of drinking, constituting symbolic capital and therefore class and gender. It is thus argued that the night-time economy is a key site for the formation of class and gender in contemporary British society.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	8
INTRODUCTION.....	9
BINGE BRITAIN	9
THE ROLE OF THIS STUDY	19
THESIS STRUCTURE	24
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	27
ACADEMIC LITERATURE REVIEW	28
BOURNEMOUTH.....	43
THEORETICAL APPROACH.....	49
<i>Gender</i>	49
<i>Class</i>	52
<i>Theories of the Carnival and Distinction</i>	64
RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS.....	71
CHAPTER 2 DRINKING RESPONSIBLY: GOVERNMENT, MEDIA AND MORALITY	75
INTRODUCTION.....	75
THEORIES OF NEO-LIBERALISM, GOVERNMENTALITY AND THE SELF	75
LIBERALISATION?	81
CARE FOR THE SELF	86
EMBARRASSING AND IMMORAL ACTIONS.....	97
GENDERED AND CLASSED MORALITY	112
‘EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY’	115
CONCLUSION	123
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	126
OVERVIEW OF METHODS USED.....	126
THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS	128
METHODS, PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT	135
<i>Initial Observations</i>	135
<i>Participant Observation</i>	137
<i>Individual and Group Interviews</i>	140
DATA ANALYSIS	142
ETHICS	146
VALIDITY	151
REFLEXIVITY	153
CONCLUSION	158
CHAPTER 4: BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS	159

INTRODUCTION.....	159
GENERAL BACKGROUND DATA AND SIMILARITIES	159
NEGOTIATING CAPITAL	166
<i>Samir</i>	166
<i>Jane</i>	169
<i>Natasha</i>	170
<i>Dawn</i>	171
<i>Christina</i>	172
<i>Frank and Simon</i>	173
<i>James</i>	176
<i>Joey</i>	178
<i>Lisa</i>	180
<i>Social Capital</i>	182
CONCLUSION	183
CHAPTER 5: DRINKING STYLES.....	185
INTRODUCTION.....	185
DRINKING STYLES	187
THE CARNIVALESQUE	192
<i>Unusual behaviour and funny stories</i>	192
<i>Drinking to get drunk</i>	196
<i>Social Interaction</i>	198
<i>'A Different Environment'</i>	200
<i>The carnivalesque and the media</i>	204
MISRECOGNITION AND THE EVERYDAY	206
<i>Individualism and Distinction</i>	207
<i>Drinking to some purpose</i>	214
<i>'Chavs' and Door Policies</i>	221
<i>Violence and Sexuality</i>	224
<i>A place to 'sit and chat'</i>	227
<i>'Chavs' and Students</i>	229
THE ANTI-PRETENSION CRITIQUE.....	233
MANAGING DRUNKENNESS AND GENDER	236
<i>Fear and Sexuality</i>	239
<i>Shame and Embarrassment</i>	241
<i>Strategies for Managing Drunkenness</i>	245
CONCLUSION	250
CONCLUSION	253
APPENDIX 1: TRANSCRIPTION STYLE	265
APPENDIX 2: ANONYMISATION OF VENUES.....	266

APPENDIX 3: RECRUITMENT FLYER	267
REFERENCES.....	268

List of Tables and Illustrations

Figure 1: Binge Britain's Night of Shame	10
Figure 2: New Year Mayhem	10
Figure 3: Proportion of Population aged 65 or over, Bournemouth 1851-2001 .	45
Figure 4: Proportion of population aged 65 or over	45
Figure 5: Jobs in Bournemouth by Sector, 1999	49
Figure 6: Jobs in Bournemouth by Sector, 2007	49
Figure 7: 3 Unit Glass of Wine Poster	87
Figure 8: 3 Unit Pint of Lager Poster	88
Figure 9: 'Would You?' River Poster	91
Figure 10: 'Would You?' Risk Poster	94
Figure 11: TfL Minicab Poster 2005	95
Figure 12: 'Would You?' Gutter Poster	100
Figure 13: Blackpool Beer Mat Front	101
Figure 14: Blackpool Beer Mat Reverse	102
Figure 15: Fancy Dress at Bar:[ME]	204
Figure 16: Illustration from Jeffries (2007)	211
Figure 17: Students' Union Bournemouth University Chav Ball poster November 2008	231

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Introduction

Binge Britain

In Britain in the early 21st century, there is a focus by media, government and academia on alcohol and its regulation. There is a generally accepted understanding that alcohol consumption, in particular amongst young people, is a problem in Britain.

This discourse is most obvious in media discussions of drinking. For example, the *Daily Mail* (2008a) describes 'Victims of Binge Britain' and writes about the 'shame of binge drink Britons' who get drunk abroad and are arrested (Massey 2008). British society is generally understood to be 'a culture that celebrates getting drunk' (The Independent on Sunday 2008). Each new year is marked by a flurry of newspaper articles including front pages covering 'Binge Britain's Night of Shame', as in Figure 1 (Daily Express 2008a), and 'Boozy Britain's bloody New Year' (Sears 2009), telling the reader, 'New Year and it's a bloody hangover' (Chapman 2009), for example, and detailing violent and shocking incidents relating to alcohol consumption. Such concern is not confined to the national press. In Bournemouth, the *Daily Echo* has exclaimed on its front page and billboards: 'Drinking epidemic hits wards' (John 2008), and reported of the town centre in the evenings: 'It's a war zone out there' (Daily Echo 2005b). Again this is linked to the idea of a particular drinking culture, as when the *Daily Echo* reported on alcohol-related admissions to Poole and Bournemouth hospitals as illustrating the 'Shocking toll of alcohol culture' (Codd 2008a).



Figure 1: Binge Britain's Night of Shame
 Source: Daily Express (Daily Express 2008a)

New Year mayhem as 2 more boys die in street stabbings

By Martin Stote and John Twomey

THE streets of Britain descended into murderous violence as revellers saw in the New Year.

Sixteen-year-old Bradley Whitfield, pictured below, right, was stabbed near his home in the early hours and left to die in a pool of blood.

The "thoroughly decent young man" was attacked on his father's 41st birthday just yards from his school in Leicester.

Meanwhile in north London, detectives were hunting the killers of an 18-year-old boy who was chased and stabbed by a gang.

The victim and nine friends had just got off a bus in Edmonton after celebrating in the West End.

Bradley's parents Anthony and Rachael had just returned from a holiday and were seeing in the New Year at their Leicester home.

Yesterday their neighbour Shane Faulkner said: "Everyone here is stunned."

"Bradley was a lovely lad who would do anything for anyone and was never in any kind of trouble."

"He was just looking forward to the rest of his life. He was a lovely lad who was looking forward to becoming a PE instructor."

"He went to school and loved swimming and rugby."

Family friend Steve Carter said: "I can't believe it has happened to Bradley. He was a brilliant lad who would always wave and talk to you." As well-wishers left floral tributes at the scene, another neighbour added: "Bradley was a great kid - well-mannered and from a lovely family."

Detectives said a 14-year-old boy, a 16-year-old girl, a man and a woman were being questioned in connection with the killing.

And Scotland Yard has appealed for witnesses to the row which left the 18-year-old dead in Edmonton. A spokesman said: "Shortly after

he and his friends got off the bus they became involved in an argument with a group of youths who were in the street."

In Crumpsall, north Manchester, a gunman killed one man and wounded two others in a suspected gangland attack as they sat in a car on New Year's Eve.

A fourth man escaped unharmed after the car was sprayed with bullets. The men managed to drive to hospital but a 26-year-old died from his wounds.

An hour later, in a possible unconnected attack, a man was discovered lying in the street in Sale, Greater Manchester, after being shot in the back. He was in a serious condition last night.

A 23-year-old was also fighting for his life with a knife wound to the throat after a gang brawl outside a petrol station in Manchester.

The New Year mayhem continued when police discovered the body of a man in his 20s in London's exclusive Park Lane.

Police are investigating a possible link between the unexplained death and a fight between three men outside the nearby Park Lane Hotel in Piccadilly.

● A 17-year-old will appear in court tomorrow accused of stabbing Wasirudeen Osawe, who died after a row at a bus stop on Upper Street, Islington, north London last Friday.

The accused, from Enfield, will appear before a youth court charged with murder, possession of an offensive weapon and GBH.

Today would have been Osawe's 17th birthday.

Violence in binge drinking

New Year celebrations nationwide were marred by violence and binge drinking.

As 700,000 gathered by the Thames to see the fireworks on the London Eye, emergency teams took 500 calls an hour, many of them attributed to excessive drinking.

West Midlands ambulance HQ had 100 emergency calls in the first 45 minutes of New Year.

A spokeswoman said most were to drink-related incidents, including assaults. "They included people collapsing, and we were also called to fights and assaults in bars," said the spokeswoman.

A Minor Injuries Unit was set up in Birmingham's centre to deal with the walking wounded.

South Western ambulance service, which covers Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset, took 1,000 calls between midnight and 7am.

A spokesman said that around 75 per cent of the calls were alcohol-related.

More than 2,000 calls were handled inside 12 hours by ambulance staff in Scotland - most of which were also drink-related.

THIRST AID: Paramedics assist a reveller in Cardiff on a night that was marred by drink-fuelled violence nationwide

Figure 2: New Year Mayhem
 Source: Stote and Twomey (2008)

Such stories are usually framed by a narrative of change, which presents the idea that alcohol consumption, or alcohol-related problems, have recently increased – hence the BBC headline ‘Hospital alcohol admissions soar’ (BBC 2008h). This is frequently linked with the 2003 Licensing Act, implemented in 2005, which opened up the possibility of alcohol being sold at any time of the day or night, for example in the *Daily Mail’s* (2008b) discussion of ‘the scourge of alcohol’. The change is then typically explained in wider terms as a change in culture – characterising Britain as being the home to a *new* ‘binge’ culture. For example, Neil MacBean, police inspector for Bournemouth town centre, has stated:

I don’t think 24-hour drinking is the real issue. We have now got a culture where it’s acceptable to go out and get completely plastered. No longer do people appear to be going out to socialise, they’re going out to drink as much as they can in as short a time as possible (quoted in Vass 2008a).

In almost all these discussions, the themes of gender and class recur – more or less explicitly – alongside the category of youth. Most immediately, the disapproval of the *Daily Express* shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 is gendered: the ‘girls’ are ‘wearing very little’, while the ‘boys’ are victims of violence. From a medical standpoint, women’s and men’s bodies are constructed as fundamentally different as regards alcohol, with media reports explaining to the reader, for example, that particular enzymes crucial for the breakdown of alcohol ‘are less active in women than men’ (BBC 2001). The academic behind this research declared, therefore, that ‘women simply need to be more cautious than males in the amount of drinking they do’ (BBC 2001). Scientific evidence on sex is at the heart of these discussions of alcohol consumption, reflected in unambiguous statements such as, ‘the way their [women’s] bodies are built means that they can’t tolerate the same amount of alcohol [as men]’ (BBC 2003c).

When statistics on alcohol consumption are presented, then, it is almost invariably with some reference to differing consumption of alcohol by gender¹. Thus the BBC reports that there are ‘More young women binge drinking’ (BBC 2003a), and the *Daily Mail* tells of ‘shocking figures’ that reveal that ‘more women than ever are drinking themselves to death’, though the story goes on to acknowledge that men are still more likely than women to die from alcohol-related illnesses (Martin 2008). In 2009 the same paper reported that ‘Binge-drinking by women doubles in eight years’ (Doughty 2009). The *Daily Express* reports that ‘Women’s drink deaths double’, and quotes Professor Roger Williams from the Institute of Hepatology at UCL as saying: ‘Women are now equal with men in every respect, and that includes alcohol.’ Again, the article reports that men are still twice as likely to die from alcohol-related illnesses than women (Willey 2008). This perception of a new problem regarding women’s alcohol consumption is not confined to the BBC and tabloid newspapers. *The Guardian* has reported in almost identical terms, ‘Binge-drinking Britain: surge in women consuming harmful amounts of alcohol’ (Carvel and O’Hara 2009). When attention is not drawn to women’s consumption, gender remains the prism through which drinking is understood, as in the BBC’s (2008d) ‘Men “drink far more than women”’ or the *Daily Express*’s (2008b) ‘Men “drink twice as much” as women’, which are seen as counter-revelations to the apparently new impression that it is women who should be concerned about their drinking.

Just as a change in ‘culture’ is portrayed as lying behind Britain’s apparent alcohol problems in general, so these discussions of women’s drinking specifically are placed in the context of a change in gendered culture. Martin Plant, who is Professor of Addiction Studies at the University of the West of England, and is a frequent contributor to media discussions on alcohol, was quoted in *The Independent* stating: ‘Girls are now outdoing boys in drinking and that really is a nasty trend. What we are seeing in Britain is something quite unprecedented.’ He attributed this trend to, amongst other factors, the ‘ladette’ culture in Britain (quoted in Frith 2004). Similarly, the *Daily Express* reports on

¹ Or ‘sex’ – I discuss my choice of words and theoretical understandings of gender and sex in Chapter 1.

the 'Wild new ways of girls who love to be lads' (cited in Day *et al.* 2004). In both Professor Plant's statement, and the *Daily Express* headline, the change in women's behaviour is constructed as unfeminine – it is behaviour that is assumed to be expected of 'lads' (or 'ladettes') rather than 'girls'.

This apparent cultural change is therefore linked with a wider theme of the shift in femininity, specifically with reference to the figure of the 'ladette'. The term 'ladette' presents an idea of gender confusion – a 'lad' being a term for a cheeky young man, but the '-ette' suffix showing that it is really a biological female who is exhibiting these characteristics.² The BBC, for example, has reported 'the shocking truth of the new "Ladette" culture' (BBC 2003c), and the *Daily Mail* has told of the 'Menace of the violent girls', who are the result of a "ladette" binge drinking culture' (Slack 2008). The *Daily Telegraph* has reported on a similar story, stating: 'Rise of "ladette" culture as 241 women arrested each day for violence' (Whitehead 2009). The perceived change in gender norms is summed up by Andrew Levy (2007) writing in the *Daily Mail*:

[D]runkenly dancing on tables or collapsing in the street used to be a source of acute embarrassment for young women the morning after the night before. Today, they are more likely to boast about it.

The Sun has similarly reported with shock on vomiting women, observing, 'Over the past five years, arrests of women for being drunk and disorderly have soared by up to **1,100 PER CENT** in parts of the UK' (Phillips 2008 emphasis in original). As well as being 'disorderly', another feature the media deems new and worthy of note is women's use of violence, with the *Daily Mail* publishing virtually identical stories every year when police figures are released, with the 2008 headline 'Rise of the girl drunks' updated to 'Rise of the thugettes' in 2009 (Hickley 2008, 2009).

Concern about women's drinking because of their bodies' apparent vulnerability to alcohol consumption is amplified by the concerns about male sexuality and

² This idea of gender as behaviour is considered in more detail below, with particular reference to the theories of Judith Butler (e.g. 1987; 1999a).

danger. As the headlines relating to alcohol cited above suggest, town centres at night-time, are constructed as dangerous. As well as leading to state sponsored initiatives to 'make town[s] safer' (Daily Echo 2005a), advice is offered by media, government and police on how those who participate in the night-time economy can stay 'safe'. This guidance on staying safe tends to be aimed at women, for example as 'savvy advice for women on safety' (Daily Echo 2008).

Class can be more or less explicit in these discussions of drinking. The very term 'ladette' is loaded with class significance, associated as it is with the ITV programme *Ladette to Lady*, which first ran in 2005 with the latest third series broadcast in early 2008 (ITV 2005, 2008b).³ The stated aim of the programme is 'transforming some of Britain's most extreme binge drinking, sexually shameless, anti-social rebels into respectable ladies'. As usual, this is presented as 'a phenomenon that's getting worse'. By presenting the 'lady' as the opposite of the 'ladette', the programme presents the transgressive behaviour as not that of the upper classes. It is notable that the participants (in the third series of the show at least) are, where their occupations are mentioned, a hairdresser, a nightclub bouncer, or unemployed. Holly, who is unemployed, is said to have been banned from a number of venues in her home town of Basildon, but according to the voiceover, 'If she can find a pub that will let her in, she thinks nothing of drinking away all her dole money' (ITV 2008b). These characterisations are familiar moralistic depictions of the undeserving poor, underclass, or even working class more generally. Although socio-economic class is not directly mentioned in these programmes, as I argue throughout this thesis, class is frequently expressed through euphemism and moral categories.

The media seem to be more comfortable using class terminology when discussing the *middle* class. When the Office for National Statistics revised the way in which it estimated alcohol consumption, adjusting for changes in glass

³ Another series has since been broadcast, but it features young women from Australia coming over to Britain, and so is not discussed here (ITV 2009).

size and alcohol content in drinks in recent years, this was explicitly stated as affecting middle class women most of all (Goddard 2008), and the class point was certainly taken on board by the media. Marcel Berlins (2007), writing in the G2 section of *The Guardian*, complained that the government's focus on those who drank wine at home in addition to the public 'binge' drinker was simply targeting 'the middle class' and a case of 'cry[ing] wolf', but the *Daily Express* (Brown 2008) reported the new statistics as 'Middle classes fuel Britain's alcohol crisis'. Such a headline also illustrates the underlying assumption that alcohol consumption in Britain today is considered to be in 'crisis'. ITV broadcast a programme that stated that although most coverage of problems relating to alcohol focused on the 'binge drinking youth culture', 'New evidence suggests that equally destructive patterns of drinking exist among middle class, middle aged mothers' (ITV 2008a). Here, gender and class were combined, as it was suggested that 'women take more risks than man when consuming alcohol' – not in terms of their behaviour when drunk, but in biological terms because alcohol is more damaging to their bodies than men's.

The *Daily Mail* also presents Britain's drinking problem in classed terms, informing its readers that in a government report, 'middle class parents [are] blamed for rise in binge-drinking' (Clark 2008). The same paper, on the day that it reported on 'Victims of Binge Britain' (Daily Mail 2008a), explained that the 'scourge of alcohol' was the result of the government's licensing reforms and 'lectures from public health minister Dawn Primarolo on the "dramatic and serious harm" being done by middle-class, middle-aged drinkers sipping wine at home' when the real issue is 'youths out of their minds on cheap drink' (Daily Mail 2008b). It should be noted that this belief that middle-class, domestic drinking is not a problem did not prevent the paper from publishing a story outlining how 'Millions of middle class, middle aged women are fuelling binge-crisis Britain' (Willey 2009). I suggest this apparent inconsistency is characteristic of the ways in which discourses surrounding alcohol are continually negotiated and reworked. Class and gender, for example, need not imply consistent, coherent worldviews for them to be powerful.

This perception of alcohol as a problem – and the themes of gender and class associated with it – is not restricted to the media. The government has released numerous documents and campaigns on the subject of alcohol. For example, the passage of the 2003 Licensing Act led to the formulation of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England (Cabinet Office 2004), to deal with how negative potential consequences of the introduction of the act could be managed. This strategy was informed by government-commissioned research published the previous year (Engineer *et al.* 2003), and drew on an Interim Analytical Report produced by the Strategy Unit in the Cabinet Office (Strategy Unit 2003). The 2004 ‘strategy’ led to the publication of a set of government proposals on ‘drinking responsibly’ the following year (Department for Culture Media and Sport *et al.* 2005). This document declared that what was desired was ‘a fundamental change in attitude’ towards alcohol, noting the ‘problems’ that ‘binge’ and ‘underage’ drinking can produce. An updated strategy, ‘Safe, Sensible, Social’, was then published in the wake of the introduction of the Act in 2005 (HM Government 2007). As with the previous strategy, this led to a further general consultation (Department of Health 2008) and a specific consultation on the sale of alcohol (Home Office 2009a). 2008 also saw the publication of a review of the 2003 Licensing Act, commissioned by the Home Office (Hough *et al.* 2008).

These alcohol strategies and reviews have been accompanied by various government advertising campaigns aiming to educate people about the potential negative effects of alcohol. The first of these was launched with the title ‘Know Your Limits’, and the most highly-publicised form was a television advertisement that featured a young man climbing scaffolding while thinking he was a superhero to catch a hen party’s lost balloons, before crashing to the ground apparently to his death (NHS and Home Office 2007). In 2008 two new campaigns were launched (see Home Office and NHS 2008). One of these, the ‘Units’ campaign, was aimed at the ‘general public’ aged over 25, and sought to raise awareness of the units system of calculating alcohol intake, and the corresponding government guidelines on ‘sensible’ drinking (NHS 2008). The second was aimed at 18-24-year-old ‘binge’ drinkers and had the catchphrase ‘Would You?’, asking young people if they would do certain things while sober

that are commonly associated with being drunk (see Home Office and Directgov 2008).

Both the 'Units' and 'Would You?' campaigns have separate advertisements explicitly targeting men and women respectively, whether in print, radio or on television, reflecting an understanding that men and women have different likely patterns of consumption of alcohol and will face different associated 'problems'. Similarly, although the Know Your Limits TV advertisement featured both men and women, the roles the overall campaign envisaged for them were quite different, and the role-playing game on the website forced players to choose whether they were a man or woman – a decision which led to different choices and consequences.

Suggestions have been made by the Home Affairs select committee of MPs that there should be restrictions on 'happy hours' and a minimum price for alcohol (BBC 2008c), both of which have been accepted in principle by the Scottish Government (BBC 2009b). Research into alcohol pricing was commissioned by the government in Westminster (Booth *et al.* 2008), but the suggestion of a minimum price was rejected (BBC 2009c), though tax on alcohol has been used as an instrument to try to influence drinking (Warwick-Ching 2008). Price policies have also been in the news in Bournemouth, with the local Town Watch, an association of the on-licensed premises in the town centre, enacting an informal £1.50 minimum price for alcohol until 2009 (BBC 2009e; Pendlebury 2009). When a venue first broke this agreement, it was a prominent news story, described as 'cheap drinks price storm' (Codd 2008b). The British Medical Association has also stated that it supports price controls on alcohol (BBC 2008e). On the broader aspects of regulation, Bournemouth Council leader Stephen Macloughlin has expressed his intention, for example, to 'beef up' licensing policy in the town, with the aim of providing 'a safe environment' which does not include acting 'anti-socially' (quoted in Codd 2007). Such is the interest nationally that even the Archbishop of Canterbury has entered the debate, declaring that 24-hour licensing has made the public spaces 'less safe and less civil' (quoted in Butt 2008).

As with the media discussions of drinking, the same themes recur. Drinking is constructed primarily as a new problem for young people, who are influenced by a broader cultural change, and the discussion seems to be framed by the concepts of gender and class. Tobias Ellwood, MP for Bournemouth East (which does not include Bournemouth town centre), has outlined his concern regarding rising violent crime in the town, which he attributes to ‘youngsters [who] go out with the express intention of getting drunk’ (quoted in Codd 2006). The problem here is understood to be with young people, who are drinking in a new and different way from, say, their parents. The government, too, is concerned about the broader cultural attitude to alcohol, and has commissioned a study of comments made regarding alcohol on radio (BBC 2008f), while the Home Secretary has complained that TV shows ‘glorify drunken behaviour’ (quoted in Daily Mail 2007). Peter Fahy (2008), Chief Constable of Cheshire Police, when discussing proposals for price regulation of alcohol, echoed this view, stating that a broader ‘culture’ lies behind young people’s drinking practices, including a glorification of celebrity drunkenness. The 2003 Licensing Act itself was justified in terms of inducing a change in prevailing cultural attitudes towards alcohol in Britain (Office of Public Sector Information 2003).

Perhaps driven by the government’s discussion of ‘partnership’ as the foundation of tackling alcohol-related problems (see Chapter 3), drinking is also asserted to be a source of concern by the drinks industry itself. In 1989 the Portman Group of drinks manufacturers was established ostensibly to promote ‘sensible drinking’, with the additional duty of policing ‘responsible marketing’ from 1996 (The Portman Group 2009). This has led to the creation of the Drinkaware Trust, which has its own website (Drinkaware 2009) and educational campaigns (Drinkaware 2007). In 2008, Carlsberg decided voluntarily to remove its logo from children’s sizes of the Glasgow Rangers and Celtic replica football kits, since the logo may encourage underage alcohol consumption (BBC 2008g). Alcohol retailers have also portrayed themselves as willing to take measures, with ASDA, for example, introducing a ‘Challenge 25’ policy whereby anyone who appears to be under 25 years old will, in selected stores, be asked to prove that they are over 18 (ASDA 2008).

The role of this study

Media and governmental discussions of alcohol therefore rely on an idea of a new ('binge') culture of drinking which is seen to be prevalent amongst young people. However, such statements of problems with young people's behaviour recall ideas of 'moral panic'. By this, I mean a perceived problem, which when subjected to detailed scrutiny turns out to be an exaggeration of the actual phenomenon, echoing old fears (Cohen 2002). Pearson (1983) has noted how young people have been constructed as presenting threatening, new problems throughout history, while Beaman (1995) has suggested that young women in particular have always been constructed as behaving in 'new' and transgressive ways. Specifically on young people and alcohol, Dick Hobbs (2005) has argued that the current focus by government and media on young people's 'binge' drinking is precisely such a moral panic, and Jackson and Tinkler (2007) have drawn parallels between the concerns expressed regarding 'modern girls' in the 1920s and those regarding 'ladettes' today.

In these discussions of alcohol by government, media and industry, themes of gender and class are often immediately apparent, as suggested by the accounts quoted above. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, I understand gender and class as structures or norms that shape social actors' understandings and actions. Therefore, gender and class can be constituted through drinking practices and understandings of these.

A detailed review of the academic literature, as also outlined in Chapter 1, suggested that there was a place for a more in-depth study of the perspective of young drinkers themselves to understand how their impressions and ideas of drinking related to the dominant themes evident in government and media discussions with specific reference to class and gender. The heart of this study, therefore, is an analysis of how young people approach and understand drinking, using an ethnographic approach. Although previous research has analysed the issue of drinking from the perspective of young people, the differences and distinctions amongst apparently 'mainstream' drinkers have often passed with little comment while broader points have been highlighted.

Where research has addressed the issues of distinctions within the night-time economy, this has tended not to be linked to the construction of gender and class. Rather, such analyses have tended to view drinking practices and associated understandings as either something potentially to be understood as reflecting such background data, or as cultural phenomena largely distinct from class structures themselves. Where such work has been undertaken, moreover, it has tended to be located in (formerly) industrial cities. This study offers a welcome complement to this previous work, being based in the town centre of Bournemouth, a seaside tourist town in the south of England.

Therefore, this study adds to the debate surrounding 'binge' drinking by refining the picture of apparent conformity familiar from media, government and indeed some academic depictions of young people's drinking on the night-time high street. It also makes a contribution to the academic literature by drawing attention to the ways in which the cultural practices and discourses surrounding drinking can serve to construct young people as classed and gendered, through the negotiating and reworking of government and media discourses, suggesting that drinking can be considered constitutive, as well as reflective, of class and gender.

My analysis of government and media discussions, detailed in Chapter 2, illustrates how 'binge' drinking as a perceived phenomenon is defined by behaviour associated with drinking rather than quantity of alcohol consumed, for example. This behaviour, especially when negotiated by participants themselves, can be seen as defining a particular sort of person, understood through the theories discussed in Chapter 1 as being gendered and classed.

Women, for example, are urged by government and media to be 'responsible' in ensuring their own safety from violence and sexual assault, with the understanding that becoming intoxicated or behaving in a sexual manner is risky, irresponsible, and unfeminine. This was then reworked and echoed through participants' accounts, through which it appeared that women were seriously concerned about their security in the night-time economy. Many women therefore talked about employing particular strategies to avoid

becoming 'too' drunk. In contrast, young men – despite being the group most likely to be victims of violent crime – seemed relatively unworried by potential violence and indeed saw intoxication as a way to overcome potential fears of violence. As the symbols of undesirable or unrespectable consumption, it was classed, but importantly gendered, figures that were picked out by participants: a girl being carried out of a venue showing her knickers, and men getting into fights over clothing, for example.

Crucially, however, not all women and men took the same attitude towards drinking and drunkenness. Although I found that for both men and women getting drunk was a commonly stated motivation for going out in Bournemouth at night, not all participants presented getting drunk in this positive light. While some celebrated the altered norms that characterised the night-time economy, others lamented these, emphasising their adherence to everyday norms. I therefore suggest that participants' approaches to going out can be understood using a continuum from the everyday on the one hand, emphasising adherence to standard norms, and the carnivalesque on the other, emphasising the way in which going out is different from everyday life, with themes of intoxication for example.

These 'drinking styles' are not accurate descriptions of participants' objective drinking practices; rather, they are concepts that make sense of how participants understood and presented their practices (and those of other drinkers). These accounts and opinions are best read as representations, which shed light on the construction of gender and class in contemporary Britain. I found that the everyday drinking style was associated with ideas of distinction connected with class, familiar from Bourdieu's (1984) work. It also drew on images and concepts from government and media discourses, particularly themes of responsibility. Class is understood here as a way of understanding how people's paths through life are not equal, and how these inequalities are reproduced. I understand class as potentially performative because cultural and social preferences and choices – the impression one gives of a particular 'self' – affect one's power within society. Discourses surrounding drinking can thus be considered classed because of the ways in which they

linked particular practices and understandings with wider cultural and economic factors. Some participants were more willing and able than others to negotiate the figures of the 'binge' drinker and the 'responsible' drinker, by drawing on cultural capital and government discourses, thus reaffirming their classed self. One of the most powerful ways in which this was done was by the oppositional representation of the carnivalesque by some drinkers in terms recognisable from media and governmental discussions of 'binge' drinking, while linking this with the classed figures of the 'chav' and the 'townie', tying patterns of consumption and behaviour to other cultural and economic characteristics to form a broader picture of class distinction.

Partly through the concept of the carnivalesque, this thesis highlights the forms of differentiation and distinction evident within young people's discussions of drinking. I argue that these are important because of my understandings of gender, class and power. It is a fundamental assumption of my analysis that cultural practices and attitudes can affect one's symbolic capital, as Bourdieu (e.g. 1989) would put it, and therefore one's passage through life. Drinking is one aspect of social life through which symbolic capital can be constructed, and it reveals the importance of notions of gender and class in structuring these forms of capital.

As such, the study is illustrative of the workings of power within society. The point can be taken to be more general than simply referring to drinking, however. As Sulkunen (2002) argues, we can find that studying drinking sheds light on the operations of wider society. In this research, the ways in which drinkers related to the discourses prevalent within government and media discussions can be seen as a general example of how discourses are not (and perhaps cannot be) fully controlled by governments, or indeed the media. Participants did not simply passively accept the definitions of 'binge' drinkers, but neither did they reject them out of hand. Drinkers responded in a variety of ways, with some challenging the assumptions of government and media discussions directly, while others broadly accepted these but subtly redefined them, carefully positioning their own drinking in relation to these reworked standards. In general terms, therefore, not only does this research remind us

that discursive and normative power works in fluid and subtle ways; it also cautions against overly prescriptive or structural accounts, while still allowing for the importance of class and gender as conceptual aids to understanding the issue of alcohol consumption.

Importantly, then, the study may help to shift public perceptions surrounding 'binge' drinking, three key ways. Firstly, and most straightforwardly, my analysis of government and media attitudes towards young people's drinking highlights how these discussions are structured by conceptions of gender and class. This may help readers to view such debates with a more critical eye. Secondly, it is clear from my research – and indeed other studies – that some people value the very losing of respectability and inhibitions is shocking and concerning to the government and media. In this way, many of the warnings sounded by government public education campaigns, for example, could easily be transformed into 'funny stories' of drunken nights like those I was told by participants.

Finally, however, at the same time as many embrace many aspects of behaviour associated with 'binge' drinking, others reject this characterisation of their drinking practices, whether or not they engage in the practices condemned in government and media discussions. That is, the term 'binge' and the set of behaviours associated with it are up for debate and redefinition. It is for this reason that I prefer the term 'carnavalesque' to describe the approach to drinking of many young people. This is a more equivocal term that makes it easier to see how such practices and understandings can be both admired and condemned, in contrast with 'binge' – a term with primarily negative connotations even to those who engage enthusiastically in the 'mainstream' night-time economy. The term 'carnavalesque' also offers a sense of history and community that places today's night-time economy in context, and evokes the elements of community and semi-regulated license that characterise both the contemporary night-time high street and the historical carnival.

Thesis Structure

In this Introduction I have outlined how there is a clear perception in media and government discussions of alcohol that Britain's young people have a problem with 'binge' drinking. However, there is no clear definition of this problem, which is constructed in different ways for men and women, and for people of different classes. Chapter 1 reviews the previous academic literature on this subject, and argues that although there has been considerable work on the structures that frame young people's drinking, such as licensing laws, planning regulation, legislation of crime and disorder, and the alcohol industry, there has been less attention focused directly on how young people themselves negotiate these structures in their drinking practices. Where there have been such discussions, these are rarely focused on issues of gender and class, which are so striking in the media and governmental discussions of young people's drinking. This thesis can therefore be understood as complementing these previous studies. Chapter 1 also explains why Bournemouth is an interesting and important setting in which to study drinking, offering a contrast with much previous work which has tended to be set in formerly industrial cities.

In this thesis I take class and gender to be concepts that can help explain how people understand the world around them. They are therefore conceived of as performative – that is, constructed through behaviour rather than necessarily reflecting some stable, objective underlying identity. However, as specifically gender and class, they must be linked, more or less explicitly, with underlying factors: 'sex' or socio-economic background. The theories behind this approach are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, alongside the review of existing academic research.

In Chapter 2 I outline how discussions of alcohol consumption in both government and media contexts, as well as statements and actions by the alcohol industry itself, construct an idea of the responsible, rational citizen, which can be best understood using ideas of neo-liberalism and governmentality influenced by Foucault. I do not suggest that all these different arenas, of government, media and industry, invariably agree. Following

Foucault, I argue that power should not be understood as residing with an institution, class or group of people controlling the dominant discourse. Rather, I try to analyse how these different factors contribute to the structural and discursive in which 'binge' drinking comes to be seen as a gendered and classed 'problem'. To suggest that a dominant class does not directly control and order society like a machine is not to suggest that class is unimportant. I argue that these discourses in fact themselves construct classes, by virtue of institutionalising certain normative, moral values regarding pleasure and responsibility, which in turn affect how people view the world and their possibilities within it.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods used in the study, and the theoretical assumptions behind these, also addressing issues of ethics and validity, and outlining my role as researcher in the production and analysis of the data. In order to look at young people's understandings of drinking in depth, I chose an ethnographic approach, and recruited participants in a number of pubs, bars and clubs of Bournemouth town centre to avoid being tied to a particular venue or institution, such as a sports club or university. I used participant observation as well as individual and group interviews with drinkers, and conducted interviews with related professionals such as drug workers, youth workers and bar staff. I also analysed government and media documents referring to alcohol. My ethical approach viewed consent as continually negotiated, so participants were made aware of the broad aims of the research and were given my contact details as well as a written summary of the research aims as I encouraged them to contact me if they had any further questions or wished to withdraw consent at any time.

Chapter 4 analyses the backgrounds of the participants, looking at specific individuals in detail. This chapter aims to put the analysis of participants' drinking practices and accounts into the broader context of their lives and to understand how class and gender operate through wider issues. This is followed by Chapter 5, which analyses participants' drinking practices and accounts in detail. It is here that I demonstrate how participants' different approaches to drinking – or, rather, their constructions of their approaches –

can best be understood using a continuum from a carnivalesque drinking style on the one hand to an everyday style on the other. In doing this I describe how these representations can be understood as claims to symbolic capital, particularly through the links to dominant discourses of responsibility and moderation and the traditional Kantian aesthetic of substance and complexity, as well as through the classed figures of the 'chav', 'townie' and 'pikey', in contrast with the reverse claims of pretentiousness. I also consider how these classed forms are mediated through ideas of gender, for example with concern for managing one's own – and others' – levels of drunkenness, and how these mesh with government and media discussions of gender and drinking.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter reflects on how previous research has considered young people's drinking practices as potentially gendered and classed, and outlines what this study can therefore offer. Previous studies have suggested the importance of drinking in the construction of gender and class amongst young people, and given the extent of the media and governmental attention now given over to the topic I suggest that this issue is deserving of a more focused treatment.

Although there have been notable studies of drinking that have addressed issues of gender and class, these have tended not to focus on what I call the 'night-time high street', following Hadfield (2005), or what is also commonly known as the 'mainstream' (e.g. Chatterton and Hollands 2003). Much detailed work has been conducted on specific groups, rather than the drinkers that seem to prompt newspaper headlines and government initiatives. By contrast, recent discussions of the night-time economy, which this study builds upon, have tended to concentrate on similarities amongst young people as they take a broader perspective in describing the structures and regulations that frame young people's drinking in today's town centres. Where class and gender are considered, they have commonly been portrayed as being reflected in drinking practices and understandings, or as cultural phenomena largely distinct from class structures themselves. In some cases this approach can be linked to a larger theoretical orientation that sees the influence of class as declining as a result of deindustrialisation and the dominance of consumerism.

This chapter shows how my research complements these studies, by focusing on the issues of gender and class using an ethnographic methodology. This thesis adds to the work that has been conducted by drawing attention to the distinctions within the apparent 'mainstream' of the night-time high street, by demonstrating how gender and class are constituted through, as well as being reflected in, drinking practices. The particular setting of Bournemouth – a seaside town on the south coast of England – also offers an interesting contrast with much previous work, which has tended to be based on industrial (or post-

industrial) cities such as Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and Bristol. Bournemouth has no such industrial heritage, and has always been primarily a tourist resort, with a different approach to drinking.

Academic Literature Review

There is much evidence from previous research that the analysis of young people's alcohol drinking offers useful insights into the broader aspects of youth culture, and particularly gender and class. Going out drinking at weekends was a central feature of the social lives of the younger women Sallie Westwood (1984) worked with, and gender and class are prominent in the resulting ethnography. Similarly, an analysis of the working-class masculinity of the young men in the ethnographies of Howard Parker (1976) and Paul Willis (1977) would be incomplete without their discussions of drinking. In more recent times, Anoop Nayak (2006) has noted how drinking is an important part of the construction of the (post)modern 'Geordie' identity, infused with elements of gender, class and ethnicity.

However, in all these accounts, drinking is one aspect of many within the broader fabric of youth culture. As the Introduction has begun to demonstrate, I argue that the place of alcohol and drunkenness within contemporary Britain suggests that it is deserving of focused attention, with particular awareness and consideration of themes of gender and class. As Gefou-Madianou (1992) complained, in terms of understanding the particular relationship between gender or class and alcohol specifically, there has been little work, particularly discussing the relationship between femininity and alcohol. Indeed, in her book dedicated to addressing this want, there was no material from Britain.

Where there are detailed analyses of people's own orientations towards alcohol, following another criticism of Gefou-Madianou, they have tended to focus on specific communities or groups. Similarly, one can list the ethnographies of Mars (1987) and Peace (1992) on fishing communities and the role of alcohol, the investigation of the role of alcohol in ethnic youth gangs undertaken by Hunt *et al* (2005), Dean's (1990) study of young people's (illicit) drinking in the Hebrides of the coast of Scotland, and the similar study conducted in urban

Scotland by Galloway *et al.* (2007). In some cases such ethnographies address themes of gender and class directly, as in Macdonald's (1996) work, but again this focuses on a particular (isolated) community, and indeed one aspect of alcohol consumption: how women's drinking relates to the construction of whisky as a national drink in the highlands of Scotland.

Alternatively, ethnographies in western countries often focus on specific aspects of drinking cultures – in particular, violence. For example, Benson and Archer (2002) conducted ethnographic work in Wigan and Huddersfield, investigating why fights break out in the night-time economy. They note that the main aim of the evening for everyone they met was to 'have a laff'⁴, and observe that this could have a variety of meanings, but do not concern themselves with what precisely these were, or how they might relate to each other – preferring to concentrate on the particular phenomenon of violence. Similarly, Graham and Wells (2003) have conducted a study of young men's aggression on nights out, unconcerned with distinction and the broader aspects of drinking, as they seek instead to make conclusions regarding the source of conflict and the opinions of young men and women on violent incidents. Dyck (1980) has conducted a study in a Canadian city of the culture of violence and drinking with an emphasis on masculinity, as has Tomsen (1997) in Sydney, Australia. The study by Hobbs *et al.* (2003) is certainly an ethnography of the night-time economy, but again focuses specifically on the role of the 'bouncer' and the nature of violence in city centres.

Where ethnographic researchers have considered broader aspects of drinking cultures, they have frequently done so by locating the ethnography in a particular bar or location. For example, Cáceres and Cortiñas' (1996) studied a single Latino gay bar, and Johnson (2005; Johnson and Samdahl 2005) similarly conducted an ethnography of a single country and western gay bar, both in the USA. On a slightly broader scale, Campbell (2000) considered the performance of 'pub(lic) masculinity' in two pubs in a particular rural village in

⁴ This idea of 'having a laff' was also central to Willis' (1977) understanding of the drinking of the 'lads' who participated in his research.

New Zealand. Given that previous research (e.g. Chatterton and Hollands 2001; Gofton 1990; Hollands 1995; Moss *et al.* 2009; Nayak 2006) has suggested that young people increasingly lack loyalty to specific venues, and even visit a number of different places in one night, such an attempt at a venue-specific ethnography might limit the scope of the research by focusing on those participants who do retain such loyalties, or simply those who visit that particular venue. Of course, there are limitations to conducting an ethnography that is not based on a fixed group or single place, and these will be covered in the next chapter, on methodology.

There has been notable work addressing young people's practices and beliefs relating to alcohol, increasing in volume in recent years, alongside the increased government and media attention to the issue. Some of these have directly addressed issues of gender and class, but often from different perspectives than that taken in this study. Gough and Edwards (1998), for example, conducted a study of a small group of middle-class young men's talk while drinking, and how this constructed ideals of masculinity. However, this was in a private home, and the participants were in an isolated group. I focus more on how these gendered distinctions are understood and played out in public and in understandings of drinking, than the observed drinking practices themselves. Harnett *et al.* (2000) have considered how young men's attitudes to drinking change as they grow older, based on informal interviews conducted in pubs, but their analysis only relates to a group of young men, and then only those from 'relatively deprived' backgrounds. Mullen *et al.* (2007) conducted focus groups and individual interviews in Glasgow with people from a wide range of backgrounds, but then still only considering young men. This study, by contrast, aims to consider both young men and women together. De Visser and Smith (2007) have studied young men's attitudes to alcohol, and argued that they tend to be 'ambivalent' towards it, since as well as being part of good experiences, it can also lead to undesirable episodes. However, their aim in outlining this approach is to model an overall approach to drinking that can explain or contextualise young men's behaviour in general, whereas I try to understand how different men relate to alcohol in different ways.

Engineer *et al.* (2003), in their government-sponsored qualitative research study, investigated young people's attitudes towards drinking, but the themes of gender and class were underplayed. The study did include references to these ideas, sometimes in quite coded terms, but left them for the reader to flesh out. For example, passing reference was made to the ways in which young people classify each other in terms of clothes, locations and tendency to be violent, and how this might relate to 'different social groups', but no reference was made to class (Engineer *et al.* 2003: 22 & 38). This is understandable, since the research aimed to paint a broad brush picture of how young people in Britain approach drinking, but this study seeks to fill in the gaps in such analyses.

There have been notable studies of how gender relates to alcohol consumption in Australia, particularly the work of de Crespigny *et al.* (1999), Farrington *et al.* (2000), Jo Lindsay (2001; 2003; 2004; 2006) and Sheehan and Ridge (2001). However, although these studies offer insights into the ways that alcohol can be understood, one cannot automatically assume that they apply in Britain, with its different context in terms of history, licensing, government and media. Moreover, where Lindsay concerns herself with class, she does so by considering only 'non-professional' workers, rather than looking at perceptions across classes.

The recent academic work with which this study has the closest affinity is that conducted on what has been called the 'night-time economy'. That is, it takes pains to place young people's drinking practices within the broader economic, governmental, social and cultural structures that frame their practices. Here I analyse this work to provide the background to my analysis, which serves a dual purpose: it demonstrates the tendency for this work to concentrate on broader, more structural aspects of the night-time economy, suggesting a gap in the literature for this study; and it provides the structural context, along with some of the theoretical background, for the analysis presented throughout the thesis, particularly in Chapters 2 and 5.

Much of this recent work, mirroring media discourses, follows a narrative of change, seeing the current drinking culture as new. Kevin Brain (2000) has

referred to 'the post-modern alcohol order' – or 'new culture of intoxication' in his work with Fiona Measham (Measham and Brain 2005) – which is contrasted with the sort of 'traditional' drinking outlined by Gofton (1990). This 'traditional' drinking was based on working-class masculinity, workplace ties and community pubs, and valued 'holding' one's drink as opposed to becoming intoxicated. Brain argues that alcohol has been 're-commodified' as a 'psychoactive' product by the industry in the wake of the 'rave scene' and ecstasy culture of the late 1980s, which has led to the emergence of 'designer drinks' such as white cider, alcopops, ice lagers, spirit mixers and 'buzz' drinks (see also Brain and Parker 1997). In this context, young people are seen as increasingly valuing alcohol on the basis of its 'hit value', as part of a 'search for pleasurable consumption and instant gratification' (Brain 2000: 7).

Similar arguments can be found in the work of Hayward and Hobbs (2007), who state that the past decade has seen Britain's cities being transformed by dramatic increases in sessional drinking of alcohol. This transformation also relates to the drinking venues, with 'traditional' pubs, which they understand to have catered for a variety of ages and where people used to drink beer, being replaced by venues that target young people and are part of nationwide chains, where people tend to consume the sort of 'designer drinks' referred to by Brain. These venues are typically laid out with few tables or chairs, facilitating 'vertical' drinking and maximising capacity.

Brain places this 'post-modern alcohol order' in the context of 'post-industrial consumer society'. Similarly, Hobbs *et al.* (2005: 161-2) state plainly that there have been two major changes in UK cities over the past 30 years:

The first is the shift from an economy based upon industrial production to a post-industrial consumer economy, and the second is the significant shift in urban governance away from the management of core local services towards a distinct focus upon economic growth.

It is in this context that they locate young people's drinking and identity construction, arguing that in this post-industrial world young people lack the stable jobs and class identities of the industrial age, and the correspondingly

firm, deep friendships. Instead, young people now forge identities through consumption, particularly the 'hedonistic' consumption of the night-time economy (see also Hobbs *et al.* 2003).

Winlow and Hall (2006) also place young people's drinking in the context of consumerism, which structures young people's cultures and identities as work loses any meaning beyond providing the means for consumption. Like Hobbs *et al.*, they lament the loss of stable class-based identities and the passing of 'traditional' drinking, and claim that, amongst other things, friendships based on drinking these days are much less close and deep than those of the past, and are a means to an end (providing somebody to go out drinking with), rather than being an end in themselves (see also Hall and Winlow 2005a; Hall and Winlow 2005b). They state that 'traditional forms of friendship and community are being radically transformed' as 'advanced capitalism' gains sway (Hall and Winlow 2005a: 32), meaning that friendship is now based on little more than style and cultural competence, in accordance with a consumerist worldview (Winlow and Hall 2009: 105-106).

Chatterton and Hollands (2001: 71; 2003) also take a similar theoretical-historical approach, contrasting young people's drinking today as being associated with 'fun, hedonism and courtship' in contrast with the 'the days of ale houses' when young men were inducted into a culture of drinking where knowing one's 'limit' was valued.⁵ In Hollands' (1995; 1997) own work, he argues that there has been a fundamental shift in the role of going out drinking for young people. It has gone from being a 'rite of passage' to an ongoing 'socialising ritual' during a lengthened 'post-adolescent' phase, as a result of broad socio-economic changes, including the shift to 'post-industrialism'.⁶ In Hollands' work, however, there is more acknowledgement of the local aspect of

⁵ It should be noted that Chatterton and Hollands do acknowledge and analyse differences and distinctions within the night-time economy more than many of the other authors cited here. The point I wish to emphasise here is the structural context in which they place young people's drinking.

⁶ For an ethnographic account of the 'growing up' described by Hollands, see Parker (1976).

the historical context than in the analysis of Winlow and Hall, for example, particularly through his discussion of continuities with the idea of the 'Geordie' as constructed through work in the 'industrial' era.⁷

These accounts, therefore, are framed by macro-sociological theories emphasising a shift in the way that society is organised. Such approaches draw on the work of Bauman (1992; 1997) for example, who argues that whereas in the 'modern' period work and production were the central organising features of people's lives, in the (current) 'post-modern' period, consumption and consumer freedom are at the centre of our society. The stable ideas of 'society' and 'class', characteristic of 'modern' society, are no longer seen as applicable, since post-modernity, *at least as it is experienced and understood*, is a 'complex' system without order. This means that life and identity are increasingly actively created as part of an ongoing process of 'self-constitution', rather than being experienced as automatic.

The application of this theoretical approach, while it is illuminating and persuasive in some aspects, has two potential drawbacks. First, by seeking to paint an overall picture of drinking and the night-time economy, the perspectives of young people themselves may be downplayed in favour of more structural accounts. Second, these narratives, which emphasise change since the 'modern' industrial period, tend to idealise an industrial past which may not have been as universal or comprehensive as is implied. The contrast is then drawn with today's apparently atomised – and yet simultaneously uniform – society based on consumerism.

As in Brain's argument regarding the 're-commodification' of alcohol, this theoretical approach focuses on how consumer choices are structured by the alcohol industry itself. Drawing on Bauman (1992; 1997) again such analysis often considers 'seduction' as a form of power – capitalism benefits from having willing consumers, and so seduces people into playing this role. 'Seduction' is seen as one key form of power; the other being 'repression', which targets

⁷ See also Nayak (2006) on the idea of the post-industrial Geordie.

those who either do not consume or are 'flawed consumers', and is based on Foucault's (1980a; 1991a) conception of panoptical power, discussed below. Writers such as Hayward and Hobbs (2007) and Measham and Brain (2005) see this dual play of seduction and repression in the contemporary night-time economy, where consumers are seduced by drinks promotions and neon-lit venues and sold dreams of what their night out will entail, before being 'repressed' by the forces of law and order in the form of bouncers and police as they are observed by CCTV. For such writers, the key to this repression is the figure of the 'binge' drinker, who, as a 'flawed consumer' can be considered guilty for the negative effects of the night-time economy.

Consumerism, therefore, is also understood to influence government policy, and can be contrasted with the attitudes earlier governments took towards alcohol. Previous alcohol policies might be understood as a form of 'bio-power', as Foucault (1991b; 1998) would put it, whereby the state seeks to ensure the health of its workers in order to maximise their productiveness for capitalism. The licensing controls introduced in World War I for example (particularly in Carlisle in relation to the munitions factories) were an attempt to ensure the productivity of the workforce (Hanson 2008). Gofton (1990) also states that the modern pub developed as a result of 'social control' policies – attempts to control what was consumed, and what activities were undertaken in working-class venues (see also Kneale 1999).

According to these theories the shift from the primacy of production to the primacy of consumption has affected the priorities of government. As Featherstone (1982; 1991) argues, 'consumer culture' rejects any asceticism, since profits are based on people consuming as much as possible, and places in its stead a 'calculating hedonism', whereby pleasure through consumption is (more or less rationally) sought, within certain limits. Hence, drinking is understood no longer as a problem for productive work, and therefore for capitalism; rather, it can be re-framed as a form of consumption that is useful, even vital to post-modern, consumerist capitalism (Hayward and Hobbs 2007). In this way, Hobbs *et al.* (2000: 703) have characterised twenty-first-century local government as 'municipal capitalism' in contrast with the 'municipal

socialism' of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, it is important to note that the mechanisms of seduction and repression do not operate equally on all members of society, and this municipal capitalism is not without moral values that help to create classed figures and groupings, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Much attention has been focused on government regulations on planning and licensing, which have apparently allowed the fundamental change in city centres' night-time economies to come about (e.g. Hadfield 2004, 2005; Hobbs *et al.* 2003). The emphasis is placed on the control and power of the seductive/consumerist/capitalist model, rather than the agency and decisions of the young people themselves. Thus, Hall and Winlow (2005b: 385) give this explanation for violence in the night-time economy:

[U]nder intense pressure to consume copious amounts of alcohol, the anxious products of a hyper-competitive, atomised society . . . young people enter a space minimally regulated by a shaky partnership between commercial interests, and over-stretched police services representing the authority of a state that very few people have much faith in. To be candid, we await with great interest the arguments of those who would *not* expect to see high levels of interpersonal violence in this space.

This focus on structural factors affecting the drinking experience leads to a tendency to emphasise the unity of young people's drinking cultures in order to make the broader point of cultural change. In this way, as noted, Brain (2000) glosses over the potential variation amongst young people in favour of a broad brush approach emphasising the 'bounded hedonism' he sees as characteristic of the 'post-modern alcohol order'. Hadfield (2005: 1) describes the 'night-time high street' as a place 'constituted by a range of thoroughly "mainstream" options in relation to music, dress, social composition, atmosphere and cultural norms'. Winlow and Hall (2006: 93-4) state:

[T]he market's relentless monopolization of the means of identity and meaning creation creates a homogenized drinking culture in which a diversity of colourful styles can be innovated, enacted and reproduced. However, the styles displayed by most young people tend to be 'off-the-peg' rather than authentic.

I also focus on this apparently 'homogenized' night-time high street but investigate how this relates to the 'diversity of colourful styles' and how these are understood as 'authentic' or not by drinkers themselves. Rather than focusing on the homogeneity of an apparently singular 'drinking culture', therefore, I consider how drinkers themselves construct and negotiate difference within the night-time economy.

In this way, the thesis builds on the work of Chatterton and Hollands (2001; 2002; 2003). They consider the night-time economy as a whole and argue that this can be understood through three categories: the mainstream, alternative and residual. As with the other theorists, they argue that within 'mainstream nightlife spaces', 'the consumer experience is increasingly framed by the brand and characterised by sameness and sanitisation' (2002: 111). Nevertheless, they address divisions within this space, noting how different groups have different practices and understandings relating to the night-time economy (see also Hollands 2002). Many of the themes traced in this thesis – such as the perceived emphasis some drinkers place on style over substance, recognising classed groupings by their cultural style and drinking practices – also have prominent places in the analysis of Chatterton and Hollands. However, I suggest that my analysis has a slightly different emphasis, offering a complement in more than simply the setting of the location, as discussed below. While Chatterton and Hollands are keen to draw out how different groups drink in different ways, based on their backgrounds, my analysis focuses on how drinking can also be seen as a mechanism through which such classed and gendered identities and impressions are conveyed, and analyses in more detail how drinkers' understandings of the night-time economy interact with government and media discourses.

It should be noted that Winlow and Hall's (2006) work is based on an ethnography of the night-time economy that, within their analysis of consumerism and post-industrialism, addresses ideas of class. They suggest that there is a *new* working class, employed in work such as telesales, and focus their research on this group's orientation to the night-time economy, contrasting it with historical working-class leisure practices. I argue that in order

to understand how class operates in the night-time economy, one must also consider how those of different classes relate to and understand this environment and the associated practices. Moreover, the overarching uniformity produced by consumerism is still emphasised in Winlow and Hall's account, rather than a focus on differences. For example, Winlow and Hall found that slavery to fashion was always seen as something that was a problem for others, not the speaker. When this is discussed, however, these claims of immunity to the homogeneity of consumerism are immediately effectively dismissed as a form of false consciousness – the participants apparently *were* slaves to fashion and consumerism themselves, as defined by their consumption patterns. I argue that such discourses surrounding consumerism can also be analysed not in terms of their truth, but in terms of their 'symbolic power' (Bourdieu 1989), as discussed below. Such discourses can be considered constitutive of class and distinction, even where participants' observed practices (such as buying particular consumer goods) seem to be no different.

In some previous research, the pharmacological nature of alcohol is emphasised. Hayward and Hobbs (2007: 440), for example, state that 'Six pints of lager or a bottle of champagne can provide a transgressive pharmacological and cultural nexus that is not class specific'. The same assumption lies behind Hall and Winlow's (2005b: 385) claim quoted above that there is bound to be violence in town centres given the environment and pharmacological properties of alcohol. However, MacAndrew and Edgerton (1970), surveying the anthropological literature on alcohol and drunkenness, have argued that 'drunken comportment' is culturally constructed. How alcohol may or may not be constructed as 'time out' and an excuse for certain behaviour depends on cultural assumptions, and always (according to their analysis at least) depends on a 'within limits' proviso – not *everything* is acceptable when drunk. This idea has been developed by some thinkers (e.g. Lithman 1979; Mandelbaum 1979) to note how different occasions, as well as societies, can imply a different 'drunken comportment'. Even if it were accepted that alcohol necessarily leads to violence, which is highly questionable, it would therefore be interesting to consider how such drunken violence is viewed by different people.

MacAndrew and Edgerton themselves note how different people within a single society who have drunk alcohol can behave quite differently. Following Bourdieu (1984) then, as discussed in more detail below, different social classes within the same society might be understood as having different understandings of drunkenness, as well as different ways of achieving this (be it champagne or lager). This study seeks to investigate this possibility of classed understandings of drinking, not taking the figure of the 'binge' drinker for granted – which Hobbs (2005) himself has suggested is little more than a figure to construct young people as 'folk devils' in the 21st century. Moreover, following Sulkunen (2002) I would argue that the study of drunkenness (including people's understandings and representations of this) can tell us something about aspects of society and culture beyond drinking itself – in the case of this study, gender and class.

More than this pharmacological determinism, Hayward and Hobbs (2007: 447) suggest that the figure of the 'binge' drinker is not classed, because such drunken behaviour is *seen* as the 'default setting' for all young people. The Introduction demonstrated how in fact media discourses surrounding young people's drinking frequently employ ideas of class, for example through the idea of the 'ladette', but more importantly, even if 'binge' drinking were associated with young people with no notion of class, young people themselves might not understand their practices in the same way. If the 'binge' drinker is understood not necessarily as an accurate description of young people's universal drinking behaviour but rather as a figure portrayed in the media and government discussions, then quite a different picture emerges. I would suggest that class is part of discussions of drinking, whether more or less explicitly, but also that it is worth investigating how the difference between, say, six pints of lager and a bottle of champagne is constructed by young drinkers themselves. The impression given by programmes such as *Ladette to Lady* (ITV 2005) certainly challenges Hayward and Hobbs' (2007: 440) claim that 'transgressive' drinking is 'not class specific'.

I suggest that this tendency to downplay issues of class can be linked to the overarching theories that shape these analyses. The argument that consumption rather than production is now at the centre of identity formation (particularly for young people) is associated with the work of writers such as Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991; 1994), who argue that in 'risk' or 'post-traditional' society, as they call the contemporary world, life is increasingly lived as a project actively constructed through (more or less) conscious decisions. The contrast is drawn with previous periods variously characterised as 'modern', 'industrial' or 'traditional'. In these periods, identities were much more heavily based on features such as class, gender and religion, which were almost automatic in forming the idea of one's self. In 'reflexive' modernity, however, the 'self' is something to be actively constructed through choices. As Giddens (1994: 75) revealingly puts it, 'we have no choice but to choose how to be and how to act'.

I follow Savage (2003) and Skeggs (2004b) in arguing that this is in fact a classed reading of contemporary society. Savage describes this as part of the construction of the middle class as the 'particular-universal' class. That is, a particular set of practices – this construction of the freely choosing self, and indeed the ideas of responsibility and rationality discussed in Chapter 2 – are historically associated with the middle class, but have increasingly come to be seen as universally 'normal' and 'good'. Moreover not all people have equal resources in order to access the variety of options, and so in fact the freely choosing self is classed – it is only those with greater resources who are in fact free to choose. Featherstone (1991: 44) has suggested that this idea of the actively cultivated self, as noted by Bourdieu (1984) as being a characteristic of the 'new bourgeoisie', can be understood as taking 'a learning mode toward life'.

Rose (1999) is particularly illuminating on this point, as he does not deny that the idea of active construction of 'self' has become more common in contemporary society, but suggests that this is a development of forms of power and government, rather than an objective description of how people actually relate to the world and their lives. Choice and individuality, with the consequent

dissolution of class and tradition, can be seen more as part of an *interpretation* of the world, rather than an objective description of it.⁸ It is such interpretations and discourses as surround alcohol and young people's drinking that this study investigates. The study can therefore be seen as a complement to the approach of writers like Hayward and Hobbs. While they emphasise the universality of pharmacological intoxication, I am concerned to understand how different interpretations of this may serve to construct particular classed and gendered figures.

This tendency to present a unified picture of young people's drinking is therefore not necessarily due to a lack of awareness of difference; it is rather an analytic device that reflects a particular broader perspective. For example, Hackley *et al.* (2008: 68) criticise the government for its 'crude stereotype' of young people's drinking patterns, which 'ignores the complexity of motivations behind young people's drinking practices', but the same group of researchers elsewhere emphasises the continuity amongst young people's drinking practices as 'calculated hedonism' (Szmigin *et al.* 2008). Brain (2000) has also acknowledged that his 'post-modern' approach to drinking may not be embraced by all young people, being instead a useful construction to understand young people's drinking in general. Similarly, Measham (2004: 319) acknowledges that the limits people set on their drunkenness may vary 'by gender, ethnicity, occupation, income and so forth', though without offering any evidence of her own. This general approach has been commented on by Jayne *et al.* (2006: 458), who suggest that the work of Hobbs *et al.* and Chatterton and Hollands 'tends towards abstraction and they tend to gloss over consumption practices by producing very generalized depictions of drinking practices'. Although Chatterton and Hollands (2001; 2003) are keen to stress the unique settings of Bristol, Leeds and Newcastle, and draw attention to their three-tiered model of mainstream, alternative and residual, I would agree that in general differences between drinkers and areas are less the focus in these accounts than broader structural points. Similarly, Harnett *et al.* (2000: 61) have noted:

⁸ This theme of choice and the masking of structural constraints is taken up in more detail in Chapter 2 on government and media discussions of drinking.

While there is a vast literature describing changes in young people's drinking patterns, there has been less research which seeks to interpret them from the perspective of young people themselves, nor situate them within the social context in which they are a part.

Although from a distance the mainstream may seem a useful concept, it is worth noting that up close every venue can be seen to have its own characteristics and atmosphere. As Sarah Thornton (1995) noted after her study of dance venues and events, she could not create a clear definition of the 'mainstream', and the drinkers I spoke to were well aware of distinctions in all the features that Hadfield (2005: 1) saw as being fundamentally homogeneous on the 'night-time high street' – 'music, dress, social composition, atmosphere and cultural norms'. As Hackley *et al.* (2008: 66) suggest, in contrast with the common characterisation of all young people's drinking as 'binge' drinking, 'young people's drinking practices tend [to] be characterized by highly nuanced and strategic approaches which are heavily contingent on time, place and company'. This study seeks to get behind characterisations of the 'mainstream' in order to understand the classed and gendered processes through which young people come to have morally contested and varied experiences of drinking. As Chatterton and Hollands (2003: 5) argue, spaces and boundaries within the night-time economy are continually being made and re-made, though regulation and the experiences and understandings of drinkers themselves – and indeed the definition of 'mainstream' and 'alternative' spaces and activities is an act of power in itself (2003: 203). The findings generated in this study therefore complement the more structural accounts noted here.

As I have sought in this research to give primacy to the perspective of drinkers themselves I have used an ethnographic approach. As discussed below, I argue that gender and class are constituted not only through talk, but also in action – people are classified on the basis of what they do as well as what they say – meaning that ethnography offers an additional insight beyond interviews conducted in isolation. The methodological rationale for this approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Bournemouth

Bournemouth is a seaside resort on the south coast of England. While there has been human activity for thousands of years in the area where Bournemouth now sits, there was no permanent settlement by the coast on this site. In 1809 a tavern was built in what is now the town centre as a stopping point for travellers between Christchurch and Poole, both much older towns (Edwards 1981: 28; Popham and Popham 1985: 61). However, the first residential house in the area was completed in 1812 (Sherry 1978: 4-5), and even by 1841 there were still fewer than 30 houses in the town (Walvin 1978: 76). Sherry (1978: 1) notes that Bournemouth is therefore one of a few towns in the country essentially created in the Victorian period. As it grew up it was a holiday resort, which catered for the 'more opulent section of society and also for invalids' (Sherry 1978: 1), and Walvin (1978: 138) notes that it was seen as a health resort, and had high concentrations of old people and nursing homes. In the 19th century Bournemouth was variously described as a 'garden city' and a 'paradise for wealthy invalids', but was not universally liked, with some contemporaries seeing it as 'elegant, genteel, moneyed, but stuffy and dull' (Edwards 1981: 114). The early residents opposed the building of a railway, as it was thought this would lead to 'trippers' coming to the town and spoiling its atmosphere and reputation (Rawlings 2005: 66), and Walvin (1978: 88) has stated that this allowed Bournemouth to maintain its 'social aloofness' and reputation as a resort for 'a better sort'. Such dreariness led a domestic servant employed by a London family who were visiting the town to complain in 1840 that:

[T]here is nothing to be seen here but woods and trees and we shall not be able to go Donkey riding for there is no Donkeys to be had . . . its [sic] a very Prettety [sic] place to look at but not to stay at there is a sermon every other Sunday morning (quoted in Edwards 1981: 39).

As historian FML Thompson put it, 'What the late Victorian middle classes found agreeable and acceptable at Bournemouth remained more polite, refined, and sedate than anything the working classes fancied' (1988: 293). In general, then, 'trippers bound for Bournemouth [were] a good deal more subdued and deferential than the Blackpool crowd' (1988: 294). Walvin (1978: 138), similarly,

has drawn the contrast with Blackpool, referring to the 'quiet restfulness' of Bournemouth, as has Sherry (1978: 1).

In terms of alcohol, Bournemouth's position is well illustrated by looking at statistics for 1915, when Lloyd George altered the licensing laws because of his fear that drink was doing more damage to the war effort than the Germans and Austrians combined (Van Emden and Humphries 2004: 235). In this year, Bournemouth had the lowest number of on-licenses per head in England and Wales, boasting just 5.82 on-licensed premises for each 10,000 inhabitants compared with a national average of 18.27 and the highest figure of 245.20 in the City of London (cited in Dudley Herald 1916). The figure for the City will have been particularly high in part because many people worked there and therefore wanted to drink there and it was a place of entertainment more generally, adding to the drinking by local residents. However, this makes the fact that Bournemouth was at the bottom of the list even more remarkable, since as a tourist resort one might expect it to have a high ratio as determined by permanent residents in the same way. This is not to say that there were no pubs and inns in the area, but they tended to be concentrated in the neighbourhoods outside the town centre such as Winton and Boscombe – areas that had developed as homes were required for the working class, with the hotels being the primary licensed venues in the town centre (Edwards 1981; Popham and Popham 1985).

The 'restfulness' of Bournemouth's reputation has been linked with its age profile, referred to above. Recent statistics show that the relative age of Bournemouth's population has fallen, though it still remains well above the average for Britain as a whole, as shown by Figure 3. Figure 4 shows how the figure in 2001 compares to other areas. Brighton, another south-coast resort, described by Shields (1990) as having a 'liminal' reputation both historically and today, has a notably younger population than Bournemouth, and even Blackpool, a resort often contrasted with Bournemouth as in Walvin's description above, does not quite have the same profile. The figure for Manchester puts all these into context, since this is a location where previous research such as that conducted by Measham and Brain (2005) and Hobbs *et*

al. (2003) has been conducted. Manchester has a much younger profile than any of the other towns cited.

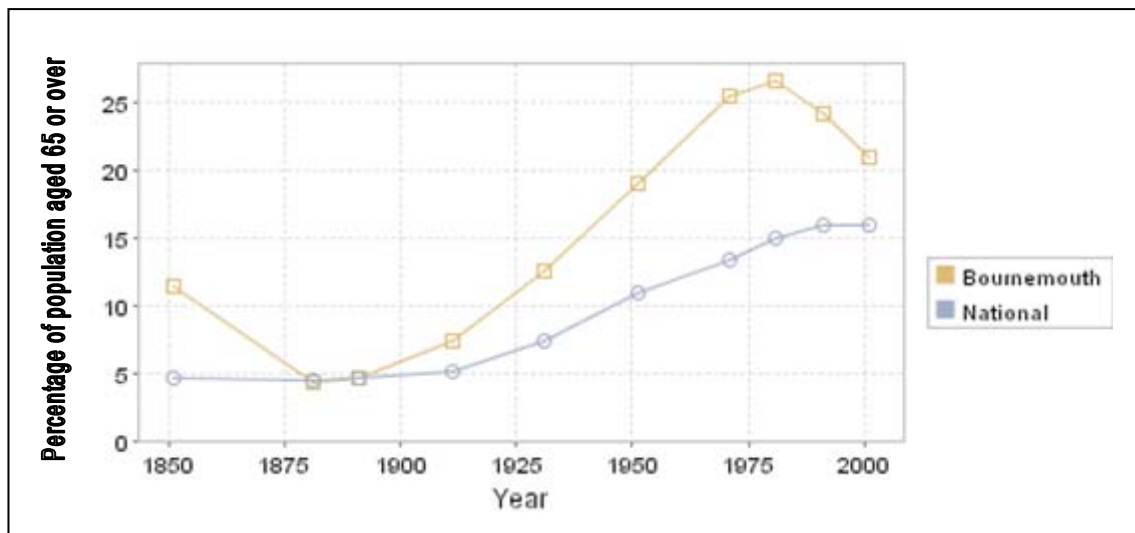


Figure 3: Proportion of Population aged 65 or over, Bournemouth 1851-2001

Source: <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>

Area	Percentage of Population aged 65 or over
Bournemouth	20.97%
Blackpool	19.58%
Brighton	16.32%
Manchester	13.24%

Figure 4: Proportion of population aged 65 or over

Source: 2001 Census (Office for National Statistics 2001c, 2001d, 2001e, 2001f)

I therefore suggest that Bournemouth offers an interesting comparison with the more industrial urban centres in which most research into young people's drinking has taken place: Manchester (Hobbs *et al.* 2003; Measham and Brain 2005), Newcastle (Chatterton and Hollands 2001; Hollands 1995), Bristol and Leeds (Chatterton and Hollands 2002). Winlow and Hall (2006) disguise the locations of their research, simply referring to the 'north-east' of England, but are primarily concerned with city-centre drinking; Winlow's (2000) PhD research

was based in Sunderland. These (post-)industrial locations are linked to the theoretical framework discussed above. When considering the dramatic changes they perceive in the drinking environment and drinking practices, Hayward and Hobbs (2007: 442 & 446) acknowledge that these can be found in 'ex industrial city centres particularly', and draw the contrast with a particular period: 'The [contemporary] NTE [night-time economy] offers something very different from the clustering of Victorian and Edwardian public houses that dominated the industrial city'. Bournemouth has never been an 'industrial city', and has always been oriented towards consumption and pleasure rather than production – particularly in the Victorian and Edwardian periods – but certainly did not have clusters of public houses in the town centre. The research of Valentine *et al.* (2008) in villages and towns around Penrith in the Lake District has suggested that young people's drinking practices, and understandings of these, can vary significantly by location, making comparisons with the industrial, urban areas noted here imperative.

Bournemouth is a particularly interesting place to consider drinking practices because despite the historic lack of pubs in the town centre recent years have seen an expansion of the number of licensed premises and a consequent change in the resort's reputation. Historian Keith Rawlings (2005: 144) has explained that this transformation was the result of authorities being told that some visitors would prefer to go to a pub rather than drink in the 'solemnity of our hotel'. This active development of the town's night-time economy can be seen in the appointment of a night-time economy coordinator, a post funded jointly by the local police, council and association of town-centre on-licensed premises, Town Watch. The post was described by the council as being 'to ensure that Bournemouth's Night Time Economy is safe, inclusive, vibrant and market leading' (Bournemouth Borough Council 2006).

There is now space for 35,000 people in the on-licensed premises in Bournemouth, and the 'night-time economy' is said to be worth £125 million per year, supporting 4,000 jobs, leading the council to state that the borough has 'the greatest concentration of night-time activity outside London' (Bournemouth Safer and Stronger Communities Forum 2008). The importance of this sector –

and the primacy of alcohol consumption – is appreciated by local professionals. Neil MacBean, police inspector with responsibility for the town centre, has stated: ‘We have a night-time economy reliant on alcohol – there are virtually no alternatives to pubs and clubs in the town centre’ (quoted in Vass 2008b).

Similarly, the night-time economy coordinator told me:

If someone said tomorrow, ‘Right, we’re going to ban the sale of alcohol in Bournemouth because it’s causing too many problems,’ er, that would be the end of Bournemouth. There would be nobody to stay in the hotels, there would nobody, erm, you know to actually participate in the town, we wouldn’t have any visitors, we wouldn’t have anybody living here.

The change in Bournemouth is not always viewed positively. The local press has referred to ‘Binge Bournemouth’ (Reader 2009b), while the BBC (2008b) has reported on young people’s drinking in Bournemouth as ‘Town’s underage alcohol problem’, stating that the number of under-18s being admitted to hospital due to alcohol is a third higher than the national average. New mayor Stephen Chappell explained at his inauguration that ‘Bournemouth happily sees blue rinse and hedonism existing side by side’ (quoted in Bailey 2008), but not everyone sees it this way. The *Lonely Planet’s* first guidebook for Devon, Cornwall and Southwest England makes the same comparison, but in less favourable terms: ‘The former preserve of the blue-rinse brigade is now a hedonistic paradise of stag-and-hen party hell’, claiming that sometimes ‘it parties so hard it’s a nation’s drinking problem personified’ (quoted in Magee 2008a). Local councillor David Clutterbuck has also complained that the lap-dancing clubs that have been established in the town have given it a ‘sleazy reputation’ (quoted in Magee 2008b).

In this way, Bournemouth lives up to the concerns of academics such as Hobbs (2005) and Hadfield (2004), who suggest that planning policies and liberalisation of licensing have led to a night-time economy based solely on alcohol. As Hobbs *et al.* (2005: 174) have put it:

Britain’s night-time economy is not saturated with art galleries, museums and other bastions of bourgeois leisure, and Britain’s youth are not queuing for concert halls, jazz clubs or coffee houses.

Rather, they argue, it is 'based almost entirely on youth and alcohol-focused venues' as a result of loosely regulated market forces. However, given its specific history, Bournemouth offers an interesting comparison with the settings of other similar research.

To put the research in context it is worth noting some background statistics about the area. As well as active policies from the local council, and the impact of the 2003 Licensing Act, it has been argued that the growth of the university and the financial services industry in the town have contributed to the development of Bournemouth's night-time economy. In 1990 the Dorset Institute of Higher Education was granted Polytechnic status only for this to be changed to University status in 1992. In the 2007-2008 academic year during which fieldwork for this study was undertaken, the university had 16,193 students, of whom 11,054 were full-time undergraduates (Bournemouth University 2009). The overall population of the unitary authority was 163,444 at the time of the 2001 Census (Office for National Statistics 2001d), suggesting that students could account for almost 10 percent of the local population. Another important factor may be the growth of the financial services industry in the town in recent years. In 1999, as shown in Figure 5, of those sectors published⁹, distribution, hotels and restaurants were the top employers, followed by public sector work, and then banking and finance. By 2007, as shown in Figure 6, the finance industry had increased its share of the job market in the area, seemingly at the expense of those tourist occupations, which still topped the statistics. Notably, in both of these sets of statistics, the figures for the manufacturing and construction industries are low, supporting the claim made above that Bournemouth is not an industrial (or manual-labour based) town.

⁹ Figures for 'Agriculture and Fishing' and 'Energy and Water' were not published, as these were placed at 'Confidential Level'.

Sector	Number of Jobs	Percentage of Total
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	21056	30.48%
Public Administration, Education and Health	19258	27.88%
Banking, Finance and Insurance	14889	21.56%
Other Services	4198	6.08%
Manufacturing	3529	5.11%
Construction	3353	4.85%
Transport and Communications	2790	4.04%
Total Jobs	69073	

Figure 5: Jobs in Bournemouth by Sector, 1999
(Source: Bournemouth Borough Council 1999)

Sector	Number of Jobs	Percentage of Total
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	22500	28.96%
Public Administration, Education and Health	21800	28.06%
Banking, Finance and Insurance	20700	26.64%
Transport and Communications	3800	4.89%
Other Services	3600	4.63%
Construction	2700	3.47%
Manufacturing	2600	3.35%
Total Jobs	77700	

Figure 6: Jobs in Bournemouth by Sector, 2007
(Source: Bournemouth Borough Council 2007b)

Theoretical Approach

The previous sections have outlined the aims and approach of this study – an ethnographic study based in Bournemouth focusing on the practices and perceptions of young drinkers themselves with particular reference to gender and class. I now explain the theories of gender and class that form the framework of this research.

Gender

In feminist theory, ‘gender’ has been commonly distinguished from ‘sex’, a difference which hinges on the sentiment expressed in Simone de Beauvoir’s

(1997: 295) famous dictum: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. The essence of de Beauvoir's formulation is that in order to be considered a 'woman', rather than simply 'female', one must act in a 'feminine' way that has no direct relationship to the fact of being female. In this way, the distinction can be made between 'sex' – an unchangeable biological fact – and 'gender' – the cultural effects of that biological fact.

Judith Butler (e.g. 1993; 1999a) goes further, questioning this concept of 'sex' by pointing out that it, too, is a human construct, and therefore not objective. However, my main focus here is on her work on the concept of 'gender'. Despite arguing that both 'gender' and 'sex' are socially constructed, Butler maintains a distinction between the two, because she is interested in the way they are constructed as different concepts. The central point of Butler's theory is that if one 'becomes' a woman, this cannot be by a single act, or even a set of actions, that, once done, confirms one's status for ever. Rather, there can be no single defining moment: 'gender . . . is an originating activity incessantly taking place' (Butler 1987: 131). The stable impression of gender is conveyed through 'a stylized repetition of acts' (Butler 1999a: 179).

This idea that one's gender is constituted through what one does Butler terms 'performative'. This term originates in linguistics, where it refers to a statement which does what it says – for example, 'I promise'. The body that performs actions has no gendered status without the actions themselves (Butler 1999a: 173). The sum of these actions, which 'congeal' into an impression of a stable gender, can be understood as '*a corporeal style, an "act" as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where "performative" suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning*' (Butler 1999a: 177).

'Gender' is therefore a way of understanding someone's action(s) as well as those actions themselves. Butler (1999a: 13) argues that people's gendered understandings of the world are dependent on the 'hegemonic cultural discourse' that operates in the particular society. In order to show how it is a way of processing perceptions, she also refers to the 'cultural matrix' or 'matrix of intelligibility' through which actions are transformed into gender identities

(Butler 1999a: 23 & 24). It is important to note that this 'matrix' or norm does not simply affect how one is seen; it also affects what one does. In Butler's (1993: 15) words: 'the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms'. Gender can therefore be understood as 'a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint' (Butler 2004: 1). It is important to note that the gendered matrix is not permanently fixed, and can vary from one society and time period to the next (Butler 2004: 9).

Butler (2004: 3) points out that norms can be central for identity formation, and yet because gender and identity are ways of understanding a set of acts, not their reality, gender can never be fully internalised as it does not exist beyond these acts (Butler 1999a: 179). Moreover, Butler (1993: 3) suggests that as with any norm, the 'matrix' by which actions are understood as constituting 'gender' is 'exclusionary' – it requires actions outside of its boundaries to define those very boundaries. Therefore, instances *outside* of the norm, which might be considered transgressions, are as important in constituting it as the most 'normative' instance (Butler 2004: 42). In this, she agrees with Foucault (1991a), who notes that norms, while in some senses homogenising since they tend to make people conform, can also serve to highlight differences between people. Skeggs (1997: 165) makes a similar point, arguing that any identity category is more of an analytic idea than a subjective reality – it suggests a coherence, homogeneity and fixity that is not reflective of the way that lives are actually lived.

Gendered norms can be understood as being internalised by individuals as a form of discipline, following Sandra Bartky's (1997) development of Foucault's ideas. Foucault (1980a; 1991a) argued that 'discipline' was a way in which the values of a society could be internalised by individuals. Using the idea of surveillance, particularly the model of the panopticon, he argued that prisoners, school pupils and soldiers in particular are observed by a higher authority, which will punish indiscretions. Eventually, through their experiences of these institutions, the observed internalise the judgements of the observer, imposing

their own *self-discipline*.¹⁰ Bartky points out that the values which lie behind this observation may be different for men and women, and so this ‘discipline’ may be gendered, citing dieting and anorexia as strong contemporary examples, but also arguing that this can be extended to use of make-up and general bodily comportment. She argues that such an understanding of discipline can develop Iris Young’s (2005) ideas of women’s ways of inhabiting their bodies. ‘Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other’ (Bartky 1997: 140).

It is important to note that this discipline need not always be experienced as a negative force. Echoing Butler’s outline of how people’s identities are inevitably dependent on the norms that structure our ways of thinking, Bartky (1997: 145) suggests that having some mastery of this form may be considered an achievement, and given that people will have been immersed in the culture from which the discipline springs, they may well accept its underlying values, and so attach some importance to being ‘disciplined’ in this way. It is through the prism of this theoretical background that the findings related to gender discussed in Chapter 5 are understood. I argue that gendered norms structure the ways in which young people think about their own and others’ drinking practices, and these norms often impact through forms of self-discipline, sometimes with an explicit reference to an anonymous observer, as Bartky suggests.

Class

Just as gender is a way of categorising a person, so is class. Rosemary Crompton (1993: 1) has explained that societies produce an ‘unequal distribution of material and symbolic rewards’, and ‘class’ is a concept employed in order to explain these inequalities. In this way it is more than a measure of income or status; it seeks to *explain* the reproduction of these inequalities as

¹⁰ Although Foucault identifies this as a form of power peculiar to modern institutions, as Bauman (1992: 5-7) points out, this sort of discipline existed in pre-modern times; it was simply exercised by smaller units, such as village communities. What the modern period saw, Bauman argues, was a more conscious, coordinated effort to impose such discipline through institutions. As Bartky (1997) suggests, discipline need not always be identified with an institution, particularly in the case of femininity, and this can make it seem ‘natural’ or invisible.

well as measure them. Since a 'class' implies a group of people, Savage *et al.* (1992: 5) suggest that it must imply a set of people which to some extent is a stable social collectivity. They list various ways in which this collectivity might be cemented such as shared lifestyles, cultures, political orientations and levels of income. However, they then observe that such criteria could apply to many groups, perhaps even the Boy Scouts. What makes a group a social class, according to them, therefore, is that it has its roots in a process of exploitation.

I follow Bourdieu (e.g. 1984; 1987) in understanding class to be the summary of 'cultural' and 'social' capital, as well as the more conventional 'economic' capital. Cultural capital can be understood as a person's cultural practices and knowledge (sometimes symbolised by educational qualifications). Social capital amounts to connections, networks and group memberships which can be used as resources (see also Skeggs 2004b: 17). It might be informally summed up as who one knows. When these different forms of capital are recognised by others as legitimate, they can be considered 'symbolic' capital (Bourdieu 1994: 127). One example of symbolic capital might be 'the collection of luxury goods attesting the taste and distinction of their owner' (Bourdieu 1977: 197).

One's class position according to Bourdieu (1987: 4) is determined by: (a) one's overall quantity of symbolic capital; (b) the proportions of this in terms of economic, cultural, and social; and (c) the trajectory of the capital, as in the distinction between 'old' and 'new' money for example. Each person can be plotted on a three dimensional grid in these terms; by looking at how the individuals were plotted it might be possible to discern more or less distinct groups. It should be noted at this point that since the interpretive work in delineating these groups is being done by the sociologist, the analysis produced is not necessarily how the people themselves would understand their world, or their thought-processes (Bourdieu 1987: 7).

Bourdieu is interested in symbolic capital because he sees it as affecting one's power – the exploitation that Savage *et al.* (1992) deemed necessary for a group to be considered a social class. Bourdieu considers not only economic exploitation, but also 'symbolic violence' – when someone imposes their

worldview on someone else (e.g. Bourdieu 1990: Ch8). Affecting people's worldview is crucial to politics, since it alters how the world is viewed and the perceived possibility of change (Bourdieu 1977: 165). It also affects how one sees other people, and therefore human interaction more generally – what characteristics are valued, for example, can affect who is given a particular job.

This emphasis on the symbolic and cultural can be linked with Foucault's conception of power. Foucault (1982: 789) distinguishes power relationships from violence. Where violence involves the use of direct force, power requires the liberty of an active subject who chooses a course of action on the basis of a relationship of power that determines the potential consequences and calculations that the individual makes. Since a power relationship is based on the way in which these decisions are made, it requires 'the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse' that forms the framework for making these calculations (Foucault 1980b: 93). Gender, then, can also be seen as a power relationship in these terms, since people's actions are affected by the operation of a gendered discourse, as Butler argues.

This apparently cultural conception of class can be squared with the more economically-based Weberian view of class as 'market position'. Weber (1978: 302) stated that a 'class' refers to a group of people who all share the same 'class situation', which is defined as one's probability of 'procuring goods', 'gaining a position in life' and 'finding inner satisfactions'. Bourdieu would argue that the cultural and social can affect these three outcomes as much as the economic, and therefore should be included in concept of 'class'. Moreover, he argues that all these domains are intimately linked – it does not make sense to separate the cultural (what Weber might call 'status') from the economic, since they act in concert.

Such an understanding of class requires some idea of judgement – the key property of symbolic capital is not objective, but how it is recognised by others. In this way, clear parallels can be seen with the performative understanding of gender outlined above. As Savage (2003: 540) puts it, 'class position is individualised and has to be achieved'. Therefore, disputes over taste and

culture are crucial to the distribution of symbolic power. Skeggs (2004b) follows Bourdieu in noting how cultural attributes can be mobilised as forms of capital, but points out that not all such 'resources' are (or can be) transformed into 'capital'. As Bourdieu (1994: 137) suggested, having one's worldview accepted depends on having some recognised capital behind one – for example, educational qualifications. A *resource* becomes *capital*, according to Skeggs (2004b: 17), when it is 'made legitimate, attributed with dominant value and converted into the symbolic'. This does not mean that a resource has no value until it is 'made legitimate'. Skeggs argues that the system of symbolic capital relies on exchange: the cultural practice is not valued *in itself*, but as an attribute that is exchanged for something else, such as power, money, or status. When not legitimated, resources are not 'exchangeable' for such objects or features, but they can still 'have value for those who use and make them' (Skeggs 2004b: 17). She thus makes the distinction between use-value and exchange-value, not only in the material economy but also in the symbolic economy.

The value of an object or practice within this symbolic economy does not simply inhere in what that thing objectively is; it is also affected by the narrative that is attached to it, and the capital behind that narrative. Thus, the very same object can either be read as 'working-class' or 'kitsch', depending on the way in which it is re-signified and re-valued (Skeggs 2004b: 107). As Skeggs (2004b: 136) puts it, it is not just *what* clothes are worn; it is also *how* they are worn. In Chapter 2 I analyse government and media discourses surrounding young people's drinking in order to recognise what drinking practices and understandings are valued according to the contemporary dominant symbolic economy.

In a broader sense, the argument can also be applied to ideas of self and performativity. Therefore, how one is perceived and valued depends not just on *what* one does, but *how* one does it (which includes how one presents it). Skeggs (2005: 973) states:

It is up to the individual to 'choose' their repertoire of the self. If they do not have access to the range of narratives and discourses for the production of the ethical self [as defined in the dominant discourse] they may be held responsible for choosing badly, an irresponsible production of themselves.

This reference to 'choice' draws on the ideas of Cronin (2000) and conceptions of neo-liberalism more generally, discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. The point here is that the way in which practices are presented can affect one's status (or class, given the cultural definition outlined here). Chapter 5 shows how the ways in which drinking practices are presented and negotiated by drinkers are crucial in understanding how class operates in relation to 'binge' drinking.

Bourdieu (1987; 1989) argues that there is a distinction between classes on paper, and classes in reality. While one might plot a number of people in the same 'social space' as shown on his grid of capitals, this does not mean that these people will identify or act as a group. This requires 'political work', and therefore Bourdieu suggests that the title of EP Thompson's (1991) influential work – *The Making of the English Working Class* – should be taken literally: it is through banners, organisations, and a particular vocabulary (the 'proletariat', 'working class', 'workers' etc) that the working class is recognised as (and therefore becomes) a group. However, this 'political work' is not neutral, and could be undertaken not only by members of the relevant group, but by others outside. Bourdieu suggests that this symbolic power is central to politics, which is the struggle of differing views of the social world. These symbolic struggles could occur through group actions, such as a mass demonstration, which will constitute the group as such, or individual actions of self-presentation showing one's position in social space. Alternatively, these actions might focus more on the *representation* of social reality, for example through insults or gossip, or through trying to alter the language used itself, as when movements try to maintain or discard existing political vocabularies (Bourdieu 1989: 20-21).

If groups are being 'made' by outsiders, then the group identifiers need not be read as positive, as the examples of artistic banners and organised

demonstrations might be. Ideas of 'mass' rather than 'community' or 'solidarity' might be mobilised, for example.¹¹ Finch (1993) argues that class can be understood as a discursive grouping, and that historically such groups have been made through moral and cultural categories. The idea of 'class' itself might be absent from this meaning-making process, since it has associated positive connotations of solidarity and community, as well as implying structures of inequality and exploitation. To place someone outside of the structures of class society (for example, using the concept of the 'underclass') is to deny that their possible lack of power and capital is due to the classed nature of society by shifting attention to individual decisions, or the classed nature of society could itself be challenged in general by simply focusing on individuals' consumption choices. It is for precisely this reason that Skeggs (2004b: 53) criticises the work of sociologists such as Beck and Giddens as discussed above, as their work can be considered 'part of a symbolic struggle for the authorization of their experience and perspectives'. I argue in this thesis that the night-time economy can be seen as just one such site of 'symbolic struggle' over the meanings and values associated with certain practices.

The idea of competing worldviews suggests that although certain tastes may not reap significant symbolic benefits in society at large they may still be valued within that group. For example, Cospers (1979) has argued with regard to workplace drinking cultures that what others might consider pathological drinking (even alcoholism) should frequently be seen as 'conformity' rather than pathology. The group may take a cultural position that bears little relation to the apparently dominant culture in society:

An occupational community which is marginal or of low status in society, such as that of students or enlisted personnel in the armed forces, may use a style of drinking that is poorly regarded by the larger society to facilitate a reversal of values whereby their group may assume greater prestige in their own eyes (Cospers 1979: 884).

Sarah Thornton (1995) has argued that such valuing and status based on different criteria to those operating widely in wider society can be understood in

¹¹ This theme of the unthinking 'mass' is developed below, pp. 68-69.

terms of the concept of 'subcultural capital' – what Skeggs might understand as simply resources can be understood as fully-fledged capital, but only within a particular subculture. Thornton's specific focus is on the culture of dance music, and the conceptions of status within this. The utility of the concept of subcultural capital has been questioned, given that it neglects elements of class (e.g. Hollands 2002; Skeggs 2004b: 149), and though it may illuminate the 'underground' nature of what is 'cool' within dance cultures, as I argue in Chapter 5, to analyse the night-time high street in these terms would be to undervalue the quite striking connections with more orthodox forms of cultural capital. I argue that many, if not all, of the distinctions within the 'mainstream' night-time economy can be fitted into the symbolic economy of wider society, and thus considered part of the ways in which class and gender operate.

The concepts of distinction and symbolic struggle can begin to suggest some kind of conscious, calculated conflict for supremacy, but I also want to draw attention to Bourdieu's analysis of how class can be understood to operate in a more visceral, emotional, unthinking and therefore apparently 'natural' way. Bourdieu (1977; 1984) argues that class tastes can be explained by the concept of the 'habitus' – a set of dispositions which generate appropriate action without conscious thought. According to Bourdieu's formulation, the habitus interacts with the field in which people are acting, to produce actions. Therefore, where the habitus is well-adapted to the given field – such as the middle-class habitus in the field of academia – the actions produced, without thought, are appropriate and generate symbolic capital within that setting. The dispositions are inculcated through formative experiences, which will be heavily influenced by the class (including cultural, social and economic factors) of one's parents and broader family. The habitus means that people do not consciously see this as the reasoning behind their choices, they value those choices in themselves – they *make a virtue* out of necessity, seeing such actions not just as necessary but as good and desirable.¹² Such a habitus can explain a whole way of being

¹² As the findings section will suggest, the idea of habitus perhaps underplays the conscious judgements people make in their everyday lives. As Skeggs (2004a) has argued, class and gender are frequently played out as conscious performances.

– including such features as ways of walking (see Robson 2000). In this way, class is understood as something that can be passed down through generations and be embodied in an individual all their lives. On an individual level, the set of actions that flows from the habitus and is read by others as class can be understood as a ‘cultural style’. This is the phrase Skeggs (2004b: 1) uses, following Diawara’s work on black masculinity, which echoes Butler’s ‘corporeal style’ noted above.

This habitus is associated with an approach to the world which can lead to participants feeling strong disgust at the habits of others. This is emphasised by Bourdieu (1984) himself, and has been developed further by Lawler (2005), Skeggs (2004b) and Walkerdine (2003), amongst others. This operation through disgust, at a visceral level, means that people do not always see their responses as classed, but rather as responding to tasteless, disgusting people – though people who are frequently recognised as a group united by their apparent tastelessness. The concept of the habitus has been criticised for being too restrictive of individual agency, and not allowing for change in environment, as it fits too well with the ‘field’ in which people circulate (Butler 1999b; McRobbie 2009). This debate is also caught up with ideas of intentionality and agency which are fundamentally psychological issues (McNay 1999) that this thesis does not specifically address. I am more concerned with observing the effects of class rather than, necessarily, its psychological impacts on individuals within society.¹³

Bourdieu (1984) argues that a key way in which class groups are made is through ‘taste’. He suggests that the dominant system of cultural value legitimates those cultural practices that broadly accord with a Kantian aesthetic – and that taste of this kind is most common amongst the ‘dominant class’. Bourdieu claims that this legitimate taste is defined by its distance from sensual, ‘naïve’ pleasures – the complex as opposed to the ‘facile’. He states that

¹³ For more on the debate on the psychological implications of Bourdieu’s theory and ideas of consciousness, ideology and agency, see the discussion in Bourdieu and Eagleton (1992), particularly on Foucault’s idea of discipline.

'popular' taste is more satisfied by a 'sense of revelry, the plain speaking and hearty laughter which liberate by setting the social world head over heels, overturning conventions and proprieties' (Bourdieu 1984: 34). Importantly, given my use of the concept of the carnivalesque to understand young people's drinking, key properties of the carnival according to Bakhtin (1984a; 1984b) are carnival laughter, and a turning of the world upside down – precisely echoing Bourdieu's characterisation of 'popular' taste. As discussed in more detail below, then, the carnivalesque has long been associated with the lower classes or orders in society. Fundamentally, the distinction being made is between nature, with its immediate animal pleasures, and culture with its more refined, acquired ascetic enjoyments. This Kantian aesthetic can be considered a form of symbolic violence, as it devalues the 'popular' pleasures and desires.

One of these groups, which many of my participants used as I discuss further in Chapter 5, is constructed through the term 'chav'. Hayward and Yar (2006: 14) have argued that 'chav' is a comparable term to 'underclass', but refers to consumption rather than production (or a lack of it), as this is increasingly the basis for defining people's 'social and status differences'. The 'chav', then, is defined by their 'vulgar' consumption that lacks 'distinction' according to 'superordinate classes', according to Hayward and Yar. One example of such 'excessive' and 'vulgar' consumption is "'binge" drinking, especially "premium lagers" such as Stella Artois' (2006: 14). 'Chavs' might also be identified by their predilection for 'sports apparel'. Hayward and Yar suggest that the term is largely interchangeable with 'scallies', 'neds', 'townies', 'rarfies', 'charvers', 'kevs', 'janners', 'spides', 'hood rats', 'rat boys', 'bazzas', 'kappa slappas', 'skangers', 'scutters', 'stigs', 'sengas' and 'yarcos' (2006: 15). From this list, participants used 'townie', and also 'pikey', which is not included here, but has a possible similar origin. Hayward and Yar (2006: 16) note that one possible etymology of the word 'chav' (there are several) is from the Romany word 'chavo' or 'chavi', which means small child. Similarly, the Oxford Dictionary of Slang suggests that 'pikey' originates as a contraction of the word 'turnpike', a feature of travelling life, and thus relates to gypsies or travellers (cited in BBC 2003b).

Drawing on research in Newcastle, Nayak (2006) argues that 'charvers' or 'chavs' were excluded from the night-time economy in Newcastle, either by price or by restrictions on clothing and door policy. The testimonies of youth workers in Bournemouth support this idea of exclusion, with people apparently drinking in public parks because they are excluded from the night-time economy by lacking the requisite money to spend, as well as those who are excluded because they are under 18. All the same, this study concentrates on distinctions *within* the night-time economy, where the figure of the 'chav' is still important. It is not applied, however, to the truly dispossessed – as Hayward and Yar point out, the defining feature of the 'chav' is not lack of the ability to consume; it is the apparent lack of *knowledge* of *how* to consume. In this way, ideas of choice are emphasised, perhaps obscuring structural factors that influence such choices, following Skeggs' criticisms of Beck and Giddens cited above.

Skeggs (2004b: 114-116) has outlined how the dominant worldview can be challenged via an 'anti-pretension critique', which can be seen as an attempt to enforce one's own values, rather than those of the dominant class. This critique means that attempts by working class people to embody middle-class cultural attributes are decried by their peers as pretentious – a form of betrayal. Considering the way in which aesthetic worldviews compete to ascribe symbolic capital to certain practices, Bourdieu (1994: 114) refers to 'the dialectic of pretension and distinction . . . which properly defines social space'. I found similar discourses emphasising the positive values of cultures commonly derided in government and media discussions of young people's drinking, and decrying those attempts to drink *differently* as pretentious, or 'stuck up'.

However, the influence of one's discourse depends on the capital one can mobilise (Bourdieu 1989: 23). Those whose cultural capital is uncertified constantly have to prove themselves, since they are defined only by what they do, whereas those who have the resource of capital behind them have more freedom not to be defined by their actions (Bourdieu 1984: 23-24). As Skeggs (2005: 969-70) puts it with respect to sexuality and class:

The central characters in *Sex and the City* can offset sexual pathology through professionalism; they are unlikely to be read as 'Essex girls', as Manolo Blahnik shoes replace white plastic stilettos.

Bourdieu (1994: 113-4 & 158) makes it clear that when he discusses particular practices being identified with particular classes he is not claiming that the relevant class actually does these things more than others; he is merely outlining how these are understood by people themselves. For example, it may be that more middle-class people than working-class people actually participate in football, but the sport is (or was in France in the early 1990s) associated more with the working class than the middle class. In this way, there is some sense in which class is not about objective assets that people hold, but rather how these assets are mobilised in order to affect people's lives and status. Therefore, as well as considering what people do when they go out drinking, I am also interested in how they understand this, and how they are viewed by others.

To take a recent example of how this classed discourse works in relation to drinking, the *Daily Mail* (2009) suggested of Cambridge students drinking on 'Suicide Sunday' that 'they are supposed to be an elite, to lead by example – and that their "celebration" brought shame to Cambridge', and lamented that

even though these academically talented young men and women may one day enjoy life's glittering prizes, the early hours of yesterday left Cambridge looking like any other city plagued by mindless yobs and drunks in 21st-century Britain.

The article's fascination with the activities of the students is based on the fact that their position as students at Cambridge, and thus privileged, middle-class, respectable, informed, apparently hard-working individuals – in short, the combination of all the themes that comprise the dominant system of symbolic value – does not fit their actions, which are performative of 'mindless yobs and drunks'. Interestingly, the students are not considered to *be* mindless drunks and yobs as a result of their actions; they have simply behaved *like* these people – they have enough cultural capital behind them not to be defined solely by what they do. The link between cultural capital as manifested through

drinking and formal socio-economic background is made clearly in the article, which opens with the statement:

Cambridge students showed their peers how to party *with class* last night as they were treated to unlimited champagne and oysters in an ice-filled punt at the famous Trinity May Ball (my emphasis).

In Chapters 2 and 5 I will outline instances of how institutions and participants in my study employed similar understandings of performativity to read some people's practices as characteristic of a fixed cultural style, in contrast to others', which as a result of legitimate capital they understood to be temporary departures from underlying respectability and responsibility.

Given the classed discourses that surround media and government discussions of drinking, and the understanding of class outlined here, I argue throughout this thesis that drinking practices, and representations of these practices, can be seen as one of the ways in which class is constituted and reproduced. It follows from this approach, therefore, that drinking can be classed in two ways. First, different practices and understandings might be reflective of particular class backgrounds. Secondly, different practices and understandings could constitute people as being (or becoming) of a particular class. Given the theoretical outlook already described in this chapter, not only do both these processes occur; they are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Butler (2004: 48) makes this point strongly with respect to (gendered) norms, arguing that a norm only has existence insofar as it is acted out in daily practice. What this means in practical terms for this study is that I have considered both how people of different social backgrounds drank and understood drinking, and how participants employed understandings of drinking that constructed certain practices or understandings as classed. I therefore collected as much background information about participants as possible, in order to contextualise their responses. As a consequence, my analysis can shed some light on how classed conceptions of drinking fit with other forms of (classed) symbolic capital, by assessing the symbolic value of participants' accounts according to the dominant symbolic economy within society, and comparing this with their existing capital in other spheres. One would naturally expect a reasonable level

of congruence between other forms of capital, otherwise drinking might simply be a cultural phenomenon unrelated to class. However, equally, if it were overly determined by class background one might suspect that it was simply a form of cultural superstructure not of great interest to the sociologist, giving little further information about the reproduction or operation of class.

Theories of the Carnival and Distinction

I have chosen the term 'carnavalesque' to structure my discussion of young people's practices and representations of drinking, in order to convey their ambivalent nature in a way that 'binge' does not because it is rarely mobilised in a positive manner. As Hackley *et al.* (2008: 67) have suggested:

Young people's drinking practices are mediated by and through the social context of drinking and it is the influence of social mediation which the term 'binge' fails to capture.

The concept also helps make sense of how understandings of drinking are classed and gendered. Mike Featherstone (1991: 22) describes the carnival tradition thus:

The popular tradition of carnivals, fairs and festivals provided symbolic inversions and transgressions of the official 'civilized' culture and favoured excitement, uncontrolled emotions and the direct and vulgar grotesque bodily pleasures of fattening food, intoxicating drink and sexual promiscuity.

The parallels with portrayals of the night-time economy and its 'binge' drinking are immediately apparent, through the alcohol, excitement, transgression, kebabs and sexual promiscuity. It also has immediate resonances with the explanations of several of my participants who said that having a 'laugh' or 'letting off steam' was a key motivation for their drinking practices. Such explanations of young people's alcohol consumption have commonly been noted in previous research, whether they be understood as 'hedonistic drinking' (Brain 2000), 'calculated hedonism' (Szmigin *et al.* 2008), 'controlled loss of control' (Hall and Winlow 2005b) or 'determined drunkenness' as part of a 'new culture of intoxication' (Measham and Brain 2005). In some ways such an understanding of alcohol is straightforward: drinking is a leisure activity for these

people, and as such is frequently opposed to work. Moreover, the idea that a 'night out' implies a different set of norms from everyday life is by no means new, since this has been a feature of drinking alcohol throughout history – for example in Euripides' (1973) *Bacchae*, written in the 5th century BC, and in the 20th century anthropology of MacAndrew and Edgerton (1970), who saw drunkenness as a period of 'time out' when the normal rules of society were suspended (within certain limits).

However, I use the term carnivalesque to imply something more than simply 'letting off steam' or 'hedonism'. Featherstone was drawing on the work on Mikhail Bakhtin (1984a; 1984b) and Stallybrass and White (1986), for example. Bakhtin argues that carnival was a very real feature of life for people, particularly in the Middle Ages until a decline from the Enlightenment onwards. He argued that representations and understandings of the carnival have remained in literature and people's interpretations of the world around them. Bakhtin (1984b: 122) sees the carnival as a time when the 'laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is noncarnival, life, are suspended'. The most striking feature of the carnival, according to Bakhtin (1984b: 122-3), is the dissolution of the everyday 'hierarchical structure' of society in favour of 'free and familiar contact among people'. During the carnival, then, one interacts with different people from one's everyday life, and in a different way. Central to Bakhtin's idea of carnival is the involvement of all members of a community in a 'communal performance,' and a general attitude towards life:

This sense of the world, liberating one from fear, bringing the world maximally close to a person and bringing one person maximally close to another (everything is drawn into the zone of free and familiar contact), with its joy at change and its joyful relativity (1984b: 160).

This communality and free and familiar contact between people are the key features of the carnival which I want to emphasise, alongside the features more typical of accounts of young people's drinking, such as unusual behaviour, intoxication, bright lights and loud music which can be understood as maintaining a contrast with ordinary, noncarnival life.

Other features of Bakhtin's conception of the carnival are the use of masks (Bakhtin 1984a: 39-40), which might be connected with fancy dress in 'binge' drinking cultures, and the use of 'profane' language (Bakhtin 1984a: 16-17). There is also an important emphasis on the body, with attention being drawn to all its natural features and functions, such as sex, excretion and so on. This 'grotesque realism', as Bakhtin (1984a: 29) refers to it, is a challenge to the dominant aesthetics of restraint and control of the body and how it can already be connected with class formation, recalling Bourdieu's theories of how cultural conceptions are central to class and power.

Overall, Bakhtin (1984a: 7) is keen to emphasise that carnival is not strictly a performance, since that metaphor requires the separation of cast and audience, whereas in the carnival all members of the community are involved. This also extends to the laughter that Bakhtin (1984a: 11-12) identifies as central to the carnival. Although the carnival does ridicule existing society, turning it upside down in its rituals, this mockery is different from the laughter of modern satirists, which places them *above* the object of scorn. Rather, carnivalesque laughter is communal, and directed at all participants – no-one is safe from it. This laughter is also linked with 'grotesque realism'. Participants are not disgusted by the events and descriptions to be found in the carnival; they are amused.

Stallybrass and White have suggested that where many academics have used the idea of carnival they would be better placed using the broader concepts of 'transgression' and 'symbolic inversion' which can be detected in four different spheres:

The high/low opposition in each of our four symbolic domains – psychic forms, the human body, geographical space and the social order – is a fundamental basis to mechanisms of ordering and sense-making in European cultures (1986: 3).

According to this schema, everyday, responsible behaviour is seen as 'high', whereas carnivalesque behaviour is classified as 'low'. I maintain the use of the specific concept of the carnivalesque, however, because the broader concept of

'transgression' complicates the issue of how the carnival is a licensed form of hedonism (see Eagleton 1981: 148; Featherstone 1991: 22-23), and also because my analysis focuses specifically on the carnival of the night-time high street as one aspect of this broader schema.

However, I retain from the analysis of Stallybrass and White (1986: 193) that the idea of the carnivalesque has long been used in the construction of the 'Other' for the bourgeoisie to present itself as 'respectable and conventional', where the 'other' is the working or lower classes depending on the contemporary conception of society. There is a long discursive tradition of public drinking more specifically being labelled as unrespectable, and a feature of the lower classes, primarily because while the middle and upper classes had private domestic space in which to conduct their leisure pursuits, the poorer were dependent on the public house (see Cunningham 1980). Interestingly, Easton *et al.* (1988: 40-43) argue that the alehouse, despite being ostensibly a public space, was constructed as a refuge from the middle and upper classes where supervision could be avoided, particularly from the 17th through to the early 20th century. This resistance to supervision is echoed in the patrons' desire for screens and snugs in later Victorian pubs, noted in Chapter 2 (Girouard 1984: 71-2). This fits neatly with Bourdieu's formulation of the 'making' of class through the discursive construction of groups.

However, it is not clear whether such a link between the carnivalesque and class holds today in terms of 'binge' drinking. As noted above, Hayward and Hobbs (2007: 440-441) have claimed: 'Six pints of lager or a bottle of champagne can provide a transgressive pharmacological and cultural nexus that is not class specific'. However, it is clear, as argued in Chapter 2, that the dominant theme of discussions of 'binge' drinking in the media is a condemnation of the altered norms characteristic of the night-time economy and particularly 'binge' drinking. It is for this reason that the concept of the carnivalesque is so relevant and powerful. As Easton *et al.* (1988: 36) and Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2009) have suggested, the carnival, by its nature as a time when moral and normative constraints are changed, is a struggle over moral codes since it illustrates alternative ways of being. As Bakhtin (1984a:

88) puts it, the carnival 'builds its own world versus the official world'. This is precisely the kind of struggle over worldviews that Bourdieu (1987; 1989) suggests is central to class formation, and as this thesis shows, in particular through Chapters 2 and 5, this understanding of some people's drinking practices is a key feature of discussions of drinking in government and media documents and also in the conversations of drinkers themselves.

I argue that young people's drinking practices and their understandings of these can be analysed using the concept of drinking styles, explained in detail in Chapter 5. The fundamental point is that attitudes towards drinking, as well as *reflecting* to some extent classed and gendered identities or backgrounds, serve to *construct* people as classed and gendered, as participants draw on dominant discourses that authorise their accounts of drinking and engage in precisely the forms of group-making and construction of an 'other' that have long characterised the carnival.

Condemnation of the carnivalesque includes disapproval not only of the transgressive behaviour, but also of the carnivalesque communality noted by Bakhtin, which is part of the carnivalesque drinking style and opposed to the everyday style. Drawing on another longstanding theme of classed discourse relating to the carnivalesque, some of my participants presented an alternative worldview whereby they portrayed themselves not specifically as part of a community, but rather as 'different' from others, who were conceived of as all 'the same'. The communality of the carnival can therefore be linked to ideas of the 'mass', as outlined by Raymond Williams. He states that: 'The masses are always the others, whom we don't know and can't know' (Williams 1990: 299). They are also constituted through ideas of taste and culture:

[M]asses was a new word for mob, and the traditional characteristics of the mob were retained in its significance: gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit. The masses, on this evidence, formed the perpetual threat to culture. Mass-thinking, mass-suggestion, mass-prejudice would threaten to swamp considered individual thinking and feeling (Williams 1990: 298).

Williams (1990: 299) also claims that this idea is associated with the working class, and moreover with ideas of democracy, which were opposed in these terms.

As Chapter 2 outlines, a key part of the neo-liberal discursive context for young people's drinking is the idea of individualism (see, for example, Cronin 2000), and therefore, to refrain from the construction of an individual self is to lose some symbolic power according to the dominant discourse. This idea of individuality and the construction of a self through practices and understandings of consumption can also be linked with the concept of distinction, familiar from Bourdieu's (e.g. 1984) work as discussed above. This mode of distinction seeks to create an impression of a rational, choosing individual, as opposed to the herd mentality that is understood to inform 'binge' drinking.

It should also be noted that the carnival has particular gendered traditions and associations. As Mary Russo (1997) has noted, the carnival holds an ambiguous position for women, as it is never entirely clear whether disruptions of the everyday – including conceptions of femininity – offer the opportunity for more lasting change or are fundamentally conservative, with the humour based as it is on the existing everyday norms themselves. As Butler (e.g. 1999a) notes, while instances outside of norms can be revolutionary, they also serve to draw attention to the norm itself. However, women and women's roles (often played by men) have long been mainstays of carnival rituals (see Davis 1974). Women, and gender more broadly, are still important features of the 'carnival' of binge drinking, both in the dominant discourses of media and government and in the discussions of participants themselves. As Russo suggests, women's position in this carnivalesque organisation is ambiguous – being seen as desirable and disgusting sometimes simultaneously, for example. Through using the term carnivalesque, drawing on this tradition, I hope to convey some of the complexities and ambiguities observable within discussions of the night-time economy.

It is worth noting that the carnivalesque, as used here, is not in the ideal form as Bakhtin describes it, whereby the whole community is involved in the production

and consumption of the ritual, and laughter is directed at and shared amongst all. These elements of community may hold true within the carnivalesque, but not all members of society, or even young drinkers, associate themselves with such themes. Importantly, then, I do not want to idealise the night-time high street. I noted above how some previous research has tended to idealise 'traditional' drinking as constitutive of deeper friendships than exist amongst young people today. Although my research can be taken as a challenging such analyses, it is not my intention to celebrate the community of the carnivalesque instead. I start from the premise that individuals negotiate discourses not entirely of their own making. This is amply supported by the connections between the government and media discussions analysed in Chapter 2 on the one hand, and participants' discussions on the other, as considered in Chapter 5. This means that the carnivalesque is equally as much part of the normative environment as the everyday. Therefore, the expressions of community by carnivalesque drinkers, rather than being read as resistances to the dominant discourses of individuality and responsibility, could be seen as echoing industry portrayals of drinking. For example, Carling lager has been advertised under the slogan 'Belong', and showed a flock of starlings flying in unison backed by the contemporary hit song 'Living for the Weekend', which describes the feelings of someone going out to a club after a week working in a job they dislike (see Carling 2006; Griffin *et al.* forthcoming).

Hayward and Hobbs (2007: 443) have consequently stated that the liminalization of space within the night-time economy should not be understood as 'spontaneous manifestations of the carnivalesque', primarily because of the extent of the influence of big business in structuring the desires and attitudes of young drinkers as well as the environment in which they realise these.

Hayward and Hobbs (2007: 443) acknowledge the influence of the 'place myth of the carnival' in this process, but claim that what is manifested is a 'reality of consumption' rather than 'the illusion of carnival' that is sold to drinkers. I maintain the use of the term because this is how some participants understood their practices, and as noted by Eagleton (1981: 148), the carnival has always been licensed and linked with commercial endeavours. The 'carnivalesque' is itself a concept applied by writers such as Bakhtin to understand particular

social forms and representations of the world. As such, it is inevitably a construct and in some sense always a 'myth'. I am not concerned with whether or not an idealised version of the carnival is lived out in practice so much as how the set of ideas is important to young drinkers, and therefore how it relates to structures of gender and class. Chapter 2 will analyse the understandings of young people's drinking that are prevalent in government and media discussions, demonstrating that the conception of the carnivalesque is anathema to these dominant discourses within our society, which emphasise the importance of rationality, responsibility, and therefore moderation in consumption of alcohol, with intoxication being considered indisputably undesirable.

Research Aims and Questions

Overall, then, gender and class can be understood in similar ways. As Skeggs (2001) has argued, both Butler and Bourdieu are concerned with how certain performances or actions come to be seen as legitimate and valued while others are not; the difference perhaps lies in the fact that Butler focuses on potential disruptions to this process, whereas Bourdieu considers its stability. Both gender and class can also be understood in the light of Foucault's discussions of power as discourses that affect people's active choices.

Drinking and associated practices and beliefs are understood in this study as part of a 'drinking style'¹⁴, which can be understood as an aspect of cultural (or corporeal) styles that are performative of both class and gender. The aim of the research was to better understand this relationship between drinking styles and the discourses surrounding them, and therefore gender and class. Drinking – and ways of thinking and talking about it – is understood, then, as Wilson (2005: 10) has put it, 'as an act of identification, of differentiation, and integration, and of the projection of homogeneity and heterogeneity'. As such, drinking practices are considered, following Wynne's (1990: 34) discussion of Bourdieu, not as simply 'appendages to an existent lifestyle, but as part of the construction and affirmation of social position', meaning both class and gender.

¹⁴ This term is developed and discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Given the previous work on drinking, and the conceptions of gender and class outlined above, I developed the following questions which this study sought to answer:

1. How, when and where do young people drink alcohol?

I addressed this question throughout my work for this thesis, through observation of drinkers and conversations with them. This gave me solid support in developing the research and analysing the data.

2. How are these drinking practices described and understood by men and women of different socio-economic backgrounds?

This, along with question 3, forms the basis of the arguments in this thesis. Wherever possible, information was collected from participants to build up a picture of their background in terms of gender and class. These backgrounds were then related to the descriptions and understandings of drinking employed by participants.

3. How do these descriptions and understandings employ notions of class and gender?

As the research progressed, I became more and more interested in the discourses surrounding drinking, as I was struck by the ways in which ideas of gender and class seemed to inform these. Given the understandings of gender and class outlined in this chapter, I took these descriptions and understandings themselves to be constitutive of class.

4. How do these descriptions and understandings vary by context?

(For example, in an interview setting compared with a 'night out', drinking at home compared with drinking in a bar or pub, drinking with a meal or drinking alcohol on its own, drinking with friends, family or work colleagues.)

Although I do pay attention to how accounts may have been constructed by participants for a particular setting, such as an interview, what I want to demonstrate in relation to the different 'contexts' is how participants' discussions of drinking employed ideas of location and setting. For example,

some locations were associated with certain practices, and participants used locations to stand for particular notions of class and gender. To recall the claim made by Hayward and Hobbs (2007), not only does it matter whether it is champagne or lager that is being drunk; it also matters where, when and with whom this is being drunk.

5. How do drinking practices fit into the broader context of young people's lives?

(Relationships at work, home, within educational institutions, etc.)

I found that the way participants related their drinking to other aspects of their lives was illustrative of class and gender. These themes are analysed further in Chapter 4. For example, Samir, Steve and Kurt stressed that their drinking helped the company they worked for, as the friendship they had formed made them more efficient. Such a positive link between drinking and work was in striking contrast to other participants, who saw drinking as in opposition to work.

6. How do young people's drinking practices and their understandings of these relate to representations of young people's drinking in the local and national press and television or public health/government education campaigns?

A major focus of this thesis is the way in which participants' claims and discussions regarding drinking drew on themes familiar from government and media discourses such as responsibility and safety. These government and media discourses are taken as contributing to the formation of the worldview or 'matrix' (as Butler puts it) through which gender and class are understood. The ways in which participants relate to these can therefore be considered constitutive of gender and class – how they relate to the dominant norms of femininity or respectability, for example.

The answers to these initial questions should help me to come to a conclusion on the overall question:

7. How does drinking constitute young people as gendered and classed?

This is the overarching question that shapes the whole thesis, but is answered most directly through Chapter 5 and the Conclusion.

Now, in Chapter 2, I turn my attention to the government and media discussions of alcohol that provide the context in which young people are constituted as gendered and classed.

Chapter 2 Drinking Responsibly: Government, Media and Morality

Introduction

I argue in this chapter that current government policies regarding alcohol are shaped by a neo-liberal mentality of government. This means that the 'responsibility' for staying healthy and safe is increasingly constructed as the responsibility of the individual. However, the government is not indifferent to individuals' choices. As a form of 'governmentality', defined as the 'conduct of conduct', these neo-liberal strategies are ways of achieving governmental aims, such as reducing crime. Moreover, any attempt to govern conduct implies a moral judgement regarding desirable and undesirable behaviour. This chapter argues that through these forms of government and media discussions of alcohol an idea of a particular ideal citizen consumer is constructed which can be read as gendered and classed. However, given that in many cases the morality of government functions ostensibly through the concept of an ethics of the self – one's duty to care for oneself through avoiding being a victim of crime, for example – rather than an explicit code, this morality and associated discourses can be reconfigured by its apparent targets. At the close of this chapter I offer some illustrations of how these discourses are redefined by the alcohol industry and media commentators.

Theories of Neo-Liberalism, Governmentality and The Self

To begin with, then, I offer a theoretical outline of the ideas of governmentality and neo-liberalism, in order to understand how this formulation produces a particular ideal of the self.

Foucault (1980b: 106) suggests over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries sovereign power, understood as adherence to formal laws, was superseded by disciplinary power. Discipline still had 'rules' that were to be followed, but rather than operating through formal laws these operated through norms. These norms need not 'weigh upon us as a force', but can be experienced as

pleasure.¹⁵ This idea of discipline relies on sustained surveillance, whereby the judging gaze of the observer is eventually internalised so that the individual behaves in accordance with the apparent rules without any visible or immediate application of force (Foucault 1980a). The rise of discipline through this period, Foucault suggests, can be linked with a changing attitude to official forms of power in society and an increasing focus on the individual subjects who are to be ruled rather than the formal rules and laws that prescribe action. Foucault understands this as eventually amounting to a shift to thinking in terms of government rather than simply sovereignty.¹⁶ As Dean (1999) outlines, government can be understood as the ‘conduct of conduct’, since one attempts to direct (*conduct*) individuals’ actions (their *conduct*).

As this governmental approach develops, there is a shift from an *art* of government to a *science* of government, with an increasing emphasis on knowledge through social sciences such as economics, political science and sociology (Foucault 1991d: 101). This can be linked with the development of the disciplinary institutions such as military academies, prisons, factories and schools, with the overall aim being that discipline would penetrate down to all levels of society. However, as this science of government and society develops, the complexity of human society is realised and this project is understood to be impossible (Foucault 1991c: 242; 1991d: 102). Questions of government therefore cease to be of the order of how society should be governed in order to secure the deeper penetration of discipline; but rather, considering whether government is really possible at all. This is tied to the

¹⁵ In the same way, Bartky (1997), cited in Chapter 1, suggests that mastery of gendered forms can be experienced as positive, and Butler (2004: 214) acknowledges that gender can be ‘fun’.

¹⁶ In Foucault’s work, this approach is described as ‘governmentality’ and is distinguished from sovereignty. The distinction might be summed up as seeing sovereignty as concerned with maintaining order, and governmentality as ensuring efficiency. However, here, I simply use the concept of government, or governmentality, as a way of understanding how current policies and discussions regarding alcohol in the UK today. I do not wish to suggest an overall historical shift in the exercise of state or sovereign power. Moreover, as Foucault (1991d) himself suggested, sovereignty, discipline and governmentality should be understood as all operating in contemporary society.

emergence of liberalism – an awareness that by trying to govern too much one might end up not governing at all, as one’s actions would produce unanticipated and undesired consequences (Foucault 1991c: 242).

This liberalism can be understood as what Rose (1992) and Dean (1999), for example, have termed a ‘rationality’ or ‘mentality’ of government – that is, an overarching approach to government. Analyses of such approaches to government tend to identify three relatively distinct periods (see Harris 1999). First is ‘early’ or ‘classical’ liberalism usually understood to run through the 19th and early 20th century. Next is the period of the welfare state, or ‘expansive’ liberal governance, before the ‘neo-’ or ‘advanced’ liberalism considered to be prevalent today.

The ‘expansive’ period can be understood as something between classical liberalism and socialism, with the freedom of the market being infringed, but in order to maintain the overall market system. The government’s task was, then, in Harris’ (1999: 40) words:

[P]lacing the ‘economy’ and ‘citizen’ within a ‘social’ context and developing programmes and technologies directed towards the public good and social solidarity.

Classical liberalism is understood to have seen its task as defining ‘liberty’ so that people acted ‘responsibly and in a disciplined fashion’ (Dean 1999: 122), but also so that their freedom and private interests were respected (see also Burchell 1996). There was an understanding that there were certain spheres of the social world in which the market or private individuals, not the state, knew best. Hence, political theories constructed spheres such as the family and civil society (or the market) as havens from the state. As Mill (1977: 270) argued, for people with ‘a tolerable amount of common sense and experience’, their own way of ordering their lives is to be valued in itself.

On the other hand, *neo*-liberalism sees its role as actively introducing market mechanisms where there were none before, reforming government itself in this way (Dean 1999: 161; see also Rose 1992). This can be seen in Britain

through practices such as the introduction of Private Finance Initiatives and Public Private Partnerships, for example, as well as the creation of agencies that are ostensibly part of government such as the Highways Agency. This transformative vision is also applied to society as a whole. Burchell (1996) suggests that while attempts were made to transform civil society during the 19th and 20th centuries through what is now understood as the Welfare State – to make society more ‘social’ or ‘just’ – neo-liberalism refers to the contemporary attempts to transform society again and make it autonomous, rather than directly controlled to a large extent by government. Peck and Tickell (2002) distinguish between the ‘roll-back’ neo-liberalism of the 1980s, where the priority was to discredit and dismantle Keynesian and collectivist institutions, and the ‘roll-out’ neo-liberalism at work today, where the priority is to actively construct neo-liberal forms of governance and regulation. Gledhill (2004) sees this as blurring the distinction between a market *economy* and a market *society*.

The autonomy referred to by Burchell is crucially not anarchy; rather, government remains, with its aims and values. This belief that market (or private) institutions and mechanisms should be actively constructed and cultivated leads Clarke (2004: 42) to suggest:

Far from being ‘pragmatic’ about the public-private distinction, New Labour valorises the private: the private sector as the site of dynamic innovation; the private sphere as the site of responsible subjects.

This final phrase from Clarke hints at a second crucial point: this approach to government and society implies a particular view of subjects or citizens. Where early liberalism saw removing the state from the protected spheres as allowing individuals’ ‘natural’ private interests and motivations to function through the ‘natural’ mechanisms of the market, neo-liberalism seeks to foster a form of rational self-conduct amongst citizens that is not necessarily understood to be naturally occurring (e.g. Burchell 1996; Dean 1999; Rose 1992). As Petersen (1997: 194) explains:

Neo-liberal rationality is linked to a form of rational self-conduct that is not so much a given of human nature (i.e. the interest-motivated, rational ego) [as in early liberalism] as a consciously contrived style of conduct.

Dean (1999: 11) suggests that any attempt to change the behaviour of individuals is a *moral* claim, since it implies a judgement about how they *should* behave. As Foucault (1987: 28-30) argues, any moral action implies (a) one's self-formation as an ethical subject, since it implies active work on the self, and (b) some 'code' of behaviour, in accordance with which this action is taken. However, in different moral systems different levels of emphasis are accorded to the code and subjectivity. According to some forms of morality, the emphasis is placed on the code and consequently the institutional forms that inculcate this into people, with the subjectivity being understood as an almost mechanical form of matching action to laws or rules. In contrast, other moral systems emphasise the practice of care of the self, and transforming oneself (see also Foucault 1990). This art of the self can be understood as characteristic of neo-liberal forms of governance. Clarke (2004: 33) suggests that an attempt to produce 'responsible subjects' can be detected in a variety of spheres of government policy, from the exhortation to adopt 'healthy lifestyles', to encouraging more 'disciplined' use of telephone services provided by doctors and emergency services. As Rose (1992: 142) puts it, the neo-liberal form of political reason accords a '*political* value to a certain image of the self' (emphasis in original). This image is 'the autonomous, choosing, free self', which makes a 'project' of life.

Overall, Clarke (2005) has suggested that New Labour's conception of citizenship can be understood as comprising four different processes: activation, empowerment, responsabilization and abandonment. Clarke sees these themes as different ways of understanding the same overall developments, but from different political and theoretical perspectives. Activation is summed up by Clarke's statement that 'New Labour likes to see people being busy', and can be seen as affecting ways of claiming benefits (an active, contract-making job-seeker), but also in the general emphasis on 'choice' in government discourses. Empowerment overlaps somewhat with activation through the idea of giving citizens the power to choose, but adding the idea of 'voice' in such schemes as Tony Blair's 'Big Conversation'. Responsibilization can be understood as a (perhaps negative) flipside

understanding of empowerment; if people are empowered to make their own decisions, they are also then considered responsible for the results – and given that there is a moral element to the political approach, this can be understood as a constraint on freedom: one is free to act *responsibly*. Finally, abandonment is a way of understanding the government's retreat from what had been seen as obligations under the regime described above as 'expansive' liberal governance. That is, placing the responsibility for, say, not becoming a victim of crime onto individuals, rather than understanding crime as a failure of policing, education and so on, conceived of as responsibilities of government, can be understood as abandoning individuals to their fates.

These themes notably echo the idea of the reflexive, choosing individual described in the work of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991), for example. Cronin (2000) has argued that within contemporary neo-liberal discourse there is no choice but to choose, and thus enact an individual self; and therefore contemporary society can be understood as instituting a regime of 'compulsory individuality'. That is, to *not* choose is to renounce one's status as a 'self' according to the neo-liberal discourse. She approaches this argument with a performative understanding of self. Rather than seeing the choices as reflecting a pre-existing, underlying stable self, she emphasises instead how a choosing, individual self is *constructed* through the very making of these decisions. I argue that certain forms of drinking practices – and ways of understanding these – exclude one from being considered a choosing, autonomous self within this discursive system.

Dean (1999: 168) therefore suggests that as well as neo-liberalism having associated 'technologies of government', such as Public Private Partnerships, it has particular 'technologies of citizenship' to fashion the ideal citizen-self, whereby targeted groups are engaged as 'active and free citizens . . . as agents capable of taking control of our own risks'. Particular groups, according to Dean, might include smokers, abused children, gay men and intravenous drug users. I would add drinkers of alcohol to this list. I argue that the same argument can be applied to recent government campaigns regarding alcohol use.

When the exhortations to become ‘active and free citizens’ (Dean 1999: 168) do not produce the desired outcome, the individual is no longer treated as ‘active and free’ and mechanisms of discipline and sovereignty come into play (see also Burchell 1996). As Foucault (1991d: 102) suggests, it is not that sovereign or disciplinary power cease to be forces in the world of governmentality; rather all three forms coexist with the focus being on their target: some conception of population.¹⁷ Gledhill (2004: 340) suggests that failure to participate in the market is understood to be a *moral* problem that requires action from government. In the context of alcohol policy, ‘binge’ drinkers can be seen as such ‘failing’ citizens. As Watson (2000) argues, the very process of targeting particular perceived groups (such as binge drinkers) serves to construct them – and this construction according to the dominant discourse of autonomous choosing selves is of failed selves in need of help.

A quotation from a youth worker I interviewed gives a flavour of how the foregoing discussions of the responsible, active citizen or self might relate to governance of alcohol. Kate explained to me:

We’re an education service, and that’s informal education (...) We’re interested in empowering young people, giving them the information and supporting them really to make their own decisions, for better or for worse, we hope for better.

This point was echoed in my interview with fellow youth worker Lewis. This reflects precisely the neo-liberal approach whereby the state has clear moral positions (some decisions are considered ‘better’ than others), but the role of the state is seen as educator, passing responsibility to the citizens themselves and offering them information to influence their choices.

Liberalisation?

In terms of attitudes to alcohol, the period of ‘early’ or ‘classical’ liberalism described above could be understood to comprise the 19th century with the Tory

¹⁷ Moreover, the idea of a ‘practice of the self’ guided by a ‘helpful discourse’ is not new – Foucault (1990) noted the importance of these ideas in Greek and Roman society.

support for the licensed trade, the Beer Acts, and the rejection of suggestions made by temperance campaigners, particularly to the Villiers Committee of 1852-4 and The Royal Commission of 1896-8 (see Kneale 1999). This period came to an end with the controls on licensing introduced during the First World War which constituted deliberate government action to limit people's access to alcohol in the hope of reducing drunkenness and thereby increasing productivity for the war effort (Hanson 2008: 191; Van Emden and Humphries 2004). The influence of these controls then continued throughout the twentieth century, a period that could reasonably be understood as one of 'expansive' liberalism, only beginning to be altered through the 1980s, and by informal mechanisms in the 1990s as noted by Hadfield (2005). It is in this context that the 2003 Act should be understood as a form of neo-liberalism, opening up opportunities for consumption of alcohol, but equally trying to transform public attitudes and norms with regard to that consumption, and placing the 'responsibility' for transgression increasingly on the shoulders of individual consumers.

As the 2003 Licensing Act came into force, Tessa Jowell, then secretary of state for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport which was supervising the Act, explained the changes thus:

There is a simple logic to this new law. Adults should be trusted to make their own decisions about when and where they have a night out. But yobbish behaviour will be punished hard and swift (quoted in Plant and Plant 2006: 99).

At first, this statement, and the way in which the 2003 Licensing Act is commonly understood as '24-hour drinking' (e.g. BBC 2005; Codd 2006; Sherman 2008; Wharton 2008), suggest that that the government is pursuing a liberal, almost libertarian, policy on alcohol as citizens are treated as trusted adults. Indeed, one Department of Health document expresses the thinking behind government policy in terms that fit neatly with liberal political theory, with action permitted so long as it does not impinge on others' lives (see Mill 1977; Nicholls 2006):

It is up to individuals to decide whether to drink alcohol and how much they drink. It is not government's role to restrict this, unless drinking

would take place under circumstances that place this individual or others at unreasonable risk (Department of Health 2008: 20).

Similarly, in 2009, the Department for Children, Schools and Families' *Consultation on Children, Young People and Alcohol*, spelled out the government's attitude to alcohol neatly:

Drinking alcohol plays a long-standing, generally positive role in British culture. Ultimately, whether people drink alcohol and how much they drink is down to **individual choice** (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009: 5, emphasis in original).

However, this does not imply that the government sees alcohol regulation as a sphere of the social world where individuals' 'natural' impulses know better than the government's. The explanatory notes accompanying the 2003 Licensing Act noted that there had been four 'key aims' of changes in legislation:

- to reduce crime and disorder;
- to encourage tourism;
- to reduce alcohol misuse; and
- to encourage self-sufficient rural communities

(Office of Public Sector Information 2003)

People's freedom to drink is not mentioned here as a reason in its own right – rather, liberalisation appears to be a means to various ends. Other documents also reveal this approach of governing through norms. A 2005 'consultation' document explained that overall government policy sought 'a fundamental change in attitude' towards alcohol in the UK, 'so that binge and underage drinking are no longer regarded as socially acceptable' (Department for Culture Media and Sport et al. 2005: 3). This was echoed in the 2007 Strategy with the action statement: 'We will challenge the belief that drunkenness and anti-social behaviour are an accepted part of an English drinking culture' (HM Government 2007: 47). Although in some formulations this was understood as a belief that the Act itself would produce this change in culture (e.g. *The Independent* on Sunday 2008), the government has spent much time and money seeking this 'fundamental change in attitude' towards alcohol – precisely the form of active

moulding of the citizen coupled with deregulation described in the formulations of neo-liberalism outlined above. The precise formulation of this ideal citizen is addressed through the following sections.

The sheer number of documents published by the government gives an indication of its concern with alcohol consumption, particularly in the light of the 2003 Act. To take just a selection, there was an 'Interim Analytical Report' on alcohol, produced in 2003 by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (Strategy Unit 2003), which became the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, published the following year (Cabinet Office 2004). A set of proposals called *Drinking Responsibly* was then published jointly by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Home Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Department for Culture Media and Sport et al. 2005). This was in turn followed by an updated 'Strategy' – *Safe, Sensible, Social* (HM Government 2007) – and this has since been subject to review and further consultations (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009; Department of Health 2008; Home Office 2009a).

The government has outlined different models of drinking which illustrate what is considered problematic about alcohol consumption. The 2004 strategy stated that particular drinking 'patterns' were particularly likely to cause problems; namely, 'binge' and 'chronic' drinking (Cabinet Office 2004: 4). In the 2007 strategy this terminology was updated to outline three 'types of drinking': 'binge', 'harmful', and 'sensible' (HM Government 2007: 3). Sensible drinking is the government's ideal, and is defined in terms of quantity of alcohol consumed, with daily and weekly limits specified. Harmful drinking is also defined in terms of quantity drunk, defined as those who regularly drink more than these recommended limits, and linked with social and health problems. In contrast, binge drinking is defined by government as drinking 'too much' (without reference to an amount of units) over a short period of time and becoming drunk. This definition was expressed even more clearly in the 2008

consultation document which described 'those who binge drink' as those who 'drink to get drunk' (Department of Health 2008: 9).¹⁸

The government, then, does not disapprove of alcohol use per se, but rather specific practices related to alcohol, which will be analysed in more detail below. It should be noted that the economic benefits of alcohol are consistently noted in government discussions. The 2004 Strategy, under a section entitled 'Alcohol and its Harms' balanced the apparent costs of 'alcohol-related harms' as being £20bn with the value of the alcoholic drinks market (£30bn) and the one million jobs associated with the industry (Cabinet Office 2004: 9). The same figures were included in the 2007 Strategy, which also asserted:

[T]he development of the evening economy, driven by the alcohol leisure industry, has supported a revival of city centres across England and Wales (HM Government 2007: 30).

The same argument can be seen in the government document *The Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance*, a report from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister which aimed to regenerate city centres and create 'Bologna in Birmingham, Madrid in Manchester' (ODPM 2003). Although the document is at pains to stress that the evening economy need not solely comprise 'binge' drinking, the relaxation of the licensing laws as a result of the 2003 Act is seen as a facilitator of this potential 'renaissance'. This is still at the heart of government policy, as shown by the statement in a recent consultation that 'the economic benefits from the sale of alcohol are considerable' (Department of Health 2008: 2). As noted in the Introduction, the benefits of alcohol retail to the local economy seem to have played a role in the expansion of the industry in Bournemouth, and the overall pattern fits neatly with the shift in mentality of local government from 'municipal socialism' to 'municipal capitalism', outlined by Hobbs *et al.* (2000: 703), whereby the market in alcohol consumption is expanded, and indeed the active consumer of alcohol is seen as a good citizen.

¹⁸ It should be noted that government surveys and statistics, however, frequently measure the prevalence of this 'binge' drinking through proxies such as quantity drunk, or frequency of drunkenness.

Care for the Self

The ideas of the choosing, responsible self outlined above have been influential in approaches to health in the UK. Adkins (2002: 109), for example, notes the prevalence of 'surveillance medicine', whereby the internalised discipline of monitoring and checking oneself for potential illnesses and risk-factors has become part of being a healthy, responsible citizen (see also Nettleton 1997). Bunton (1997) argues that in contemporary formulations, this emphasis on becoming fit and healthy can be understood as a 'moral' obligation, configured as noted above through norms that are internalised amongst the population to achieve the aims of the government.

Osborne (1997: 181) suggests liberal and neo-liberal approaches to health can be contrasted in terms of their aims. A liberal approach will seek to influence health indirectly, imposing 'techniques of security' to shape the environment so that individuals choose healthy options, for example through licensing laws regulating the sale of alcohol. A neo-liberal approach, in contrast, will seek to act directly upon health by creating a set of surrogate values and targets.

The current government approach to alcohol and health can be understood in this way. Alongside the liberalisation of licensing laws and the reluctance to regulate the price of alcohol, for example, as discussed below, the government has spent millions of pounds informing citizens that it is potentially unhealthy to consume more than 3 or 4 units of alcohol a day. It sees its role as being 'to ensure that everyone is able to make informed choices about how much they drink' (HM Government 2007: 47), an aim which underpins the 'Units' public education campaign, launched in May 2008. The print and billboard advertisements showed alcoholic drinks and indicated their unit alcohol content, while the television version put these in everyday settings and interactions, such as a drink after work, a meal out, or watching television at home. For example, wine glasses would have '3' written on the condensation (see Figure 7), a bottle of wine would have '10' written on its label, and a pint of lager would have '3' written in the foam from its 'head' (see Figure 8).

Did you know that a 250ml glass of wine (ABV 12%) contains 3 units of alcohol? And that if women regularly exceed 2–3 units a day it could add up to a serious health problem? Visit nhs.uk/units **Units. They all add up.**



NHS

**ALCOHOL
KNOW YOUR
LIMITS**
SHOULD NOT
REGULARLY EXCEED

<small>MEN</small>	<small>WOMEN</small>
3-4	2-3
<small>UNITS DAILY</small>	<small>UNITS DAILY</small>

Figure 7: 3 Unit Glass of Wine Poster

Available from:

<http://www.alcoholstakeholders.nhs.uk/pdf/Wine%20poster%20final.pdf>

Did you know that a pint of lager (5.2%) contains 3 units of alcohol? And that if men regularly exceed 3–4 units a day it could add up to a serious health problem? Visit nhs.uk/units **Units. They all add up.**



NHS

**ALCOHOL
KNOW YOUR
LIMITS**
SHOULD NOT
REGULARLY EXCEED

<small>MEN</small>	<small>WOMEN</small>
3-4	2-3
<small>UNITS ONLY</small>	<small>UNITS ONLY</small>

Figure 8: 3 Unit Pint of Lager Poster

Available from:

<http://www.alcoholstakeholders.nhs.uk/pdf/Lager%20poster%20final.pdf>

It is worth noting that, as the posters reveal, the 'guidelines' are different for men and women – following the understanding of men's and women's bodies as fundamentally biologically different as mentioned in the Introduction – and also that the drinks themselves are different: white wine for women, lager for men.

The aim and mode of the campaign was clearly educational and targeted at a rational calculating individual, even literally, as the tagline is 'Units: They all add up', implying that responsible drinkers would tot up their units each day and at the end of the week. The logo at the top of the website (NHS and Home Office 2008b) is for 'NHS Choices', enforcing the point that this is a campaign that seeks to alter the choices people make which affect their own health.

This approach to health management can be understood as a form of personal risk management: the risks of consuming alcohol are put forward, and the individual is encouraged to make a rational, responsible decision on the basis of these. This might be linked to Beck's (1992) conception of the 'risk society', but as argued in Chapter 1 I focus on how this is a way of understanding the world, rather than the truth of this analysis. This worldview, I argue, implies a particular model of the ideal risk-managing 'self'. As Petersen (1997: 198) suggests:

Individuals whose conduct is deemed contrary to the pursuit of a 'risk-free' existence are likely to be seen, and to see themselves, as lacking self-control, and as therefore not fulfilling their duties as fully autonomous, responsible citizens.

Frequently, the risks presented directly result from one's actions, as with the long-term health issues discussed above, thus indicating a lack of care for the self. This was clear in the Know Your Limits campaign cited in the Introduction where a young man was shown falling from some scaffolding, seemingly to his death (NHS and Home Office 2007). The apparent attraction of scaffolding for men was echoed on the 'Know Your Limits' website (NHS and Home Office 2007), when a role-playing game forced players to choose whether to be a woman or a man, before outlining quite different choices. Men were seen as

being likely to start a fight or climb some scaffolding, while women were warned against taking unlicensed minicabs home as there was an associated risk of sexual assault.

In this account intoxication is condemned because it distorts the protagonists' reasoning. This is even clearer in the later campaign entitled 'Would You?', which is organised around the overarching theme 'You wouldn't do this sober' (Home Office and NHS 2008: 2). Figure 9, for example, advises drinkers not to jump in rivers. Alcohol, or rather 'binge' drinking, is therefore constructed as dangerous because it damages people's self-control and care of the self.

This requirement to manage one's exposure to risks is also linked to crime. David Garland (1996) has argued that governments' approach to crime has fundamentally changed over the past 30 or so years. Until the 1970s, the state presented itself as having the core aim of eliminating crime, whether this was by effective policing or addressing potential causes of crime such as poverty or inequality. From the 1970s on, Garland detects a change whereby: 'The state's claims in respect of crime control have become more modest and more hesitant' (1996: 447), as high rates of crime have become an accepted 'background' feature of people's lives (1996: 446). The state has come to see its role, he argues, as one of managing criminal opportunities, through encouraging the use of credit cards instead of cash or installing CCTV, for example. In this model, the individual comes to have more and more responsibility for their own safety, being encouraged to set up Neighbourhood Watch schemes for example, and generally to act in a way that minimizes criminal opportunities. The government's role is therefore to seek to change the actions, routines and even mindsets of its citizens (Garland 1996: 454). Garland refers to this as the 'responsibilization strategy' – the citizen becomes responsible for their own safety, rather than it being the duty of the state to provide a safe, even crime-free environment (Garland 1996: 452).

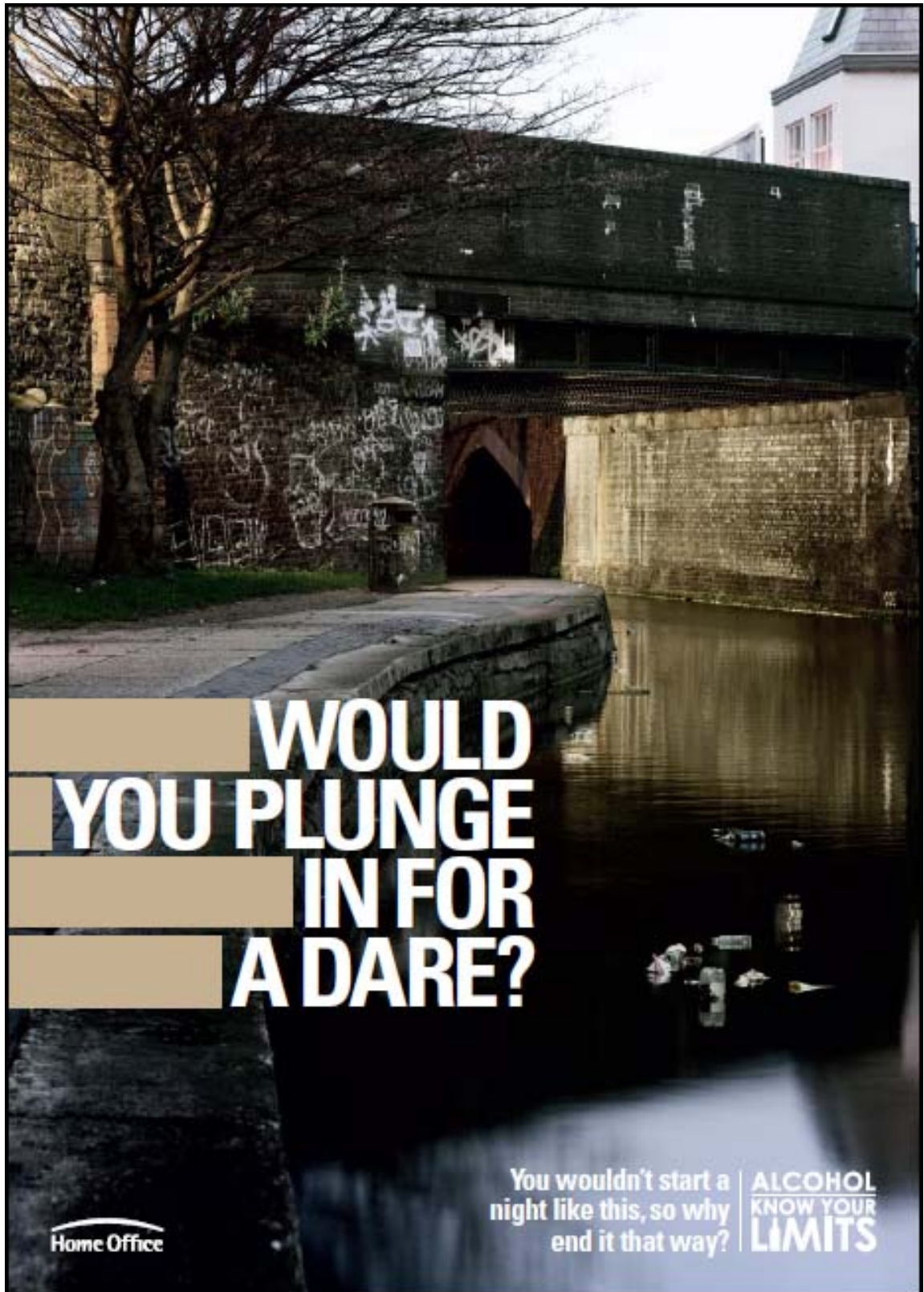


Figure 9: 'Would You?' River Poster

Available from

<http://www.alcoholstakeholders.nhs.uk/pdf/River%20Portrait%20Poster.pdf>

We can see that this approach underlies a number of government and police initiatives regarding crime in the UK. For example, police in Bournemouth distribute the *Safer Dorset Handbook*, which in 2008 asked the reader: 'Help us keep crime down in Bournemouth and Poole' before going on to list tips on 'Personal Safety' (Dorset Police Authority 2008). It advises readers to visit a charity website 'for more information on how to keep yourself and your loved ones safe'. The 2009 edition outlined how one major task of the police was 'educating local businesses, residents and visitors about the simple steps they can take to help prevent these types of crimes [thefts] from occurring' (Dorset Police Authority 2009). The way to keep crime down, it seems, is to ensure that you are not a victim.

This idea of responsabilization regarding being a victim of crime is clearly gendered with regard to alcohol. The 2007 Alcohol Strategy stated that the Know Your Limits campaign 'played on the vulnerability of binge drinkers and emphasised both the physical and criminal consequences that can arise from irresponsible alcohol consumption' (HM Government 2007: 33). For women, this was placed in the context of the observation that: 'Approximately one-third of sexual assaults take place when the victim has consumed alcohol, with perpetrators taking advantage of vulnerability caused by excessive drinking' (HM Government 2007: 42). The document explained that this observation was the reason why the 2006-2007 Know Your Limits campaign aimed to make 'young women aware of how alcohol increases vulnerability to sexual assault' (HM Government 2007: 43). Women are thus encouraged to be responsible for, manage and minimise their risk of being sexually assaulted.

The 'Would You?' television advertisements, discussed in more detail below, are largely similar for men and women (NHS and Home Office 2008a, 2008e), in that they both involve the actors ripping their clothes, damaging their shoes, breaking things in their flat and so on. In contrast, however, other 'Would You?' materials are much clearer about distinguishing between the sexes, with the radio advertisements, for example, talking about sexual activity for women (NHS and Home Office 2008d), and violence and vandalism for men (NHS and Home Office 2008c). The men's radio advertisement references ideas of

masculinity, asking: 'Would you drink a pint of urine to prove that you're a man?' Thus there appears to be a general understanding that the risks for men lie in violence and vandalism, whether as perpetrator or victim, and the risks for women lie primarily in sexual assault.¹⁹

This Would You? campaign includes a 'channel' on the video site YouTube (Directgov 2008), where government-produced videos can be viewed. One of these asks 'Would you get in with a man you've just met', with a hand-held camera of the inside of a car, intended to be from a young woman's point of view. The video finishes with the doors being locked. The point seems to be that the young woman is putting herself at risk (presumably of sexual assault) by getting into the car with the unknown male driver. A poster depicting the same scenario has also been produced (see Figure 10). This echoes a campaign in London run by the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London and the Mayor's office, where it was stated that women risked being raped if they used unlicensed minicabs (see Figure 11).

The same ideas can also be traced locally in Bournemouth, as warnings from police led to the front page headline 'Think when you drink: Boozing women warned after sex crime figures', illustrated by a picture of women on a night out (Roberts 2006). When talking to me about their informal education role, Kate told me that youth workers in Bournemouth had a particular approach for young women who had been drinking, especially in relation to unplanned sexual encounters:

[I]f you're gonna drink where you're gonna drink and never drink on your own, make sure you've got someone who knows what time you're gonna be home, all that sort of stuff. And there's the stuff about making sure that you're safe if you've been drinking. Don't, don't get dragged into the bushes and get pregnant, you know, all that sort of stuff.

¹⁹ There is a striking absence in these education campaigns of the possibility that one of the crimes men might commit when they have drinking is the very rape and sexual assault that women are encouraged to guard against. The perpetrators of such crimes are seen to be unlicensed minicab drivers rather than fellow drinkers.

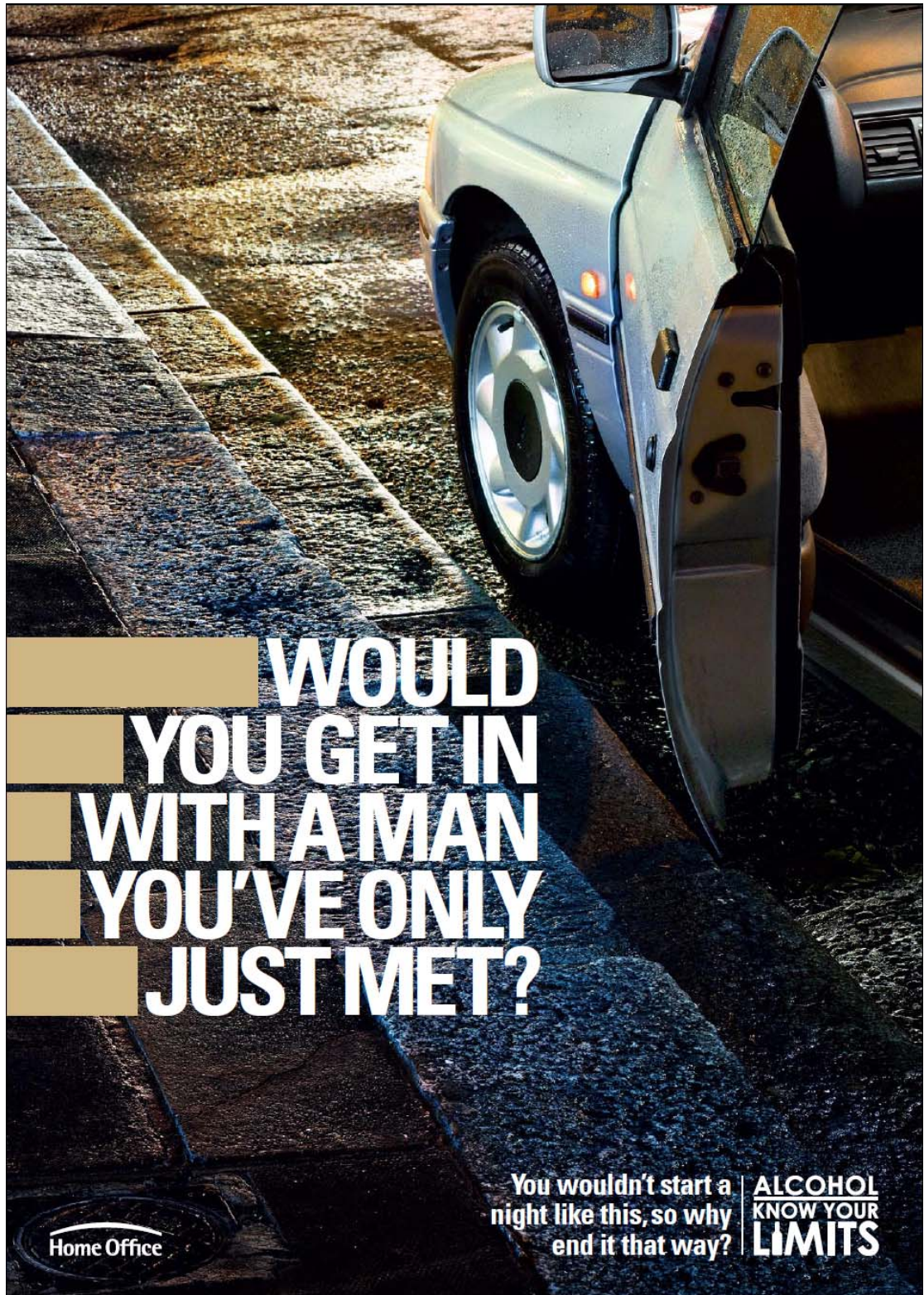


Figure 10: 'Would You?' Risk Poster

Available from

<http://www.alcoholstakeholders.nhs.uk/pdf/Car%20Portrait%20Poster.pdf>



To find out what an illegal minicab could cost you, ask a rape victim.

10 sexual assaults are committed in London every month by illegal minicab drivers.

Book a licensed minicab or black cab. Text HOME to 60835 to get local licensed minicab and taxi numbers sent to your phone.

Know what you're getting into.

Text charged at 25p per enquiry plus standard text message rate. Service not currently available on V9 and 3 mobile networks.

MAYOR OF LONDON supported by heart 106.2 METROPOLITAN POLICE Working together for a safer London Transport for London

Figure 11: TfL Minicab Poster 2005

Available from

http://www.met.police.uk/campaigns/other_campaigns/safer_travel_05.pdf

This idea of gendered risk management is not limited to government and police; it appears to be widespread in popular culture. The same premise lies behind the book *Savvy! The Modern Girl's Guide to Doing It All Without Risking It All*, by Crimewatch presenter Fiona Bruce and Metropolitan Police Officer Jacqui Hames. Bruce explains the need for the book thus: 'They [women in the past] didn't get off their heads in the way they do now. In some ways that's a great freedom but in other ways it brings its own risks' (quoted in Daily Echo 2008).

Campaigns to raise awareness of risk and to inform people of risk-minimisation strategies and media discussions of risk therefore construct a particular (gendered) idea of the responsible drinker. 'Responsible' drinkers will not only avoid behaving 'anti-socially' and causing 'nuisance' to *other* people; they will also take appropriate care of *themselves*. As the 'Would You?' website advises, they will plan how they are going to get home, eat before they drink, and set up strategies whereby they 'look out' for their 'mates' (Home Office and Directgov 2008). They will therefore, as much as possible, remain in control of their environment and actions. This is an interesting contrast with the ideas of losing control and inhibitions that characterise the carnivalesque drinking style discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Elizabeth Stanko (1997) has argued that women's awareness of risk and coping strategies reflect a perception not only of the risk of actual violence, but also the risk of not being seen as 'appropriately feminine'. Women's 'safekeeping', then, as Stanko calls it, is "performative" of respectable femininities' (Stanko 1997: 489). Importantly, Stanko places her argument in the context of Garland's (2001) discussion of changing approaches to crime. To recall the ideas of gender from Chapter 1, understanding 'femininity' as that set of behaviours and understandings which makes one a 'woman', I propose that the government and media approach to women's risk management contributes to the construction of a particular form of responsible, respectable femininity which values safekeeping as Stanko suggests. The dominant understanding of appropriate feminine behaviour is to be responsible, calculating, risk-averse and having strategies to ensure these things are applicable to the night-time

economy. This form of femininity is very closely related to the general idea of the conscious, rational, calculating neo-liberal ideal self, as noted by Moore and Valverde (2000: 526). Moore and Valverde analyse discourses surrounding date rape to suggest that being raped while under the influence of an intoxicating substance – and therefore not fully conscious – is commonly considered to be a deeper violation of a woman's femininity than being raped while conscious, because of notions of selfhood and rationality. I would suggest that the prevalence of such discourses of safekeeping mean that these same issues of selfhood apply regardless of the consequences of one's intoxication; simply to become intoxicated – understood as placing oneself in a state of intoxication – is, according to the dominant discourses discussed in this section, to place doubt over one's respectable femininity.

Embarrassing and Immoral Actions

One perceived problem with 'binge' drinking, defined by the government as drinking to get drunk, is therefore that it interferes with sober calculation and risk-management. However, the government has stated:

There is no direct relationship between the amounts or patterns of consumption and types or levels of harm caused or experienced (Cabinet Office 2004: 12).

It is not simply pharmacological intoxication that is of concern; other factors affect how problematic drinking is considered to be. Some of these factors are understood to be personal to the individual, such as their genes, life experiences, personal circumstances and any history of substance abuse. However, the environment around them is also understood to play a role: 'a crowded and noisy environment can increase the risk of disorderly behaviour' (Cabinet Office 2004: 12). This is understood to indicate a change in norms:

In the culture of drinking to get drunk, which often sets the tone for the night-time economy, the norms differ from usual behaviour – noisy behaviour may be expected and aggressive behaviour tolerated, with drunkenness used as an excuse. Where there is little social control, such behaviour is likely to increase (Cabinet Office 2004: 46).

The problem with 'binge' drinking, as perceived by government, therefore, is not simply quantity drunk, but the way in which this is drunk and the associated behaviour: 'the culture of drinking to get drunk'. The perceived change in norms in the night-time economy is therefore considered a problem – there is concern that 'noisy behaviour' may become more tolerated, even expected. As Chapter 5 illustrates, it is this very change in norms that is sought by many drinkers – rather than noise and disorder being an unfortunate accompaniment to a night out with friends, for some people they are the very reason to go out. The description of a drinking environment quoted above, along with the idea of drinking to get drunk, conveys a picture of a particular style of drinking that values intoxication, is crowded, noisy and 'disorderly'. At this point one might start to think of a club on a Friday or Saturday night: loud music, a busy dancefloor, people dancing and shouting.

I argue that the government's objection to this 'culture' is manifested in moral terms rather than simply crime and risk management. It is difficult to draw a clear line between what constitutes anti-social behaviour, and what simply constitutes a transgression of personal morality, as the example of urinating in the street suggests (see Figure 12). This might be considered 'anti-social' but it is difficult to see who is the direct 'victim' of the possible crime – apart from the pride of the perpetrator. As Garland (2001: 181) suggests, previously 'victimless' crimes are now understood as harming the 'community' or general 'quality of life', and are considered to prefigure far more serious offences.

The television advertisements in the 'Would You?' campaign illustrate this point well. One of these shows a young man preparing to go out (NHS and Home Office 2008e), and the other shows a young woman (NHS and Home Office 2008a). As they get ready, the man urinates on his shoes, spills food on his t-shirt and rips his jacket. The woman gets her skirt wet, smudges her eye make-up and smears vomit in her hair. The advert then asks: 'You wouldn't start a night like this so why end it that way?' The actions are symbolic of being excessive and irresponsible. They are not normal everyday (or daytime) behaviour. However, it is not immediately clear why the government should be concerned with all the actions in the advertisements from a crime and health

perspective. It seems unlikely that having a torn jacket or smudging one's make-up have any relationship with health or crime issues. Even urinating on one's shoes or having a wet skirt are unlikely to cause a health problem, although the fact that one has vomited suggests that one has drunk more alcohol than one's body can cope with. Notably the advertisements themselves, in contrast with the first Know Your Limits campaign, do not make any link with any criminal or unhealthy behaviour; the point is simply that one would not act this way at other times, or if one was sober.²⁰

The aim of the campaign was 'to highlight the possible negative consequences of drinking excessively' (Home Office and NHS 2008: 1). The idea of 'drinking excessively' has important resonances with the idea of carnivalesque drinking discussed in later chapters, which I suggest incorporates notions of class. However, the point I wish to emphasise here is simply how the idea of excess moves beyond risk to oneself and harm or inconvenience to others. The campaign contrasts the effort that may be put into ensuring the desired presentation of oneself at the beginning of the night with how one may appear by the end. The concern as expressed here is one of an altered set of norms, in which normally undesirable personal appearance becomes desirable, or at least tolerable – *normal*. The focus is on the presentation of a responsible, orderly, respectable self as valued in the everyday, sober world. It is not only that the apparent offences in the advertisements have no victim apart from the protagonists themselves, but also that the actions are only 'offences' from a particular moral standpoint. It is almost as if the government is giving advice on how to construct a performative responsible self. Moreover, the framework for this self is self-monitoring and self-discipline. The idea behind the campaign is for individuals to turn their sober eye on themselves – to observe what they look like and do on a night out, and compare this to their usual everyday normative patterns. The perspective employed in the TV advertisement is that of a fly-on-the-wall, which could be compared to the idea of observation of the panopticon – the aim is that this perspective is then internalised and monitors the individual's usual behaviour on nights out.

²⁰ Issues of crime and health are covered in the 'Would You?' poster campaign, however.

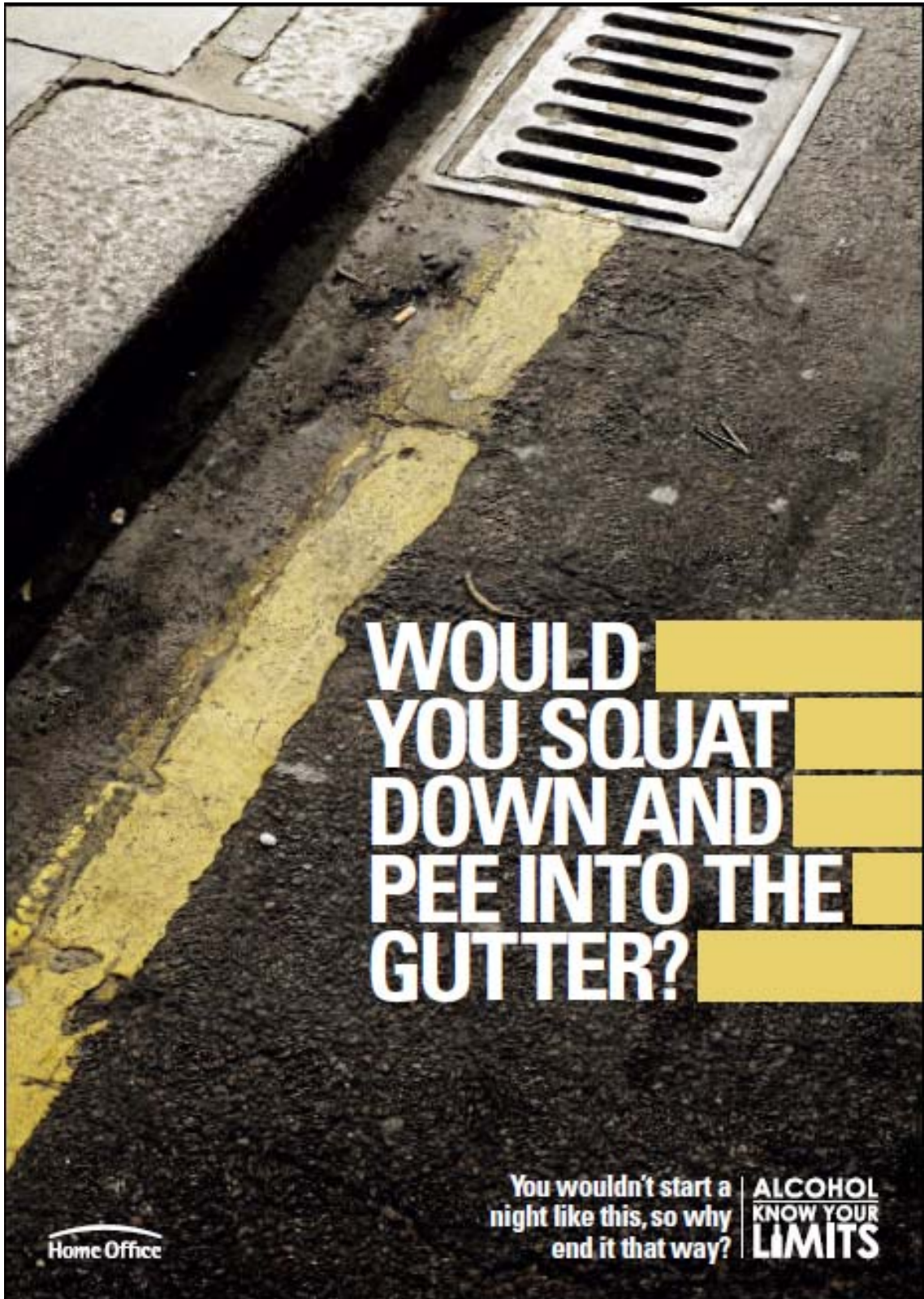


Figure 12: 'Would You?' Gutter Poster

Available from

<http://www.alcoholstakeholders.nhs.uk/pdf/Gutter%20Portrait%20Poster.pdf>

As such, the advertisements can be considered attempts to foster a sense of disgust at certain actions and then mobilise this through (self-)discipline to mould young people's drinking practices. As argued in Chapter 1, disgust can be a powerful way through which class operates in regard to taste and the boundaries of cultural acceptability. In this way, given the historically classed nature of (apparent) respectability and restraint and the way in which class figures in discussions of excess in relation to 'binge' drinking today, it is possible to see such advertisements as part of an attempt to mobilise middle-class disgust, accordingly configuring those who do not meet the requirements of this schema of taste as classed and perhaps even non-citizens.

The same theme is advertised on bar mats in pubs in Blackpool, provided by the local council (see Figure 13 and Figure 14), which make it clear that there is a 'line' which drinkers should not cross, and encourage them to 'keep your fun, good clean fun.' Losing control or acting in too raucous (or public) a way is clearly undesirable.



Figure 13: Blackpool Beer Mat Front



Figure 14: Blackpool Beer Mat Reverse

Griffin *et al.* (2009) suggest that such formulations of ‘problem’ drinking constitute drunken ‘excess’ as a problem of individual will, rather than referring to the conditions that structure the individuals’ choices, such as Licensing laws and price regulations (or lack of them). They argue that this formulation of the self-disciplined self, as well as being gendered as I have demonstrated above, is also classed, because it prioritises a particular formulation of pleasure. Indeed, in this government formulation, intoxication is not understood as pleasurable in itself, but as something to be avoided (see also O’Malley and Valverde 2004). Recalling the ideas of moral and cultural class formation discussed in Chapter 1, the historically classed nature of this pleasure cannot be avoided given the association of the working class with excess (e.g. Skeggs 2004b) and the Kantian aesthetic expressing distance from sensate, ‘facile’ pleasures, particularly as negative reactions to it appear to take the form of disgust, suggesting a classed habitus as discussed in Chapter 1. However, class is also figured more explicitly in discussions of intoxication, excess and pleasure.

Tobias Ellwood, the MP for Bournemouth East constituency, has stated that town centres are 'off-limits' for many people in the evenings because of the culture that means that 'youngsters go out with the express intention of getting drunk' (quoted in Codd 2006). When he expressed his concerns about Bournemouth's night-time economy in a meeting with students from the local university, Ellwood made the distinction between these students, who kept to their 'own groups' and 'own places', and those whom he saw as being at the heart of the problem: those who saw drinking as a 'big thing' in their lives (as 'a release from everyday life') who went out looking like 'Grant Mitchell' – like 'thugs'. These references to the Eastenders character Grant Mitchell, and the idea of the 'thug' clearly link going out to get drunk with the working class – specifically, the figure of the violent, white, working-class man.

The same association can be seen in Tessa Jowell's use of the term 'yobbish' to refer to undesirable behaviour characteristic of 'binge' drinking, quoted above. The term 'job' originates in cockney backslang, where words were reversed, and thus means 'boy'. This form of slang was primarily associated with barrow-boys and thieves (Ayto 2007: 92) – notably not the respectable classes. It has passed in common usage to refer to those who are violent and disorderly, by virtue of the association with the young men of this class.

However, it is revealing that Jowell does not simply refer to 'jobs', but prefers to focus on 'yobbish behaviour'. I suggest that this reveals how behaviour is understood to be classed in these formulations. Garland (2001) has suggested that, in addition to the neo-liberal approach to crime outlined above, whereby potential criminals are envisaged as rational decision-makers, which he calls the 'criminology of the self', there is another criminological approach: the 'criminology of the other'. This latter criminology understands the criminal as someone fundamentally different from normal, responsible individuals, who is without morality and beyond help. Therefore, the conclusion is that they should be excluded from society. Garland uses this formulation to understand societal attitudes to, notably, 'jobs' as well as predators and career criminals. A focus on 'yobbish' behaviour, rather than figure of the 'job' *per se* highlights how

behaviour is not automatically read as performative of a particular sort of 'self' – to behave in a 'yobbish' way is not (necessarily) to *be* a 'job'.

As noted above, when education campaigns and moral exhortations aimed at supposedly active and free citizens fail, the mechanisms of sovereignty and discipline are employed. This discussion echoes the arguments of Hayward and Hobbs (2007), for example, who draw on Bauman's (1992; 1997) ideas of seduction and repression, discussed in Chapter 1. I wish to emphasise how the targets of seduction and repression are constructed quite differently. Thus there are 'powers' to deal with the 'yobbish' behaviour that concerned Jowell. 'Liberalisation' begins to seem an inappropriate word to describe recent trends in alcohol policy in the UK when one considers the initiatives that have accompanied, for example, the 2003 Act. If 24-hour drinking is allowed in Britain, it is certainly within limits: within a designated 'Alcohol Disorder Zone' (ADZ), for example, or within an area under a 'Designated Public Place Order' (DPPO), people can have open containers of alcohol confiscated at the discretion of a police officer, and can be fined for not complying with a request to stop drinking (Department of Health 2008: 5). Bournemouth town centre has been covered by a DPPO since July 2007 (Bournemouth Borough Council 2007a).

In 2008, Andy Burnham, the new culture minister, repeated the understanding of the 2003 Act expressed by Jowell several years earlier by explaining that it had a dual thrust: first, granting 'freedoms' to drinkers, but also offering 'considerable powers' to 'crack down on irresponsible behaviour' (Burnham 2008). Alcohol policy has consistently been understood by this government in terms of 'rights and responsibilities' (Department for Culture Media and Sport et al. 2005: 3) – indeed the 2004 Alcohol Strategy contained a table for individuals, the alcohol industry and government, with columns of 'Responsibilities' and 'What they can expect from others', which surely can be read as some formulation of 'rights' (Cabinet Office 2004: 20-21).

2009 has seen the introduction of 'Drinking Banning Orders' (or 'booze Asbos' as some media discussions have labelled them (BBC 2009f)), whereby an

individual can be banned from particular venues or areas as a result of anti-social behaviour (Home Office 2009b). This latest initiative emphasises how the government's application of discipline and sovereignty is related to ideas of the self. Individuals subjected to one of these Orders are expected to attend (and pay for) a Positive Behaviour Intervention course, which instructs people in how to control themselves and behave in socially-approved ways – a clear form of self-discipline to construct a responsible self.

A telling example of local authority intervention can be seen in Blackpool, which, as noted in Chapter 1, offers an interesting comparison with Bournemouth in terms of its history as a holiday resort with a different approach to alcohol and pleasure. In Blackpool the local council took action to stop Carnage UK from running a 'Dirty Porn Star' themed bar crawl.²¹ The final destination venue claimed to have been warned that it would receive 'unexpected and multiple compliance checks' on the night, and therefore decided it could not go ahead. While a council statement claimed that such checks are routine and licensees would not be warned in advance, the council leader seemed to tell a different story:

[T]his council was elected on a promise to clean up Blackpool and that is what we are doing. We want to encourage families back and while this kind of binge drinking free-for-all is allowed that won't happen (Blackpool Gazette 2008).

He implies that the council did not 'allow' the event to go ahead. This appears to be a moralistic argument, based on a disapproval of the perceived 'free-for-all' nature of 'binge' drinking, as well as, presumably, the theme of the night. The event is condemned on the basis that it is out of control, excessive, and the antithesis of respectable family life. The same themed event went ahead in Bournemouth, but was condemned by the local police, as Inspector Neil MacBean complained that it went against the 'sensible' drinking policy they

²¹ 'Carnage' is a company that organises nights out for students where they visit a number of drinking venues reserved for them only. They pay a single fee to buy a t-shirt which gains them entry to all the relevant clubs, but must pay for all their drinks themselves (see Carnage UK 2008).

sought to encourage, and ‘with a porn star theme and alcohol, there is, of course, the greater risk of sexual assault’ (quoted in Hooper 2008), echoing the discourses of managing risk of being a victim of crime cited above.

In terms of strategies to manage ‘irresponsible’ behaviour, the town of Oldham offers an excellent example of the ways in which discipline and sovereignty are still applied under the current licensing regime, but in particular circumstances. The council there has recently received national media coverage for its introduction of regulatory measures to reduce alcohol-related violence, anti-social behaviour and criminal offences. A minimum price of 75p per unit of alcohol has been set by the council. If a venue wants to sell drinks for less than this, then it must fulfil additional requirements in order to retain its license. These include: funding additional police officers who are permanently stationed in the venue for the course of the offer in question, operating a ‘post office style’ queue whereby customers formally line up in rows delineated by ropes, and allowing each customer to buy only two drinks at a time (BBC 2009a).

There are clear echoes of disciplinary procedures previously introduced or considered by government. During the First World War, ‘treating’ – buying a drink for someone else – was banned as it was felt to increase drunkenness (Hanson 2008: 191), and campaigners in the 19th century felt that the designs of pubs should be reformulated so that licensees could better observe what patrons were doing (and how much they were drinking) (Kneale 1999). Intriguingly, it was common in pubs in the 19th century to have screens between the bar itself and the drinking area, such that the publican physically could not see the patrons (Girouard 1984: 71-2).

According to the Oldham formulation, then, the moment when venues (and drinkers) forfeit their right to ‘freedom’ from state intervention is when they sell alcohol at too low a price. As well as particular *behaviour* being condemned, this is related to a particular category of person. When questioned about the policies in Oldham, a council official gave this explanation:

The price of alcohol became so cheap that it was attracting people who didn't have a lot of money to spend. That type of clientele was attracted to the town and that, we think, led to more issues concerned with their – that overconsumption (BBC 2009a).

In this formulation, those with little money are constructed as more likely to cause trouble. Access to money is thus associated with access to responsibility. This is a familiar echo of longstanding concerns regarding the working classes having 'money in their pockets' (see McRobbie 2009).

This formulation of the problematic or 'failed' citizen is also figured in government discourses, though slightly differently as the unproductive, undisciplined individual. Home Office minister Alan Campbell (2009) has stated, with respect to alcohol pricing policies:

My concern during an economic downturn but indeed at any time is that people go out to work, they work very hard, they come home at the end of the week, you know, they want to go to the pub and have a reasonably priced drink or they want to go to the supermarket and get a bottle of wine to enjoy in the comfort of their own home with their families.

In this formulation those who work hard are seen as deserving a drink, and they should not be penalised for this. That is, their right to drink depends on their having gone out to work and been productive, echoing the themes of rights and responsibilities discussed above.

Both these formulations employ ideas of class, by linking undesirable consumption with a lack of money, and desirable consumption with hard work. This theme is echoed throughout discussions of alcohol pricing policies. Ian Gilmore, president of the Royal College of Physicians and chair of the UK Alcohol Health Alliance, who frequently makes public commentary on government alcohol policy, is reported as being specifically worried about white cider, 'sold very cheaply in cut-price supermarkets such as Lidl and Aldi in deprived areas'. In similar terms, he has stated of a pricing policy: 'There is no point in Waitrose in Godalming doing it and not Lidl in inner-city Liverpool' (quoted in Boseley and Wintour 2008). In this way, the 'problem' of alcohol consumption is again conceived of as being linked to price, and thus associated

with those from low-income or 'deprived' backgrounds. Similarly, Dr Petra Meier (2009), reporting on government-commissioned research on alcohol pricing policies, stated that 'the very cheap booze' is preferred by 'harmful' and 'young' drinkers, thus linking lack of economic capital to irresponsibility.

It is worth noting that Bournemouth has explicitly rejected the Oldham model. The night-time economy coordinator told the press in response to the media coverage of Oldham's measures: 'The most important thing is that Town Watch has continued to police itself very well' (quoted in Daily Echo 2009). This idea of *self* policing, applied to venues as well as individual drinkers, emphasises the town's commitment to neo-liberalism in the face of the more authoritarian proposals. Again, he noted the aim is to tackle 'irresponsible drinking practices', which may be fostered by 'irresponsible' drinks promotions on the part of the licensees. In this way, the idea of partnership, discussed in detail below, is taken up.

In Garland's (2001) 'criminology of the other', the construction of the 'others' is not solely based on the practices they engage in but also the narrative that accompanies them. In terms of drinking, binge drinkers are constructed as those who do not have the desire or ability to manage themselves correctly despite the help offered from government through education on how to create a responsible self. This is a way of understanding certain drinking practices, but not all those who engage in these undesirable practices need be labelled 'binge' drinkers, or considered outside of respectable citizenship; some may be able to construct the impression of a responsible self. As noted in Chapter 1, Bourdieu (1994: 137) points out, however, that performative statements can only be effectively made if they are backed up by the requisite capital.

This idea of economic and cultural capital affecting how one is categorised can also be seen in the judge's decision in a case where a 22-year-old estate agent was sentenced for assault and causing actual bodily harm to a woman in Bournemouth while drunk. The defence claimed that the offender was 'truly ashamed of what he had done' and stated:

He behaved in a way which was totally out of character. He has now changed his behaviour and no longer goes out drinking late at night in Bournemouth. He has never been in trouble with the police before and has learned his lesson (quoted in Magee 2009).

In this way, the offender was presented as a learning individual, capable of work on the self and self-discipline. The incident was presented in such a way that it would not be seen as performative of a violent or irresponsible character, but rather as a temporary aberration. The judge, on sentencing this estate agent, seemed to agree with this account, saying that 'on this occasion you behaved as an idiot', rather than that the man *was* an idiot (quoted in Magee 2009). The presentation of him having 'learned his lesson' implies that he has the ability to impose self-discipline echoing the language of the Positive Behaviour Order, and therefore claiming that this form of government intervention is unnecessary. I argue that this man's successful presentation of himself as a learning, disciplined individual is linked with his stable, well-paid occupation.

In this context it is worth drawing a contrast with the way in which 'anti-social' drinking is constructed. If drunkenness and binge drinking are seen as problems in themselves, they are of even more concern in public places. One of the stated aims of the Home Office Action Plan was 'to reduce public drunkenness, and associated criminal and disorderly behaviour' (quoted in Engineer et al. 2003: 1). The drunkenness itself, not just the associated behaviour, is understood to be a problem. In addition to the powers outlined above such as ADZs and DPPOs, culture minister Andy Burnham (2008) promised initiatives to 'make it easier to disperse anti-social drinkers', an assurance that seems to be supported by new Home Secretary Alan Johnson's call for a renewed focus on anti-social behaviour (quoted in Ford 2009). The problem with the drinking is constructed here not in terms of quantity, health, or even violence, but simply as public and (therefore) 'anti-social'. Importantly, however, these initiatives are not applied to all individuals, but rather are targeted at specific groups, notably those lacking in conventional forms of symbolic capital.

It is instructive to recall here Butler's (2004: 56) discussion of norms when she argues that regulations banning certain practices have a normative, as well as a formal legal, function: those people who engage in such practices are constructed as non-persons. In this case, public drinkers are such constructed as such non-persons or – perhaps more accurately – irresponsible non-citizens.²² The same argument can be applied to those who transgress less formal regulations – simply norms and advice from government – as discussed in relation to gender and class throughout this chapter. This construction of types can be understood as a form of symbolic power, and analogous to the 'criminology of the other' discussed above.

Several off-licences in Boscombe, an area just outside the centre of Bournemouth often associated with drug and alcohol misuse (BH Life 2008), have set up a scheme designed to tackle public drinking by homeless people. This is based on an agreement that they will not sell single cans of alcoholic drinks. The 'neighbourhood manager' stated that the ban 'makes it more difficult for people who are irresponsibly using alcohol if they have to purchase more cans instead of one' (quoted in Pendlebury 2008a). This is counter-intuitive if one understands 'irresponsible' drinking as consuming 'too much' alcohol – the logical thing then would be to ban people from buying much *more* than one can at a time. However, buying a single can suggests two things: first, that one is short of money, and second that one intends to drink it immediately, and therefore in public. The chair of the local Traders Association states plainly: 'They used to have to beg £1 for a can, now they have to beg £4. We know it's already working' (quoted in Pendlebury 2008a). This cannot be about the total quantity drunk, as this would be the same regardless: if 'they' wanted to drink four cans, they would always need £4. The perceived problem, therefore, is so not so much drunkenness as *public* drinking. A local councillor responded to the initiative using a familiar word: 'It's very responsible of those [businesses] who have signed up' (quoted in Pendlebury 2008a). I argue that this form of drinking, regardless of the behaviour associated with it, is

²² For more on this idea of responsibility and citizenship, with particular reference to the construction of such non-persons, see Whiteford (2008).

considered problematic by definition because of the lack of economic and cultural capital of the 'street drinkers'. They would not be considered deserving of a drink according to Alan Campbell's (2009) model quoted above.

In Burnham's formulation of anti-social drinking, requiring dispersal powers, there is an understanding that drinking is particularly 'anti-social' if done in a group. The 'social' in the alcohol strategy *Safe, Sensible, Social* (HM Government 2007) is not therefore social in the sense of being part of a group and interacting with friends, but social as defined by very particular norms. It is 'anti-social', therefore, to be young and in public with one's friends.²³ The idea of anti-social drinking is a concern in Bournemouth too. Council Leader Stephen Macloughlin outlined his approach to licensing thus: 'We want to provide a safe environment for people to enjoy themselves, have fun, but not act anti-socially' (quoted in Codd 2007). In this formulation, we have a clear indication of the ways in which legitimate modes of fun are delineated by various authorities: fun is to be encouraged, so long as it is the right type of fun, and is not anti-social.

These formulations seem to be targeted at underage drinkers – seen as key problems by government – as local drug and youth workers suggested to me (Chloe, Lewis, Ethan, and Daisy). This targeting of young people's public drinking, and indeed that of the 'street drinkers', is facilitated by the nature of Designated Public Place Orders. These do not make it an offence *per se* to be drinking in public. The offence is to not stop drinking when requested by a police officer. Thus, the application of the apparent ban on drinking in public places can be applied according to the discretion of the police force, and can target specific groups or individuals – the 'failed' selves of the neo-liberal model discussed above.

²³ See Squires (2008) for a more detailed analysis of the government's policies on anti-social behaviour.

Gendered and Classed Morality

I have discussed above how the government advertisements construct different ideas of risk and danger for men's and women's drinking on the basis of a conception of different (sexual) bodies, which leads to different conceptions of how to ensure health and safety. I hinted that these differing conceptions are linked to the construction of gendered social norms. Citing Stanko (1997), I noted that women's motivations for presenting and developing 'safekeeping' strategies may depend as much on some notion of appropriate responsible, respectable femininity as on fear of actual sexual assault or other forms of violence. It is this normative environment that means that alcohol-related health issues are treated as more shocking amongst women than men, as in reporting such as the *Daily Mail's* decision to run the headline 'More women than ever are drinking themselves to death' and to focus on the 'ladette' culture rather than the fact also reported that 'men are still more likely to die from drink than women' (Martin 2008).

Thus, as well as media coverage of women's drinking being framed in quantitative, health-oriented terms, many media concerns with young people's drinking – and women's in particular – make little or no reference to issues of health or safety. The term 'ladette' is one of the primary ways in which women who drink are condemned. The television series *Ladette to Lady* describes 'ladettes' as 'a blight on society' (ITV 2008b), not because of the risks they take, but because of their immorality, and specifically their apparent disregard for conventional femininity. The term, which conveys the idea that a woman is behaving in a way that is characteristic of a young man (a 'lad'), is understood as unequivocally negative. The distaste for apparently unfeminine behaviour has been succinctly expressed by the Bournemouth *Daily Echo* headline 'Gender Benders' (Daily Echo 2007). It is this incongruity between the gender of the drinker and their behaviour that is so shocking.²⁴

²⁴ See Day *et al.* (2004) for a fuller discourse analysis of how the media construct ideas of femininity in conflict with drinking practices.

The same incongruity is played upon in a report in *The Sun* newspaper of young women's drinking practices, which includes a set of 'shocking pictures' (Phillips 2008). The descriptions of the women reflect a particular idea of caring, traditional femininity: 'bride-to-be', 'nursery nurse', 'a pretty 18-year-old blonde', and 'about to qualify as a primary school teacher'. That these women are drinking is explicitly contrasted with the idea of women as being the 'fairer' sex. The prompt for the article appears to be the release of statistics that show a rise in the number of women arrested for being drunk and disorderly over the past 5 years. Notably, when Don Shenker from Alcohol Concern was asked for a comment, he explained his position by claiming, 'The trouble is, women's bodies can't handle large amounts of alcohol' (quoted in Phillips 2008). In the context of the article, then, the biological or physical is connected with the social, working to make the norms surrounding women's behaviour seem to naturally follow from apparently objective biological facts. This acceptance of a biological vulnerability underlies even media accounts that challenge the idea that women should be condemned for apparently unfeminine behaviour. As Emine Saner (2008: 14), writing in the G2 supplement of *The Guardian*, put it: 'No amount of equality campaigning will change biology'.

It is important to note that when 'ladette culture' is condemned in the media, the criticisms largely focus on its moral appearance, for example 'drunken loutishness' as in Hickley's (2008) discussion in the *Daily Mail* on the 'ladette' culture, or *Ladette to Lady*'s statement that 'ladettes' are 'giving British women a bad name' (ITV 2008b), rather than concerns for the health or safety of the young women. Looking at how this 'ladette' culture is linked with class, the voiceover on *Ladette to Lady* informs the viewer that 'a lady must never get drunk', implying a self-discipline that reflects a classed and gendered identity (ITV 2008b). Thus the conception of the 'ladette' implies a particular form of femininity. For example, the make-up artist on the *Ladette to Lady* show states:

The difference in style between a lady and a ladette when it comes to make-up application is huge. It has to be done in a discreet way, so that someone looks at you and thinks, 'fresh, clean, pretty, tidy', all the adjectives that you associate with a lady who knows how to look after herself (ITV 2008b).

In this way, attention is focused not only on drinking practices and associated behaviour, but also on appearances, and how these are read as reflecting a particular gender and classed identity based on ideas of respectable (middle-class) femininity familiar from analyses such as those of Skeggs (1997).

Despite the focus on appearances, and the awareness that appearing to be a 'lady' is something that can be more or less conscious as a form of active self-discipline, the discourse of the programme is that the performative identity is somehow *real*. The 'headteacher' explained the aim of the programme as being to change participants' values and 'release the person inside' them (ITV 2008b), which suggests that behaving as a 'lady' is the definition of 'person'-hood. However, not all 'lady'-like behaviour is read as *being* a lady. Hence the 'headteacher' wondered of one girl's behaviour: 'Is this an act, is she just playing a game here?' (ITV 2008b). Here again, as with Jowell's idea of 'yobbish' behaviour, or the estate agent who behaved *like* an idiot, behaviour is not automatically read as indicative of a performative self.

The *Daily Mail's* (2009) coverage of 'Suicide Sunday' again illustrates the general media approach to gender and morality. When picking out issues of morality that seem not to be directly connected with crime, health or safety, it frequently picks up on women's behaviour, as in its disgust at the following incident:

An all-girl line-up from the 'Sidney Sussex Drinking Society' lifted their skirts to reveal the words 'Sidney Slags' spelled out in individual letters on their pants. And so on.

In this way, the norms of conventional femininity are doubly undermined: to raise one's skirt in public is generally considered unfeminine, and then the identity statement revealed in the slogan is performative of an unrespectable sexuality – being a 'slag'. It is worth noting that, given the organisation behind this performance, it can be safely assumed that part of the attraction is the very

subversion of respectable femininity that the *Daily Mail* appears to subscribe to.²⁵

'Everyone's Responsibility'

Just as Osborne (1997: 186) suggests that the idea of responsibility infuses the whole of the health system, with managers and GPs being considered 'responsible', as well as individual citizens, so it is not just drinkers who are constructed as 'responsible' within government discourses surrounding alcohol. The title of this section is the title of a section in the government's most recent Alcohol Strategy (HM Government 2007: 48). The section begins by listing those public bodies that have a role to play in delivering the aims of the strategy, such as the police, government departments, the NHS, local authorities, schools, as well as the alcohol industry and more nebulous organisations such as 'local communities', voluntary organisations and 'the wider business community'. However, the emphasis is quickly shifted to 'individual responsibilities' – which extend to keeping a watch on and trying to influence 'friends, family members and work colleagues'.

This partnership approach has also been taken on by the police, with Inspector Dean O'Connor, commander for Bournemouth Central Section, stating that:

Over the years a number of partnership initiatives have been implemented in Bournemouth town centre, as well as some innovative enforcement and crime prevention measures in a bid to tackle alcohol-related crime. Earlier this year officers started using blue-tooth technology to text safety measures to pub and club goers' mobile phones – to remind those who get drunk that they are more at risk of becoming a victim of crime (Dorset Police Authority 2009: 23).

Here the ideas of partnership and also responsabilization are plain.

In terms of the operation of central government's policies in practice, the theme of partnership is equally evident. The educational approach outlined above

²⁵ See Papagaroufali (1992) for a discussion of how women's enjoyment of drinking sometimes goes beyond drunkenness to the very inhabitation and construction of public space as their own in subversion of normative femininity.

relies on people knowing the alcohol content of what they are drinking, in order to be able to calculate their unit intake and therefore the associated risk. The 2007 Strategy stressed the importance of labelling on alcoholic products indicating unit content, which 'helps consumers to estimate how much they really drink' (HM Government 2007: 43). A consultation on further action in light of the Strategy the following year revealed that labelling of alcoholic products was still an issue of concern:

The Government and the alcohol industry first agreed that alcohol unit content should be included on all alcohol bottles and labels in 1998. In May 2007, DH [The Department of Health] reached a voluntary agreement with the alcohol industry to include alcohol unit content and government guidelines for lower-risk drinking on the majority of labels by the end of 2008. The Government also asked that labels carry a warning on the risks of drinking alcohol while pregnant (Department of Health 2008: 15).

It then went on to reveal that the results of an independent study of labelling had been 'disappointing'. Only 57 percent of alcoholic products contained *any* indication of alcohol unit content, and only 3 percent had all the agreed information displayed. This, 10 years after the industry had agreed to unit labelling. The consequences of this 'disappointing' display are to be 'second-stage monitoring', though 'there is now real doubt' whether the desired changes will come about. In the face of this apparent failure, the document states 'it is only prudent to plan for our next steps', but clarifies this by stating that: 'If necessary, this would mean a further consultation' (Department of Health 2008: 16). After ten years of failure to voluntarily self-regulate according to the government's wishes, the alcohol industry will only be subject to a further 'consultation'. There is very little sense in this document that active regulation is desirable – it is at best a last resort. Moreover, as noted above, the 'Units' phase of the 'Know Your Limits' campaign, which apparently cost £10 million (Hinsliff and Campbell 2008), was introduced at the behest of the alcohol industry in return for implementing the government's plans on labelling, which it has evidently failed to do.

This approach to labelling is illustrative of the government's general approach to alcohol policy for two reasons. Firstly, it confirms that the government is

reluctant to forcibly regulate the alcohol industry, and suggests that it is content to live with the increased availability and affordability of alcohol (BBC 2008e; Warwick-Ching 2008). Secondly, it underlines the importance of the idea of education to the government's approach, since despite the lack of action on labelling by the industry, the government has spent considerable amounts of money on education campaigns. Since government policies do not appear to have limited people's access to alcohol, and yet they do not see alcohol use as universally positive, the government has sought to reduce people's desire to take up particular opportunities, and to deal with the effects of their actions when they do.

As noted, this approach is frequently envisaged as 'a partnership', to tackle alcohol-related issues that are 'everyone's responsibility'. However, as Hackley *et al.* (2008) have argued, at least in its latest incarnation the weight of this partnership seems to fall overwhelmingly on the individual drinker to become 'responsible' and 'sensible' within the existing drinking environment. It is worth recalling the statement from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009: 5) that maintained: 'Ultimately, whether people drink alcohol and how much they drink is down to **individual choice**' (emphasis in original).

As Hanrahan (2006) has noted, although government agencies can attempt governance through concepts such as 'responsibility', they cannot control the life and meaning of these concepts. That is, one agency may have a specific set of characteristics it attributes to the concept 'responsibility', and a set of aims which are to be achieved by people internalising this concept and transforming themselves into 'responsible' citizens, but this may not be how the concept is understood by the people themselves. Here, I take the concept of 'responsibility' and look at how it has been mobilised and redefined by the alcohol industry itself. The analysis presented in Chapter 5 suggests how drinkers themselves negotiate and redefine related concepts outlined in this chapter.

Police, academics and campaigners have all called for tougher regulation of the alcohol industry, with many calls being made for price regulation, particularly

given the widespread belief that supermarkets in particular sell alcohol at below-cost price, as a 'loss-leader' to encourage shoppers into their stores. For example, Peter Fahy, Chief Constable of Cheshire Police, while acknowledging the influence of a broader 'culture' on young people's drinking, has stated that 'international research shows that price and availability [of alcohol] has the greatest impact on consumption' (Fahy 2008). Similarly, Plant and Plant (2006), academics in the field of alcohol studies, have argued that price and licensing controls are the best way to reduce alcohol consumption, a position echoed by medical professionals who called for price regulation in a BMA report published early in 2008 (BBC 2008e). The pressure group Alcohol Concern has also called for action on the price of alcohol (Warwick-Ching 2008), as has government-commissioned research suggesting a minimum price policy for alcohol (Meier 2009). In this way, as noted above, as price is connected to responsibility, so responsibility is linked with notions of wealth and class. However, a commitment to the free market and partnership with the alcohol industry inhibits such action. As Kevin Hawkins from the British Retail Consortium has noted, voluntary action by the supermarkets on alcohol pricing could amount to price-fixing, and so 'would bring the OFT [Office of Fair Trading] down on them like a ton of bricks' (Hawkins 2008). It is even unclear whether action by the government itself would contravene EU legislation safeguarding economic competition (Baumberg and Anderson 2008).

These difficulties have been encountered in practice in Bournemouth. Speaking to bar manager Matthew, I found that when Town Watch tried to introduce price controls, it realised that it could be accused of price-fixing, and thus drafted a 'responsible operating policy' that meant that venues would be censured if it was felt their pricing policy 'encouraged a high volume of drinking or poor behaviour'. The issue of becoming a 'cartel' was clearly one of great concern to the manager, and he noted that a past chair of Town Watch had felt obliged to threaten to resign if an agreement on minimum pricing was passed, in order to dampen the appetite for such a (potentially illegal) move. However, it was clear from my interview that there remained an implicit agreement that £1.50 per drink was the lowest acceptable price. This has come under more pressure given the economic climate of recession. When discussing the outlook for the

next year or so, Matthew noted that one local businessman in the field had foreseen that it would be 'grim'. He explained the situation as follows:

What we don't want to see is a price collapse next year. [WH Mmm] That'd be awful. And I don't think we'll see that. There was a bit of talk at Christmas, there was a bit of corridor cartel talk of 'Anyone thinking about putting their prices up to £2 rather than £1.50?'

In fact to some extent there has been a 'price collapse', as one club has sold drinks for 80p and the JD Wetherspoon's chain has introduced a nationwide offer of selected 99p pints of beer (Pendlebury 2009). The implicit £1.50 agreement is well-known in the area, as shown by the local paper's reporting of the 80p drinks story: 'Pubs and clubs in Bournemouth Town Watch had been voluntarily sticking to a minimum price of £1.50 to discourage binge drinking and anti-social behaviour' (Pendlebury 2008b). Since the emergence of these drinks prices under £1.50, the night-time economy coordinator has told the local press that as far as price is concerned, the focus should be on supermarkets and off-licences, and in terms of on-licenses, 'The responsible operating policy will be coming back stronger than it was before' (quoted in Pendlebury 2009). Indeed, it had already been reported that the Town Watch group would be setting up a new 'strategy group' to ensure that 'irresponsible price promotions' were not undertaken, with the night-time economy coordinator stating that most venue operators in the town 'understand that they need to be promoting responsible drinking' (Reader 2008). Importantly, he has made it clear that although he is concerned that 'irresponsible drinking policies will affect the way the town operates at night' (quoted in Pendlebury 2008b), this is 'not concerned solely with price' (quoted in Pendlebury 2009).

The key term throughout these discussions is 'responsible', which can be found in all government discussion of alcohol policy, particularly in relation to pricing. Culture Secretary Andy Burnham (2008) discussed alcohol pricing and promotions in terms of 'irresponsible' and 'responsible' practices, echoing the language used by Home Secretary David Blunkett in 2004 (quoted in Moss 2008). One of the stated aims of policy resulting from the 2007 Strategy was to encourage 'responsible retailing and promotions' (HM Government 2007).

Government language is echoed by the alcohol industry even when it is being condemned. When the club concerned withdrew its 80p promotion, for example, Bournemouth Borough Council leader Stephen Macloughlin praised it for 'acting responsibly' while police Inspector Neil MacBean expressed his relief that the venue was now 'taking a sensible approach' (Pendlebury 2008b). However, the initial defence of the promotion by Luminar Leisure, which owns the club, was that: 'We're trying to do it in a responsible manner. We're not going to serve anyone who's inebriated.' Thus, they constructed getting drunk as irresponsible, and even further echoed government initiatives by stating: 'The majority of people know their limits' (quoted in Codd 2008b), an apparent echo of the 'Know Your Limits' campaigns (Home Office and Directgov 2008; NHS and Home Office 2007, 2008b).

The alcohol industry has thus largely absorbed the government's discourse of 'responsible' drinking, and reflects this when formulating and discussing policy. The drinks manufacturer Pernod Ricard (2009), for example, has set up a website stating 'We accept responsibility', and trumpeting its *active* membership of the Portman Group as well as supporting the Drinkaware campaign.²⁶ However, following Drinkaware's wider approach (see Drinkaware 2009), the main theme of the website is educational, informing drinkers how *they* can become more 'responsible' with tips such as 'Don't drink on an empty stomach'. Importantly, Pernod links responsibility with ideas of status and price as it outlines the top piece of evidence for its 'responsible' strategy, above the Portman and Drinkaware claims: 'our business strategy of promoting the premium nature of our wine and spirits brands goes a long way to encourage consumers to enjoy a drink responsibly'. Something about the 'premium' nature of the product means that it is likely to be consumed 'responsibly'. Perhaps the price means that people simply cannot afford to drink enough to be considered 'irresponsible', or perhaps there is a broader cultural argument that 'premium'

²⁶ Similar themes can also be found on the Heineken website (<http://www.enjoyheinekenresponsibly.com/>), amongst others.

drinks should not be associated with 'irresponsible' drinking styles. Pernod does not elaborate, preferring to allow the reader to infer their own meanings.

Similar claims regarding the premium, or complex nature of a product and the likelihood of it being consumed 'irresponsibly' can be seen in the response of James Watt, founder of the Brew Dog brewery, to the media furore surrounding the launch of their unusually strong 'Tokyo*' beer:

Mass-market, industrially-brewed lagers are so bland and tasteless that you are seduced into drinking a lot of them. We've been challenging people to drink less alcohol, and educating the palates of drinkers with progressive craft-brewed beers which have an amazing depth of flavour, body and character. The beers made at Brew Dog, including Tokyo*, are providing a cure to binge beer-drinking (quoted in BBC 2009d).

This apparent opposition between complex tastes and 'binge' drinking, echoing the Kantian aesthetic discussed by Bourdieu, was also drawn on by drinkers themselves, as shown in Chapter 5.

The off-licensed trade is also aware of the need to incorporate discourses of responsibility. Andy Bond, CEO of supermarket chain ASDA, announcing that its town centre stores would not sell alcohol between midnight and 6am despite having 24-hour licenses, stated that the aim of the measure was 'to make it harder for people who are already drunk to purchase more alcohol', echoing government fears regarding drunkenness, discussed in detail below. This might be seen as an attempt to stave off the likelihood of legislation on pricing policy, as shown by Bond's statement: 'However, I am not in favour of indiscriminate price rises which would disproportionately hit the vast majority of people who drink sensibly and in moderation' (ASDA 2008). The ideas of 'sensible' and 'responsible' drinking, prominent in government accounts of drinking, are mobilised to characterise the majority of people who buy alcohol from ASDA stores, challenging the possibility of government action using its own language and approach.

The point echoes discourses surrounding alcohol voiced by the highest levels of government. Then Prime Minister Tony Blair introduced the 2004 Strategy by

explaining: 'The aim has been to target alcohol-related harm and its causes without interfering with the pleasure enjoyed by the millions of people who drink responsibly' (Cabinet Office 2004: 2). This 'harm' is considered to be the fault of 'a small minority', a position repeated in the 2007 Strategy, with the 'Ministerial Foreword' referring to the 'significant minority who don't know when to stop drinking' (HM Government 2007: 1). Current Prime Minister Gordon Brown used the same language in response to Chief Medical Officer Liam Donaldson's proposals regarding minimum pricing, confirming that he wanted to 'crack down on binge and underage drinking', but stating: 'We do not want the responsible, sensible majority of moderate drinkers to have to pay more or suffer as a result of the excesses of a small minority' (quoted in BBC 2009c).

Similarly, criticising the increase in duty on alcohol by 6 percent more than inflation in the 2008 budget, Rob Hayward, chief executive of the British Beer and Pub Association which represents alcohol manufacturers and retailers, drew on discourses of responsibility familiar from government documents. He complained that: 'The government is punishing all beer drinkers rather than the minority of drunken hooligans' (quoted in Warwick-Ching 2008). When price policies were put forward more in more concrete terms by the Scottish Government, Fiona Moriarty, director of the Scottish Retail Consortium, explained: 'Irresponsible drinking is not about price or availability yet this is the main focus of the government's approach. We need to develop solutions that educate rather than alienate' (quoted in BBC 2009b). David Poley from the Portman Group responded to the proposals in the same way, and stated that alcohol-related problems were connected with 'the harmful drinking minority' (quoted in BBC 2009b). Tim Howe, chairman-elect of The Wine and Spirit Trade Association, challenged the idea of a minimum price policy on the basis that this would 'significantly disadvantage the vast majority of responsible consumers', while acknowledging that there is 'a section of the community who, you know, are not able to, if you like, contain themselves, and if it's there and they can buy it they will' (Howe 2009). However, in Bournemouth, the chair of Town Watch, representing on-licensed premises, stated plainly: 'Supermarkets which sell alcohol at cost or below cost price are clearly irresponsible' (quoted in Reader 2009a). Without explicitly stated definitions, therefore, it seems that the

term 'responsible', and the idea of distancing one's practices from a 'minority' of 'irresponsible', 'binge' drinkers is important to government and industry.

Non-industry actors can also re-work this concept. Chloe, a drug worker, argued that these dispersal and confiscation powers alter young people's drinking behaviour for the worse, but tried to represent the young people's behaviour in positive terms, by invoking the prized model of drinking 'responsibly':

So what the kids do is ((laughingly)) because they still want a drink, and probably *the majority of the time they want to drink quite responsibly*, yeah their main aim is to get pissed maybe but actually behind that they would quite like to actually enjoy this bottle of vodka that they've just paid £8 for as well. [WH: Mm-mm] Um but they're not permitted to do that by the way in which the policing goes ahead because, um, what, what happens is that they sort of club together, they get as much booze as possible or whatever, go off somewhere. Because the fear of getting caught with the alcohol is so strong they neck it down instantly so, in the hope [WH: Mm] that they're not going to get caught and then, um, they're absolutely, you know pissed as farts – excuse my French – um by [WH: Mm] half past seven, eight o'clock, they don't need to be in 'til half eleven, twelve o'clock or whatever so they've then got these sort of three or four hours, extremely vulnerable, extremely loud – and you know how alcohol effects different people but – you know extremely vulnerable, eh particularly the girls, extremely loud, bored, no money because they've spent it all on alcohol, nothing to do (my emphasis).

Central to Chloe's point is the representation of these young people as *not* seeking to deliberately get 'pissed as farts'; this is the result of the ineffective application of authority.

Conclusion

In sum, then, as argued throughout the chapter, the idea of 'responsible' and 'sensible' drinking are distinguished from 'binge' drinking not solely on the basis of quantity of alcohol consumed, but also by the norms and actions that are associated with particular drinking 'patterns' or styles. The model of anti-social drinking is clearly on the same side as binge drinking. It is public and apparently irritating, and is disapproved of on moral as well as health and criminal grounds. Sensible and responsible drinking are quiet, adhere to usual norms, seem to involve small groups, and are not linked with public places –

they seem to indicate domestic drinking, or drinking with a meal. Binge and anti-social drinking are loud and public, rejecting everyday norms and embracing the idea of intoxication. In a sense, being public and interactive, these might be understood as more 'social' than the former, if a 'carnavalesque' approach to drinking were taken.

These desirable and undesirable types of drinking can be seen as part of the overarching neo-liberal approach to the governance of alcohol in Britain – or at least England and Wales. At the same time as licensing is liberalised, people are encouraged to drink in particular ways and to be responsible for their own safety in the night-time economy. These types of drinking are therefore associated with particular models of the ideal citizen and the 'failed' self. These models are both gendered and classed. They are gendered in the sense that the ideal for men and women is quite different, with women being exhorted to protect themselves from sexual assault, and men to avoid climbing scaffolding. This also has broader moral implications, as the shock of women behaving as 'lads' is related. They are classed in the sense that the figure of the ideal drinker is associated with a particular model of morality relating to pleasure and work. Moreover, from the few cases discussed here, such as the estate agent who assaulted a woman and the 'Suicide Sunday' revellers, class is relevant in determining whether the 'criminology of the other' and its associated methods of sovereignty and discipline will be applied for indiscretions.

At the same time as delineating these models of the ideal drinker and the failed self, however, it should be taken into account that these discourses and figures can be mobilised in various ways by all the relevant actors: government, media, industry and, not least, drinkers themselves. The following chapters outline my analysis of the data collected from participants who were part of what Hadfield (2005) has called the 'night time high street'. As I demonstrate, they employ understandings that in some ways mirror the distinction between responsible drinking and binge drinking expressed in media and government discussions. However, I argue that the government's assumptions fail to capture the distinctions within the night-time economy. While the government has refined its understanding of 'problematic' drinking over time, targeting the over 25 age-

group with the 'Units' campaign, this simply leaves us with a further dichotomy between the 18-24 'binge' drinkers and the over-25s. 'Binge' drinking is the only available model provided by government of the drinking styles of under-25s. It is loud, public, excessive and irrational. In fact, my research suggests that some drinkers see themselves as discerning and adhering to everyday norms, and certainly not excessive, and therefore do not identify with the models of 'binge' drinking presented by the government: those are other people they feel they can identify in the night-time economy. In this way, just as discourses of responsibility and respectability are mobilised by the alcohol industry and the media to defend certain practices when under attack, so some young people too mobilise these discourses in order to make claims to legitimate cultural capital.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter seeks to outline the research methods chosen to explore the study's aims and research questions stated above. The key assumptions behind the research are outlined, which meant I took an epistemological approach that emphasised the importance of the perspective of drinkers themselves. The rationale for an ethnographic approach is explained, and I outline details of the methods employed, which included participant observation, informal interviews and unstructured individual and group interviews, in addition to text-based research on government and media documents. I demonstrate my approach to data analysis through which I developed codes and concepts through an iterative process of moving between data and interpretation, informed by grounded theory. I then account for the ways in which I negotiated issues of ethics, which revolved around the concept of informed consent, and validity, which were based on providing an open account of the research process. Finally, I offer a reflexive account of my own role in the research process. Given the understanding of validity explained in detail below, I argue that all these details together form an audit trail that serves to demonstrate the validity of the data and interpretations presented in this thesis, though in the final analysis readers themselves must make their own assessments.

Overview of Methods Used

I began the study, as outlined in the Introduction, with a clear sense that issues of class and gender strongly structured media and government discussions of young people's alcohol use. As already noted, much of the previous work considering contemporary drinking cultures in the UK has focused on the structures which provide the context for this drinking, such as licensing laws, regulation of breweries and PubCos, and developments regarding illegal drugs. To balance this perspective, I have tried to focus on the discourses employed by young people themselves, and how these rework themes and conceptions prevalent in media and government discussions of alcohol consumption, particularly with respect to gender and class.

Considering the 'night-time high street' (Hadfield 2005) as the location on which government and media discussions of 'binge' drinking focus, I saw an ethnography based on this setting as an appropriate way of studying young people's drinking. Ethnography, put simply, involves participating in a setting in order to understand the ways in which people negotiate their everyday lives. As the research questions cited in the previous chapter showed, the focus of this study was on the descriptions and understandings employed by drinkers themselves – how did they understand their own and others' drinking, and how might such understandings be structured by gender and class? Ethnography enabled me to move beyond an approach that focuses solely on what drinkers say, whether in interviews and focus groups as in some research on such drinking (e.g. de Visser and Smith 2007), or in, for example, online forums (Bogren 2006). I aimed to integrate some understanding of what is done as well as what is said – and also to have access to what is said within drinking settings, since this is part of those settings themselves.

I undertook preliminary observations totalling approximately 27 hours, before conducting 13 sessions of participant observation in four specific venues totally approximately 19 hours. In total I conducted informal interviews with 113 drinkers, which included one taped individual interview of 50 minutes, and three taped group interviews of 35, 54 and 57 minutes, as well as two open-ended surveys conducted via email. It should be noted that the level of involvement from participants varied considerably. Some participated in taped interviews, others had extensive conversations with me while I took notes, and others said only a few words, either on their own, or as part of a larger group where other members did most of the talking.

In terms of professionals, I conducted interviews with the 'club chaplain'²⁷, four youth work professionals, two drug and alcohol professionals, one bar manager, five bar workers, one door supervisor, the two MPs for Bournemouth and the night-time economy coordinator. In addition, when I initially spoke to the night-time economy coordinator and the chair of Town Watch (the bar manager), also

²⁷ I describe this post below.

present were two other venue managers, who were the co-chair and treasurer of the organisation.

I have also tried to keep track of reports of alcohol (mis)use in the media, particularly those articles, reports or programmes that seem to employ notions of gender or class. This has entailed periodic keyword searches on the UK national newspaper websites, as well as the local newspaper for Bournemouth, the *Daily Echo*. The scale of media coverage of alcohol means that I cannot claim that these searches have been exhaustive, and sometimes I have come across television programmes in particular by chance or recommendations from colleagues, rather than any strictly scientific method. However, this study has not sought to be an exhaustive analysis of coverage of young people's drinking in the media; my aim with this research is to provide the context for the practices which young people engage in and to gain an overall impression of the discursive landscape that is the British media in the early 21st century.

In contrast, my approach to government documents and initiatives has been more thorough and complete, as these are more clearly highlighted and released into the public domain. I have therefore considered all the Alcohol Strategies and consultations on these since 2004, as well as looking at government statements regarding the Licensing Act 2003 and its review in 2008. I have also tried to keep track of the various government public education campaigns on television, radio, print and the internet, helped by the website <http://www.alcoholstakeholders.nhs.uk/> which publishes materials for use by health and social care professionals and local authorities.

Theoretical Assumptions

My fundamental assumptions could be traced to a number of approaches in social science, but I here I cite Addison (1992: 112), who states the following five assumptions which underpin the approach that he calls 'grounded hermeneutic research':

1. Participants of research are meaning-giving beings; that is, they give meaning to their actions, and these meanings are important in understanding human behaviour.

2. Meaning is not only that which is verbalized; meaning is expressed in action and practices. To understand human behaviour, it is important to look at everyday practices, not just beliefs about those practices.
3. The meaning-giving process is not entirely free; meanings are made possible by background conditions such as immediate context, social structures, personal histories, shared practices, and language. When something is noticed as missing, wrong, or problematic, illuminating these background conditions can allow change to occur.
4. The meaning and significance of human action is rarely fixed, clear, and unambiguous. Meanings are not limited to preestablished categories. Meaning is being negotiated constantly in ongoing interactions. Meaning changes over time, in different contexts and for different individuals.
5. Interpretation is necessary to understand human action. Truth is not determined by how closely beliefs correspond to some fixed reality. It is never possible to achieve an objective, value-free position from which to evaluate the truth of the matter. Facts are always value-laden, and researchers have values that are reflected in their research projects.

These assumptions fit with the approach to gender and class outlined in Chapter 1. I understand gender and class as ways of understanding sets of actions, which might be called ‘corporeal’ or ‘cultural’ styles, as determined by particular worldviews or structures of thought – a ‘matrix of intelligibility’ as Butler (1999a: 24) put it. In Addison’s terms, therefore, they can be seen as simultaneously both norms that are created through the ‘meaning-giving process’ and part of the constantly changing context that structures that process. Importantly, as noted with reference to Foucault (e.g. 1980b) in the previous chapter, power operates at the level of individuals, and therefore analyses should start at this level, considering how individuals, as ‘meaning-giving beings’ as Addison puts it, negotiate dominant discourses and produce relationships of power.

The broader discursive background to young people’s drinking can also be understood as ‘background conditions’ as Addison put it – hence my discussion of government, media and industry discourses surrounding alcohol and ‘binge’ drinking in Chapter 2. Following the discussion of class, gender and norms or discourses in Chapter 1, drinkers’ perspectives cannot be fully understood without looking at the wider context. As Bourdieu (1989: 18) notes:

No doubt agents do have an active apprehension of the world. No doubt they do construct their vision of the world. But this construction is carried out under structural constraints.

The government and media discourses analysed in Chapter 2 should be understood as part of these 'structural constraints'. This is not to say that individuals simply accept or reject dominant discourses surrounding drinking. They negotiate these and create their own meanings and understandings with these as a background.

The 'meaning-giving process' is therefore crucial to the study of alcohol and drunkenness. As discussed in the previous chapter I follow MacAndrew and Edgerton (1970) in understanding drunken behaviour not as a direct result of the pharmacological properties of alcohol, but as something which is, to some extent, learned and social, as it varies according to the culture which one studies. What people believe alcohol to be – a disinhibitor, a medicine or a social facilitator, for example – affects how they behave when they drink it (Marshall 1979: 456).

The defining method of ethnography is 'participant observation', meaning the practice of observing and thinking about practices while participating in them to some extent. The claim of knowledge of the participant's perspective is therefore effectively made on the basis of living as a participant. This assumes that there is some underlying common humanity (Asad 1986; Atkinson 2006), and therefore people can learn how to live in another society (Spradley 1979: 8). LeCompte and Schensul (1999b: 2) therefore state that 'the researcher is the primary tool for data collection' in ethnography.

However, members of a culture have spent their whole lives learning the 'rules of the game', and this sort of timescale is not available to researchers, even if they adopt the persona of a child or outsider and open themselves up to making obvious public mistakes and being corrected. Researchers therefore usually take short-cuts, by directly asking participants questions, whether this be in informal conversation or formal interviews and focus groups. Hence Fetterman (1998: 37) notes that although participant observation is 'crucial to effective

fieldwork', 'the interview is the ethnographer's most important data gathering technique'. Ethnographers might also use some element of surveying. LeCompte and Schensul (1999b: 18) characterise ethnographers as data 'omnivores'. One could argue that given that a variety of data exists in any culture, and ethnographers seek to study that culture, they should be open to using all types.

It should be noted that Bourdieu (e.g. 1990) has argued that people's everyday lives are not governed by the abstract, rational logic characteristic of science – including social science and ethnography. Instead, he states that action is determined by logical short-cuts and unthinking knowledge – one knows what to do and how without thinking about it. However, social actors still observe the situation they find themselves in, and create meaning and interpretations just like the ethnographer (though perhaps not always as consciously and deliberately). As Spradley (1980: 124) himself points out, all participants are participant-observers in some sense, even if they are unaware of it, and when researchers ask them questions, they can tap into their ethnographic knowledge. Their accounts need not be taken at face value, and the ethnographer's perspective need not be the same as that of the participant. I follow Fetterman (1998: 22) in suggesting that a good ethnography needs some element of both the participant's perspective (as far as this is accessible to someone who is not that participant), which can be called the 'emic' perspective, and the 'etic' perspective of the ethnographer themselves. As Grills (1994: 194) puts it: 'In ethnography's finest moments, the perspective of the analytical voice is co-present with the voice of the member'. I hope I have managed to approach this 'juxtaposition of perspective'.

It should be acknowledged that methodological writing on ethnography, particularly since the 1980s, has emphasised how the 'culture' under consideration only exists as such when it is constructed by the ethnographer as an object for study (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). The idea of a coherent and homogeneous culture that defines a community is thus always an analytical fiction created by the ethnographer to 'make sense' of what they see, hear and feel. All people will experience and understand the

'culture' in their own way; what ethnography can offer is a summation and analysis of these individual experiences and understandings. Coffey (1999) has pointed out that membership of a culture is not simply an either/or equation. Cultures are never homogeneous, and so the idea of a full member is far from clear, as every member may have a different relationship to the 'culture' as a whole.

Even if it were accepted that a 'culture' is potentially fluid, heterogeneous and changeable, and membership is constantly being negotiated, the setting of this research may be understood to be different to the classic setting for ethnography. The same people do not always attend these venues, and the practices I studied were largely concentrated in just a few hours each week. This means that I was not building up long-term relationships with participants, seeing them day after day. The research process was ethnographic, however, following Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995) 'liberal' definition of ethnography as a set of methods and a general approach to research.²⁸ Moreover, as they also note, one can never fully study a 'setting'; the closest attempt one can make is to study a set of cases or phenomena that occur within and make up that setting.

Allowing therefore for a changeable culture with fluid boundaries, the key feature of ethnography becomes not so much clearly defining this culture, but as Denzin (1997: xv) puts it: 'the avowed humanistic commitment to study the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual'. I do not outline a 'binge' drinking culture, or argue that participants subscribed wholeheartedly to the 'culture' or discourses I discuss in later chapters. Participants had their own practices, opinions and beliefs; my claim is that the overarching ethnographic

²⁸ They define this as a broadly qualitative approach, with the key feature of employing participant observation. However, as soon as they introduce this definition, they open it out once again by suggesting that all social researchers can in some sense be considered participant observers since they participate in the lives of those they are studying, to varying degrees (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 1-2).

themes presented in this thesis are helpful for understanding the 'night-time high street'.

However, Silverman (2003) is sceptical about the ability of interview data to tell researchers what happens in the social world – instead, they offer 'cultural stories' *about* the social world. It is, in fact, precisely the 'cultural stories' described by Silverman that I am concerned to analyse. For example, in discussing strategies for managing drunkenness, or their ideas concerning apparently 'responsible' behaviour while drunk, the accounts participants told me may not reflect their thoughts or actions while engaged in such practices, but they do inform me about discursive ideas of responsibility, gender and class in relation to drinking and the night-time economy.

As Ellis and Bochner (2000) have argued, narratives can be seen as a bridge from the past to the present since they involve the telling and understanding of past events in the present, and thus are crucial to the construction of selves – both of the telling participant and the others they refer to. Killingsworth (2006) found that stories of past drinking episodes were very important for women at a mothers' group, since they could illustrate the women's independence and identity as people in their own right – not just as mothers. In a research context more similar to my own, Griffin *et al.* (2008) have noted the importance of 'funny stories' regarding drinking to young people's formation and consolidation of friendships.

As Holstein and Gubrium (1997) outline, where a participant in an interview is conceived of as active, their choice of what to say, what to withhold and so on can be understood as the active construction or presentation of a self – the interview is not simply an occasion to access objective information; it is also an instance of social interaction and presentation of self. Thus, as they put it, 'how' people say things can be as important as 'what' they say.

As well as telling us about identity construction, stories can tell us about the general assumptions within the culture being studied. I consider these 'cultural stories' interesting and helpful for my study because I argue they are still framed

by the discourses and norms that structure society as a whole – the interview room is not outside of society. In this context Fetterman (1998: 60-61) talks about ‘folktales’ giving ethnographers an insight into cultures; stories that are familiar and frequently re-told amongst groups of friends can be considered such folktales. When Ollie talked to me about certain nights being ‘legendary’, he meant this literally – legends, or funny stories, grow up about these nights, because of the unusual events that occur. These funny stories can be understood as ‘peer group resources’, which help cement a ‘community of practice’, as Georgakopolou (2003) puts it, whereby tellings of these stories are not organised in terms of audience and teller, but with all participants co-authoring the story.

I found not only the substance of stories but also the way in which this content was framed and negotiated within the group were revealing about the norms that structure people’s presentations of themselves, both to me and to their friends – presentations that can be understood as the construction of (classed and gendered) cultural or corporeal styles. The group interviews I conducted were comprised of friends or colleagues who had decided to participate in the research together. As Callaghan (2005: 7.5)²⁹ argues, when participants know each other their discussions can be understood as ‘a collective expression, which shapes and is shaped by, the contribution of individual members, but which draws reference from beyond the lifespan of the group itself’.

In sum, then, this study adds something to survey research, which seeks to outline quantities and types of drinks consumed, and the structural analyses considered in Chapter 1. Moreover, by looking at the broader lives of participants, or at least their drinking practices as a whole, the research puts discourse analyses – such as that conducted by Gough and Edwards (1998), who consider young men’s talk while drinking beer and eating a take-away meal at one of their houses, and Kaminer and Dixon (1995), who look at ‘repertoires’ used by men when talking about their drinking practices – in their wider context.

²⁹ This article is referenced using paragraph numbers, as requested in its HTML publication form.

This study is based both on young people's talk while drinking and their talk about drinking. At its core is the assumption that people's beliefs regarding alcohol are a significant part of their drinking practices, and that these beliefs are linked to other values systems and worldviews that can tell us something about a society, its subgroups and particular individuals, depending on the level of focus, and the modes of distinction that operate (Mandelbaum 1979; McDonald 1994).

Methods, Process and Development

The first stage in my fieldwork was to get in touch with potential 'gatekeepers'. I therefore contacted the 'club chaplain', a youth worker employed by a number of churches in Bournemouth town centre to offer help to drinkers on the streets, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights. I had a meeting with him, in which he gave an account of his job and the key regulatory and corporate figures in the town, and he later drove me around the town centre pointing out most of the drinking venues. Through him I was able to contact the chair of the 'Town Watch' organisation – a trade association of the licensed venues in the town centre which seeks to impose some self-regulation on its members – and the night-time economy coordinator. I discussed my research with these officials, and how I might proceed with their approval, and we negotiated my access to venues in order to recruit participants. I also gained their provisional consent to be interviewed by me at a later date.

Initial Observations

I began my fieldwork in the town centre itself with a series of observations of drinking venues. I would go to a venue, accompanied by a friend, at around 8pm or 9pm and stay for approximately 2 hours, simply sitting or standing as was appropriate (and possible), talking to my friend and observing the setting. The aim of these observations was to get a general sense of what venues there were in the town and how they might differ in my eyes. I completed 11 sessions of observation, covering 13 venues and totalling 27 hours. These observations also allowed me to assess which venues I would approach in order to secure their consent for me to recruit participants on their premises.

In some senses this initial stage could be considered 'descriptive observation' (Angrosino and de Perez 2000). Emerson *et al.* (2001) distinguish between different stages of writing fieldnotes, moving from 'mental notes' or 'headnotes', onto 'jotted notes', which are then being more formally written up into descriptive fieldnotes. They also distinguish between different levels of involvement of the researcher in the fieldnotes, going from apparently objective description to an experiential account of being in the setting. In my case, for these provisional observations I bypassed the stage of 'jotted notes', moving straight to writing descriptive fieldnotes in full sentences when I returned home having made 'headnotes' while in the venues. As far as the content of these notes is concerned, I would work at a variety of levels as delineated by Emerson *et al.* I would note the 'objective' positions, type and sizes of the bar, any tables and chairs, the range of food and drink on offer and their approximate prices, and so on. I would also relate my experiences and feelings in the venue, particularly where I was talking to other drinkers. In addition, I would hope that someone reading my fieldnotes would be able to gain a sense of what it was like to be in that venue. However, as I was not fully immersed in the setting, and by definition was not drinking with the same approach as the other patrons (I was there for research, not pleasure, whatever that might imply), these would not be the experiences or impressions of a drinker.

When writing up my fieldnotes, I used headings similar to those employed by Lindsay (2006) and her researchers:

- Outside Environment – incorporating information about the venue's location in the town, the sort of transport links nearby and the appearance of the venue from the street.
- Background (not on Lindsay's list) – information about the company that may own the venue, and whether it has been under different ownership or name in the recent past
- Inside Environment – observations of the furniture, arrangement of space in the venue and general décor, as well as audio and visual entertainment

- Patron Characteristics – this would include my descriptions of the clothes patrons were wearing, the size and mix of the groups they were in, what activities they were engaged in, their distribution through the venue, and any changes noted over the period of observation
- Drinking Styles – what drinks were available, and the approximate pricings, as well as what I could observe patrons drinking
- Information on Bar Service and Management Style – this would include information about whether table service was offered, what sort of uniforms the staff were wearing, if any, and other general observations about the staff, whether there were any door staff, and what types of glasses were used (for example, were they plastic or ‘real’ glass)
- Personal Impressions of the Venue (an amalgam of more disparate discussion in Lindsay’s format) – in this section I would reflect on my personal feelings about the venue: whether I felt comfortable and whether I might come to the venue myself, for example, as well as speculations about what the venue might be like at other times, based on personal opinions and experience

These headings would also be in my mind when I conducted the observations, to try to ensure that I was thinking about all the different aspects of the venue.

Participant Observation

Having conducted these exploratory observations, I chose to approach four venues where I could engage participants in conversation. I chose this method of recruitment in order to avoid being tied to either specific venues or specific groups of people such as sports clubs or university students. Some previous studies have been based on samples of university students, chosen simply for ease of access (e.g. Gill *et al.* 2007; Moss *et al.* 2009). However, as Ritchie *et al.* (2009) have pointed out, students are in different circumstances to those of the same age who are not in higher education, and these only apply for a bounded period, after which they are graduates when they are likely to have quite different practices and understandings again. I also suspected that recruiting through newspaper advertisements would limit my sample in terms of occupational background and class more generally (see Babor *et al.* 1980). As

noted in the Introduction I did not want to conduct an ethnography of a particular venue due to the apparently fluid nature of young people's drinking practices, and because I sought to consider how variety and distinction might be detected between venues.

All four venues I chose happened to be owned by larger companies, as almost all the drinking venues in Bournemouth town centre are, but only one had a widely recognised chain name. All served food at some point during the week, and stayed open beyond 11pm on some days of the week. In this way, they could all be understood as characteristic of the 'hybrid' venues noted by Chatterton and Hollands (2001) and Hadfield (2005), and might therefore be understood as being very similar. However, this apparent similarity is a noted feature of the 'night-time high street', and having conducted observations I felt that these venues were oriented quite differently in terms of music, lighting, décor and arrangement of space, while the patrons were of slightly different age profiles and different appearance. I was unsure what these differences might imply, but I hoped to talk to a variety of people and felt confident that I could do so in this selection of venues. I therefore approached the managers of these venues and asked if I could recruit participants on their premises, and all agreed, with the conditions that they would not have to do anything differently, and I would not disturb their customers or the general atmosphere. In one case the manager was extremely helpful and encouraged her staff to talk to me, which most did, though the venue closed down before I was able to interview the manager herself.

The venues I chose might be understood to be places that people tended to go to before going on to clubs or other venues. Accordingly, it is possible that I missed people who only come into the centre of town to go to a 'destination venue' – their final location – particularly given that my visits to these venues were usually before 11pm, when people tend to move on to clubs. However, I would argue that in one sense this was inevitable, as it is impractical to try to recruit or talk to participants in clubs at any length, and so recruitment, if not carried out in what might be called 'pre-club' venues, would have to be tied to some other institution such as a sports or community club, school or university,

which I wanted to avoid. Moreover, I feel the decision can be defended by the variety of participants. If one were to think about who might not come into town to drink before 11pm, one would imagine this would be those for whom the fact that it is cheaper to drink alcohol at home is important – and therefore the unemployed, low-paid and students. I spoke to a number of low-paid workers and students, and so I do not feel these people were excluded from the study. I did speak to more drinkers who might be seen as middle-class, and no-one who told me they were unemployed, but as other researchers have pointed out, those on particularly low incomes are unavoidably excluded from the night-time high street, and thus from this study as a whole (Chatterton and Hollands 2001: 4).

My method of recruitment broadly followed that used by Lindsay (2006). I would approach drinkers, briefly explain who I was and the purposes and methods of the research, and encourage them to email, SMS, or phone me to confirm their interest in participating, handing out flyers which had my contact details as well as details of the research printed on them, including some examples of the questions I might ask.³⁰

On visiting the venues, I tried to remain open to approaching all patrons, as they were all part of the culture of the night-time high street. Some participants told me that they were worried they were ‘too old’ to participate, but I felt that if people were out in the venues, and willing to participate then they would make valid participants. Nevertheless, given the focus of the media and government campaigns, I maintained an eagerness to talk to those under 35. As noted above, this study aims to develop models of gender and class to understand drinking practices, and so to initially sample by these categories, ascribing identities to potential participants in order to select them, would be inappropriate (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 50; Silverman 2006: 79).

As I conducted these observations it became clear that people were reluctant to give up their free time to participate in the research following the initial meeting.

³⁰ This flyer is attached as Appendix 3.

I had only received two emails offering participation, and one of these potential participants then dropped out, explaining that she was having family problems and would be moving away from the area. This is comparable with Lindsay's (2006) research, where 90 hours of observation in 10 venues in Melbourne, using a number of researchers, yielded just 35 interview participants. Griffin *et al.* (2008: 34-5) also found that they were unable to conduct participant observation to the extent they had initially envisaged due in part to the ways in which drinkers constructed the public space they occupied as private space, which they were reluctant to allow a stranger to inhabit.

I therefore began to think about different ways of generating data. During these initial attempts to recruit participants some had offered to talk to me at the time. In one case I had agreed to speak to a group of men, one of whom was keen to talk to me about the methodology of the project. I therefore began to tell drinkers they could speak to me there and then if they wanted, as well as continuing to offer the possibility of meeting some other time. At this point, if they agreed, I would ask them if they would mind me taking notes of our conversation.

At first I had been reluctant to take notes, as I was concerned that this would harm rapport. However, when I therefore I simply sat or stood listening to participants talk, reluctant to take out my notebook, some participants expressed concern – how was I going to remember everything they were telling me? In this sense, given that my ethical approach rests on keeping participants well informed and trying to represent them as fairly as possible, it seemed only sensible to take notes having assured participants that they would remain anonymous in any reports I might write up. These were the equivalent of the 'head' or 'jotted' notes and were transformed into fuller fieldnotes when I returned home at the end of the night.

Individual and Group Interviews

When conducting individual and group interviews, I did not use a formal interview schedule, but had a list of topics that I wanted to cover if possible during the allocated time. I did not want to direct the information I received from

participants by asking prescriptive questions; I wanted them to tell me how they saw their own drinking and the night-time economy in Bournemouth generally, and then to pick up and probe on points that I thought were important. In this way I hoped to be open to incidents and issues that might not have seemed relevant initially. It should be noted that, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue, it is impossible to remove the 'researcher effect' from the process of research completely; what I have sought to do is allow myself to be guided to some extent by participants' concerns and beliefs, and to understand my influence on their statement of these.

The recorded interviews with drinkers were conducted on largely 'neutral' territory – a café, or in two cases a room booked on the university campus. Although the university campus might seem to be an institutional setting likely to be associated with me, the researcher, it was suggested by the participants themselves. The first group attended sessions at the university gym one night a week, and therefore wanted to meet directly after this on the university site, while the others were students, and so could meet me there conveniently during a break between their lectures. With the professionals, I met them at their places of work, as this was most convenient for them. As regards the MPs, one came to speak at the university, and I attended this meeting and was able to ask him a question about drinking in Bournemouth, while I conducted a more lengthy informal interview with the other at a private meeting as part of his regular constituency 'surgery'.

Wherever possible I sought to find out participants' ages, occupations and educational backgrounds, working from the same point as Skeggs (1997: 79) when she began her research that as much information as possible might help me make sense of participants' class positions. However, as Sarah Thornton (1995: 90-91) has noted, asking about work can be seen as anathema amongst clubbers, leading to an immediate loss of trust and rapport. Such questions were sometimes possible for me, if I worked them naturally into conversation – indeed many groups of drinkers had come out after working together during the day, and so it seemed appropriate to ask about their jobs. Nevertheless, I felt that it was inappropriate for me to ask about family background in these

informal interviews, though this was possible in the more formal setting of the audio-recorded interviews and focus groups. The information I collected is covered in detail in Chapter 4.

Data Analysis

At its simplest level, analysis begins with the search for, as Fetterman (1998: 96) puts it, 'patterns of thought and behaviour'. It is an attempt to pull out salient aspects of the data and make connections between them to form some overall arguments about the setting being studied. My data analysis began simultaneously with its collection. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) advise that researchers compare data from the beginning of collection, and I did so, thinking about how one drinker's account of their practices might be at variance (or in agreement) with another's. I noted down any analytic insights in a research diary, which I would return to time and again, influencing the developments I made during coding, discussed below.

As I did this, I had some ideas of potential differences and similarities in the data, though these were not concrete or necessarily coherent. My participants did not use ostensibly 'classed' or 'gendered' terms for the phenomena I was concerned with – types of people, activities, places and so on – and where the connection with class or gender could be made they had unclear or ambivalent meanings. I suggest that this is symptomatic of the nature of class and gender – as Skeggs (2005: 965) has argued, class is often signalled 'through moral euphemism, rarely naming it directly, hence relying on the process of interpretation to do the work of association'. Gender can be understood in the same way; the whole way in which these norms operate is often ambivalent and imprecise. When participants (more or less consciously) signalled class through euphemism, or gender indirectly, there was an assumption that as a member of the same culture I could do the work of association myself (or at least their own friends who were listening could). My analysis lays bare how I understand these euphemisms, such as 'chav' and 'townie', as well as looking at the more indirect workings of class and gender.

I found grounded theory approaches helpful in trying to clarify and understand these euphemisms and indirect associations. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001: 171) suggest that the grounded theory approach need not be adopted wholesale, and particular points can be taken on board if they offer useful insights and help. Charmaz (2006: 46) argues that a grounded theory approach to coding should comprise at least two main stages. The first is to code by word, line, or some other segment of data, and the second is to use the most 'significant' or 'frequent' codes to 'sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data'. Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 49), drawing on grounded theory approaches, see even this initial coding as something more than indexing and searching for particular terms; it is a way of asking questions of the data.

As Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 46) and LeCompte and Schensul (1999a: 3-5)³¹ emphasise, coding itself can be distinguished from interpretation. They see coding as often being a strategy for describing or organising data. Coding is an act of interpretation in the sense that it organises the data according to the researcher's interests and prejudices but it remains the researcher's *description* of what has happened in the setting rather than an *interpretation* whereby connections are made between the different events, actions and claims made by participants that the researcher has encountered.

In this way I began a process approximating line-by-line coding with my research questions in mind, particularly 'How are these drinking practices described and understood by men and women of different socio-economic backgrounds'. This meant a focus quite simply on what participants had said about drinking, summarizing their arguments, comments, and actions. In this way, I felt I managed to capture more sense of participants' worldviews, and also keep some context for their statements.

³¹ LeCompte and Schensul phrase this as 'analysis' and 'interpretation', where they see analysis as 'crunching' the data to make it more manageable, before making connections between the 'crunched' units. I use the term analysis to cover the whole process of coding, interpretation and writing up.

As discussed in more detail in Chapters 1 and 5, the themes of the carnivalesque and the everyday helped me make sense of the data as I conducted this initial analysis. While some accounts stressed the otherworldliness – or unusualness – of their nights out, others centred on sitting and talking, largely adhering to everyday norms of social interaction in public space. As Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) have argued, the researcher cannot and should not go into the process of analysis with an ‘empty’ head – simply an ‘open’ mind. To the sensitizing concepts which framed my work – class and gender – I therefore added more analytical or metaphorical conceptual aids to offer a framework for my analysis. The idea of the carnival had been mentioned in some previous work on contemporary British drinking cultures – notably by Hadfield (2005) and the rejection of this idea by Hayward and Hobbs (2007) – and this led me to look at more literature on the idea of the carnival, particularly that of Bakhtin (1984a; 1984b), Stallybrass and White (1986), and Featherstone (1982; 1991). In addition, some participants I spoke to used the adjective ‘different’ again and again when describing their practices. This seemed to imply some mode of distinction as participants sought to be ‘different’ in comparison with someone or something else. I therefore looked at research on identity and distinction, and the idea of a mainstream in youth culture. This meant thinking again about Bourdieu’s (1984) work on distinction, and various work on sub-cultures and identity (e.g. Hebdige 1988; Hesmondhalgh 2005; McCulloch *et al.* 2006; Pilkington 2004; Thornton 1995).

With these ideas in mind, I began to think about what might be the ‘significant’ codes, as Charmaz (2006) puts it. In doing this, I merged and changed some of the codes I had created in the initial stage, beginning to move upwards through analysis, thinking about how codes could be grouped together to form broader concepts. At this stage I went back to the stage of ‘initial’ coding to try to test these broader conceptual ideas and understand how they might work. I coded on the basis of form as well as content, as recommended by Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 44-45). Thus, I coded certain passages as ‘Funny Stories’, when they were also coded as ‘Unusual Behaviour’, to denote that they were *accounts* of previous behaviour constructed for a particular occasion – when

talking to me, the researcher. Next, I tried to group these codes under larger titles, and retained the conceptions of the carnivalesque and the everyday, as I felt these were good ways of conveying some sense of a spectrum along which going out could be understood.

In doing this, I found particular codes (i.e. practices, comments or claims) that could not be easily grouped into either of these overarching categories. For example, some people might engage in practices that would be coded as 'Unusual Behaviour' or 'Funny Stories', but also employ strategies to try to avoid classification as part of a mainstream of 'binge' drinkers. In trying to understand these inconsistencies in my framework I began to move from the individual statements or observations that had been coded in small segments back to the broader context of these snippets: who said this, when, where were they, who were they with? This can be seen as a form of the 'What happens if...' question Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 50) recommend researchers ask of their data, even if the question was not asked of the participant at the time. It also follows Addison (1992: 112), quoted above, when he states that 'background conditions' can help to illuminate phenomena that appear 'wrong' or 'problematic' according to the researcher's initial approach. Thus, I was effectively asking, given my major themes, what happens if: a man or a woman gets drunk, or a person of a different 'class' gets drunk? At this point, I thought again about how theory might apply, looking at work on gender and the carnivalesque (e.g. Russo 1997), and revisiting ideas on the carnivalesque and class particularly in Stallybrass and White (1986), and those concerning consumption, distinction and class (e.g. Bourdieu 1984; Savage *et al.* 2001; Skeggs 2004b; Wynne 1990).

Having been constantly reviewing government documents and initiatives over the course of my research, I also considered how these ideas of the carnivalesque and the distinctive or everyday might be connected to the categories used in government discussions such as 'responsible' as opposed to 'irresponsible', and ideas of 'binge' drinking. I was also particularly interested in the ideas of personal responsibility that come through government and police documents, and how these might relate to the 'limitations' that I found some

participants put (or said they put) on their drinking episodes that might be labelled carnivalesque. This led me to theories of neo-liberal criminology, and 'responsibilization' (e.g. Garland 1996, 2001; O'Malley 1996; Rose 1996). I was also interested in considering how this related in particular to gender, as it seemed to be women who had taken on board this responsibilization to the greatest extent, which led me to the work of Stanko (e.g. 1997) and, given that the theories of responsibilization owe much to Foucault, I looked at how his ideas might be modified to incorporate some idea of gender (e.g. Bartky 1997). These discussions led me to broader analyses of governmentality and neo-liberalism such as Dean (1999), Rose (1996), Clarke (2004), as well as discussions of specific applications of these ideas, such as in the field of public health (e.g. Petersen 1997). In this way, my analysis can be understood in Sharkey and Larsen's (2005: 179) terms as 'a dialectic movement between data and theory, being shaped and reshaped as knowledge expands and deepens'.

Ethics

Murphy and Dingwall (2001) argue that there are two ways to assess the ethics of research. First, one can consider the results of a piece of research and their effects on participants (the *consequentialist* approach) and second, one can reflect on what are considered inherent rights of participants (the *deontological* approach), which therefore focuses on the process of research more than its outcomes.

Murphy and Dingwall (2001) cite Beauchamp *et al.* in outlining four principles that should underlie ethical research. First, *non-maleficence*, meaning that researchers should avoid harming participants and, second, *beneficence*, meaning that the research should produce some identifiable benefit. Angrosino and De Perez (2000: 693) balance the same fundamental principles by arguing that the means of study should not generate any more harm than is necessary to achieve the value that the research can create. Therefore, one should seek the least harmful methods possible for a given purpose, and be careful that this choice will not undermine the value thus created when viewed by others.

These are both consequentialist principles. The consequentialist approach can be difficult to assess because in some senses the consequences of research cannot be fully anticipated – for example when a report is interpreted by others in a particular way to the detriment of participants, despite the researcher's best intentions. Moreover, if the research has any purpose beyond the reproduction of participant perspectives (and in some sense all research is the interpretation of the researcher), its results and conclusions and even the process itself may change participants' outlook, and potentially lead to a challenge to the status quo. Whether such a challenge is desirable is a political or moral judgement – but this should not lead researchers to abdicate their task of interpretation.

In terms of beneficence, I argue that there are benefits to this research, as outlined through the rationale for the study in the introduction, and through the findings and conclusions demonstrated later in the thesis. Non-maleficence is a more complicated standard. However, in brief, my research is highly unlikely to have harmed any participants, as for the most part they were engaged in conversations with friends covering topics they had clearly discussed previously, and were comfortable debating. Where participants seemed to be uncomfortable, this seemed to bear little relation to my presence. In some cases participants did not agree, and there was heated debate in one group regarding the merits of a certain club and whether Bournemouth needed a particular type of venue, but this was a discussion which could well have occurred without my intervention – indeed I had not directly prompted this topic of conversation. Some participants did mention topics or events that seemed to have been traumatic. In these cases I made individual judgements as to whether to ask further questions. For example, Eve told me emphatically not to go to a particular club, and when I asked why she simply stated that she had had her drink 'spiked' there. I decided not to press her on this incident, as it seemed inappropriate in a reasonably rowdy group, particularly on her birthday, as it might have compromised her privacy and enjoyment of her night. Of course, it is possible that by simply accepting this statement and not probing further, she felt that I was dismissing her story, and I cannot know this – in the final analysis I had to take these decisions according to my own judgement. Hannah was happy to tell me stories of her being drunk which she found

embarrassing in some ways yet also funny, but there was one particular story that she and Megan (who was the other participant in the group interview) knew, but refused to tell me. They stated quite clearly that they 'never' wanted to talk about this incident again, and sensing that they felt strongly about this, I did not press them to reveal details.

The third and fourth principles outlined by Murphy and Dingwall (2001) are from a deontological perspective. One relates to the *autonomy* of participants; the other to some idea of *justice*. The autonomy principle states that the values and decisions of participants should be respected. The concept of informed consent helps to ensure that this principle is upheld. This implies that participants are fully aware of the project and what it will entail before agreeing to participate. As the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) puts it, the key to informed consent is to ensure that participants are aware of

the purpose(s) of the study, and the anticipated consequences of the research; the identity of funders and sponsors; the anticipated uses of the data; possible benefits of the study and possible harm or discomfort that might affect participants; issues relating to data storage and security; and the degree of anonymity and confidentiality which may be afforded to informants and subjects (Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth 2008).

To some extent the idea of informed consent cannot be applied in practice. As Murphy and Dingwall (2001) ask, can a participant really be said to have given *informed* consent without having been to 'graduate school' and studied methodology and ethics themselves, and indeed without being able to see into the future and know the conclusions, implications and consequences of the research? However, since the same difficulties apply to researchers, all they can do is anticipate the consequences of their research to the best of their ability and inform the participants honestly and accurately about the research process.

Therefore, in the informal conversations in drinking venues, as noted above, I introduced myself and the aims, purpose and process of the project before asking if people would be interested in participating. I assured them that they

would be anonymous in any material I produced from the research – one man even requested a particular pseudonym. This is in-keeping with the suggestions of the ASA that researchers should ‘try to minimise disturbances both to subjects themselves and to the subjects’ relationships with their environment,’ since handing out flyers and engaging people in conversation are both accepted parts of going out in a town centre.

The ASA (2008) also states that consent should be seen as a ‘process’ and ‘may require renegotiation over time’. Participants should be able to withdraw their consent from the research process at any point. All participants had my contact details and information about the project from the flyer, and were encouraged to get in touch with me if they had any queries or concerns about the research or wanted to withdraw their consent. It is this ongoing negotiated consent which is the aim of my research practice.

As far as my participant-observation is concerned, I was observing not just those people I talked to and who actively consented, but also many others in a venue. As Murphy and Dingwall (2001) note, in many settings it is impractical to seek active consent from all present, and this is certainly true of a busy pub on a Friday night. The night-time high street is a public space, where people can be observed by others without explicit consent (indeed such ‘observation’ and visibility are key aspects of the carnivalesque drinking style discussed later in the thesis). From a deontological perspective, therefore, given that I have not affected these people’s night out, or invaded their privacy in any uninvited way, this approach is ethical. In addition, they will be unrecognisable to anyone reading the report.

In the taped interviews I provided participants with a verbal introduction and a written information sheet which they read before the interview began and recording started. I ensured that they were aware that the interview would be recorded and they were free to withdraw from the research process at any time, meaning that the decision of whether or not to participate in the research was entirely in the hands of participants themselves.

The principle of justice states that all people who are equal in relevant respects should be treated equally. I took care to ensure that I treated all those I spoke to as participants in the same way. Of course I have natural sympathies towards particular people who for one reason or another I find more agreeable, but I sought to represent all participants fairly. My general approach has been that of the anthropologist studying alcohol use: not to judge any practice a problem unless it is deemed so by a participant, and then to treat this as an opinion (Douglas 1987).

The values and beliefs of participants were respected insofar as they were the focus of the research and I have made every effort to represent these accurately. This does not mean that my representations and interpretations would be necessarily agreed upon by participants but I would suggest that I respected them – I was interested in them and sought to study them accurately, and so had practical as well as ethical reasons for ensuring the justice principle.

Some ethnographers have recommended that participant-observers should be sympathetic and non-judgmental listeners, but as Cook and Crang (1995) have noted, this can lead to ethical and practical issues. First, as Schwalbe (2002) has discussed, one may be confronted by issues or opinions one feels strongly about and feel a moral duty to challenge these, even though one's initial reaction as an ethnographer is to bite one's tongue. Second, if one is invariably sympathetic and non-judgmental, participants may feel that one is naïve, gullible, amateurish or uncommitted to the topic. I found that a balance of sympathy and challenges was helpful, and I had to judge this on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes, by acknowledging that I had not yet visited a particular venue, I was able to elicit a clear statement from participants of their opinions about this place, often, I felt, to a much greater degree than if I had said I had already been to the venue, and certainly than if I had led the participants by expressing some opinions. On the other hand, my rapport with Lee and Ross, for example, seemed to be greatly enhanced when I jokily challenged Ross' account of his last 'lads' night out'. He said he had visited every pub between two venues, and I should not ask him the names as he could not remember them, but I joked that surely the quickest way between these venues was

through the public gardens. Lee responded by saying 'he knows his stuff', and Ross' attempt to explain led to Lee simply making jokes at his expense. Such joking, which I coded as 'Teasing Friends', can be seen as an element of the 'carnavalesque' night out, and I had been part of this at first hand – this was not simply two men relating their experiences of going out in an interview setting; they were out having a night out, albeit a quiet one.

In these deontological (or procedural) conceptions of ethics I was fortunate, as I did not encounter any people who I felt particularly required intervention in order to secure their own or others' safety. Although some participants I met may have drunk more than recommended daily limits as set by government, I did not pass judgement on this and always tried to make it clear that I did not seek to judge people's drinking, but to understand it.

Validity

Traditionally, research has been judged according to two criteria: reliability and validity. Reliability assesses whether, if the study were repeated, the same results would be obtained, while validity considers whether the study does actually measure what it sets out to, and whether its conclusions follow from the data given.

A distinction can be made between internal and external reliability (Seale 1999: 42). Internal reliability implies that, given the data collected, the same conclusions would be reached by different researchers. External reliability requires that the whole study be conducted again, to see if the same basic data would be obtained. Seale (1999) states that performing a test for external reliability is unrealistic in qualitative research, since the idea of conducting the same study again with a different researcher is paradoxical – it would not be the same study if it were conducted by a different person, and would doubtless focus on different phenomena. Moreover, it is unclear whether it would be an indication of failure if participants were to give different answers when one asked them precisely the same questions in the same way. Such a test assumes an underlying stable worldview that may not be accurate. In terms of

internal reliability, it seems likely that a different analyst would detect different themes and interests in the data (see Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 45).

In terms of validity, apart from overall judgements regarding its utility and interest, which might be considered some form of external validity (Denzin 1989: 20) in terms of judging the research in terms of its 'truth', the account produced by qualitative researchers, without being statistical representative, can really only be judged on its internal coherence – do the data shown and the arguments demonstrated justify the conclusions? However, Geertz (2000: 18) notes that coherence alone cannot be a criterion for adequately assessing the validity of an account, since a paranoid person's beliefs or a criminal's story may well be coherent but that does not necessarily make them true or helpful.

Moreover, as Wolcott (1994: 355) observes, while consistency might be seen as desirable in research reports, it is not necessarily a feature of the human behaviour that is being reported on. I would modify this concern to say that I hope my account has consistency and internal logic, but manages to convey the ambivalence, inconsistency and uncertainty of gender and class as lived by participants in my research. This ambivalence, inconsistency and uncertainty can be conveyed and explained using logical, consistent structures of argument. I think that consistency and logic can and should lie behind Wolcott's (1994: 367) notion of 'understanding', which he suggests should replace ideas of validity.

It might be argued that my research focuses largely on how people discuss and think about drinking *while they are drinking*, since most of the interactions with participants were conducted in drinking venues while participants were on a night out. There is an associated risk that they would not make the same arguments the morning after, or on a Monday morning when clearly sober, or that they might exaggerate the carnivalesque nature of their practices due to the atmosphere surrounding them. However, this does not undermine the validity of the research. I have set out to complement previous studies on drinking, many of which have focused on detached discussions of drinking outside of the practices being considered. There is no more 'truth' or validity to one account

or another; they are different accounts constructed for different situations and audiences. Moreover, claims that discussions on, say, Monday morning would have elicited different accounts on the basis of shame are questionable on the basis of my data, since participants would frequently recount 'funny stories' even when sober. I have tried to be careful not to explain participants' accounts using my own ideas of what a sober reflexive self might or should do, looking instead at what they actually did and said.

In general, I have sought to demonstrate the internal validity of my account through a clear account of the research process through which I have produced this thesis, thus providing an audit trail of my methods and procedures. In assessing the internal coherence of the arguments made in the thesis it is important to consider the context of the data, which has been done not only in this chapter but also in Chapter 1 with the broad outline of the history of Bournemouth, and Chapter 4 with the sketches that place participants' accounts in the wider context of their lives. I have endeavoured to employ 'thick description' (Geertz 2000) throughout the thesis when discussing data in order to place them in their context. Finally, the next section offers an account of my own place in the research, to help the reader assess the validity of the data that my arguments are based upon.

Reflexivity

As many ethnographers have acknowledged, there is always the possibility that the researcher may influence the setting he is studying. This is particularly relevant given the observation of LeCompte and Schensul (1999b: 2) cited above that 'the researcher is the primary tool for data collection' in ethnography. However, as Agar (1986: 36) suggests, such is the nature of ethnography that researchers may become 'part of the woodwork' for participants after some time. Although this study did not involve me building up long-term relationships with participants, my participant observation did take place as participants lived their everyday lives with friends and family and more often than not, even conversations initially prompted by me would turn into discussions amongst participants themselves, led by them in the direction that they wanted to go. Re-telling anecdotes which seemed to be more directed at each other than me,

sometimes even telling stories to each other for the first time; getting deep into discussion of the merits of particular venues and nights; and even simply teasing each other – although one can never tell, at these points it seemed as though I really had become ‘part of the woodwork’.

Importantly, ethnographers do not necessarily aim to eliminate the apparent ‘researcher effect’ so much as to understand it. The process of assessing the role of the researcher is generally understood as ‘reflexivity’. However, as Seale (1999: 161-2) points out, an attempts at reflexivity or confessions from the field can serve to authorise an account without in fact subjecting the claims of the research to critical scrutiny. Bourdieu (2003) suggests that participants may not be the best people to ask about their everyday lives and how these are structured, and so researchers may not be the best people to answer questions about what theories, ideas and prejudices have structured their practices and accounts (see also Seale 1999: 163).

Therefore, in terms of assessing the effect of the researcher on the data and analysis produced, Bourdieu (2003: 282) has warned against the ‘explosion of narcissism sometimes verging on exhibitionism’, which can sometimes result from an attempt at ‘reflexivity’. He argues that what really needs ‘objectifying’ is not so much the process of research and analysis and their personal experiences in the field, but the social world that will affect the analysis researchers produce. The practices of researchers are affected by their backgrounds and social worlds, just as are those of the people they are studying. Therefore, as well as analysing the social world of the participants, they should train their analytical eye on their own social world.

In terms of analysing my own background, as a young man living locally (and given the carnivalesque nature of drinking in some town centre areas, with its norms of free and familiar contact) I would suggest that talking to someone like me would not be unusual for many participants on a night out. In this sense, therefore, I did not perhaps face the same barriers to rapport as Griffin *et al.* (2008), noted above. Given I was researching class and gender, it should be noted that I am a man who is unambiguously middle-class, in terms of

education, accent, and probably cultural style – if I were to turn my analytical eye on myself. I am relatively confident in the academic arena in contrast with some of the participants I have spoken to, discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

In some senses this facilitated my discussions with the ‘distinctive’ drinkers, as they seemed to feel they were talking to an equal, or co-conspirator. When Joey spoke to me about being almost brought up as a racist, but having escaped this mindset, he was expecting a positive agreement, and when he and Chris talked about ‘people like them’, indicating some men walking past, they were implicitly not including me in that category. I was, in contrast, included in their category of people who were different. This may also have something to do with my relatively slight, unthreatening demeanour. Similarly, Samir was quite clear that he would have spoken differently to a researcher who was an undergraduate, and would use different language if he were talking to, say, a ‘bin man’. Although I felt slightly patronised when being advised about career choices, it was clear that Samir was treating me as someone he felt would implicitly understand his worldview.

Despite this apparent identification of myself with a middle-class worldview, I would suggest that I was also able to engage with drinkers from other backgrounds, expressing different opinions. Sometimes, however, I felt that with those who did not so clearly welcome a discussion with an academic (or simply with me), a stance of benign ignorance was less helpful than showing some knowledge of drinking, as in the example of generating rapport with Lee and Ross discussed above. Being seen as noncommittal can be read as being judgemental as much as being neutral, particularly when there is a natural lack of rapport or confidence in the researcher. With something as shrouded in moral judgement as drinking, as illustrated by my discussions in Chapter 2, it is only natural that some drinkers should be suspicious of the motives of an academic researcher, and be wary of revealing practices – wary of being judged a ‘binge’ drinker perhaps. If I were to conduct the research again, therefore, I would be more willing to offer indications of my own experiences and beliefs as regards drinking in order to help foster a sense of trust and equality in the

interaction. Nevertheless, I feel that I have gained much useful data through these interactions, even where they have not been smooth and enjoyable.

There may also be a sense in which my perceived gender affected the way in which participants related to me. Sarah Moore (2009) found that the young women she spoke to about drinking told 'cautionary tales' about women getting drunk as part of their routine preparation for going out – stories which they also shared with her during focus group research. Participants did not tell me such detailed stories, and perhaps this related to my gender. However, the opportunity was there for me to press Eve and I chose not to from an ethical perspective, suggesting that my access to such stories was based more on my ethical approach than my gender *per se*. Moreover, some women did relate to me instances where they had become drunk and done things that they regretted. Nayak (1999) has argued in terms of methodology that ethnicity is constituted through the research process, and I understand gender in the same way. Therefore, I suggest that through the research process my background as a man who is not strikingly masculine, in terms of physical or social presence, combined with my non-judgemental ethical approach, allowed me to access women's accounts as well as men's relatively freely. On the other hand, my demeanour, in terms of culture and class as well as physicality and gender, may have affected the men I spoke to (or was not able to speak to in depth), in terms of reference to violence. In this thesis, as in my research, the themes of 'hegemonic' masculinity and violence (see Hall 2002) are relatively insignificant. I would perhaps have encountered more instances and discussions of violence if I had focused on different venues or used different methods such as increasing late-night observation, but this absence may also be explained by an unwillingness to talk to a slight, middle-class academic about the pleasures of violence in the night-time economy.

My background may have been more important in terms of my analysis. I am aware that the analysis I have produced is peculiar to me, and is influenced by own worldview. I came to this research as a young man who reasonably frequently got drunk to what would be considered 'excess' by some commentators. I have enjoyed feelings of drunkenness, busy venues and loud

music and the sense of community and 'free and familiar contact' that come with these. Interestingly, the period of this research has seen me 'binge' less frequently than at any time since I was 16. All the same, the football team I play with can make jokes about my behaviour at social events with them involving alcohol, and I enjoy these occasions and the 'banter' associated with them. I am also slightly dismissive of apparent aspirations to 'difference' for its own sake, and would agree with Danny, one of my participants, when he said:

[T]heir music policy is, it's, it's deliberately different and often that type of person can be perceived to be enjoying diff--, being alternative in eh inverted commas, often simply for the sake of being alternative. [WH: Mm-mm] Um I'm guilty of it myself. You know, I like, I will like a band more if I know that not many people like them. [WH: ((laughs))] It's just, it gives you a sense of, of cultural snobbery which is [WH: Mm-mm] entirely unfounded, the reason nobody else likes them is because they're rubbish ((laughingly)) often.

There is, then, a sense in which I am sympathetic to the motivations of the 'binge' or carnivalesque drinker, and this may lie behind my preference for the term carnivalesque itself, with its positive associations of liberty and abandon, rather than 'binge', with its connotations of failing to meet standards of responsibility and self-control. However, as I argue in Chapter 5, this terminology can be justified by the fact that many participants themselves do not understand their drinking practices in a negative light, and as failures of self-control, but rather as celebrations of unusual behaviour and community, opposed to the perceived rigidity of everyday life.

On the other hand, I do not always associate alcohol with getting drunk, and enjoy drinking in 'moderation' simply for the taste, perhaps in a traditional pub with a quiet atmosphere, sitting and catching up with friends, and have a strong distaste for violence. I also profess to enjoy 'real ale' or bitter more than mass produced lagers, and am slightly dismissive of marketing campaigns that play on the national associations of brands such as Stella Artois and Fosters when these are brewed in the UK. In this sense, I am a classic everyday and 'distinctive' drinker.

My background, and ambivalent attitude to alcohol, then, has possibly most strongly influenced my analysis by pushing me to question the assumption that there is a single monolithic drinking culture, if I cannot even outline a single attitude to alcohol for myself, and by reminding me that individuals are not necessarily inherently coherent and consistent.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to outline the methods used in the study and the rationale behind these in order to offer an audit trail to judge the validity of the research, as well as to put the rest of the thesis in context. I took an epistemological approach that emphasised the primacy of drinkers' own interpretations and claims, but recognised that these interpretations were themselves accounts constructed for a particular situation: the research encounter. Ethnographic methods were chosen because they offered an insight into the practices and discussions of young people themselves while still allowing analysis of the context and structures that shape these. My analysis constantly moved between data and interpretation to ensure that the arguments made were based on participants' own actions and interpretations. My ethical approach was based on the principle of informed consent. Though in such a study it is impossible to outline the full details of the research and ensure that these have been fully appreciated and understood, I made significant efforts to be clear and honest regarding the process and purposes of the research before and while interacting with participants. As well as analysing the data produced through my fieldwork, I have outlined here an analysis of my own background and approach to the research as an effort at reflexivity. Although there are possibilities that particularly my class and gender have affected the data produced and the analysis conducted, my discussion of these factors should serve to put the claims of this thesis into context, in order that they can be properly assessed. I argue that the methodological decisions and the open account presented here serve to ensure the validity of the study, though it is up to readers to make their own conclusions regarding this thesis.

Chapter 4: Background of Participants

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, class is understood in this study as more than economic or market position, employing ideas of cultural and social capital familiar from Bourdieu's (e.g. 1984) work. As noted, Bourdieu argues that people can be distinguished not only by their overall volume of capital, but also by its composition and trajectory. This chapter seeks to give a sense of how this capital can be understood in practice, and therefore serves to contextualise the discussions of drinking in Chapter 5. It also serves to place drinking practices in the broader context of participants' lives. The chapter will outline the general data on the backgrounds of the participants, according to conventional understandings of economic, cultural and social capital, drawing on governmental and academic sources to explain the classifications. I then sketch portraits of individual participants. These cases should not be taken as ideal types, or the most typical participants, but rather as interesting cases, which might be positioned on a spectrum. In this way, I look at 'class' from a variety of perspectives, to understand how such relations are lived out in practice.

General Background Data and Similarities

The conventional statistical way of grouping people according to social class is through occupational data. The current standard basic system of classification used in the UK is the Standard Occupational Classification 2000 (SOC2000), which can then be used to derive the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), the system which replaced the Registrar General's Social Class (RGSC) schema in 2001 (Donkin et al. 2002; Office for National Statistics 2000). SOC2000 has nine categories. The descriptions of these categories reveal that they are to a large extent based on the cultural capital (educational qualifications) that are considered necessary to hold the particular job in question (Office for National Statistics 2000: 12). Similarly, the RGSC was designed:

[S]o as to secure that, as far as possible, each category is homogenous in relation to the general standing within the community of the occupations concerned. This criterion is naturally correlated with . . . other factors such as education and economic environment, but it has no direct relationship to the average remuneration of particular occupations (General Register Office [1966] quoted in Crompton 1993: 53).

These classifications, then, were based on status ('standing'), not income alone. Occupational data, then, can never be fully separated from cultural capital. They are not so much assessments of class in the Weberian or Marxist sense as they are statistical attempts to operationalise 'class' as understood in British society, and explain people's differing life chances. The overall NS-SEC schema has eight classes for those in work, and in the simplest format these are condensed down into 3 classes ('Managerial and Professional', 'Intermediate' and 'Routine and Manual'). RGSC was commonly condensed into two classes ('manual' and 'non-manual'). These two and three tier systems correspond to two of the three understandings of class argued by David Cannadine (2000) to have been in popular circulation since the 18th century, the other being a hierarchical model of infinite gradations. I include these data as a way of illustrating the variety amongst the participants I spoke to, but also to help understand the complexities of the ways in which class operates. This thesis seeks to outline how class is constructed through drinking, and in doing so it is important to have a sense of other aspects of participants' lives that might be classed, to understand how drinking might fit into a broader schema of distinction.

My sample consisted of 113 drinking participants, and 5 bar staff who also talked to me about their own direct understandings of drinking, including their own drinking practices. Of these, I have classifiable occupational data for 43, which does not include those full-time students who informed me of holiday or part-time work, as they are classified first as students, and thus considered economically inactive and excluded from the occupational classifications.

In ideal circumstances, SOC2000 data would be supplemented with additional questions regarding the size of the organisation a person works in, and their level of supervisory responsibility. However, as my data do not include this, I

have used what is called the 'simplified' model to translate my occupational data into class data. According to SOC2000, there were no 'Managers and Senior Officials', 13 in 'Professional Occupations', 7 in 'Associate Professional and Technical Occupations', 8 in 'Administrative and Secretarial Occupations', none in 'Skilled Trades Occupations', 2 in 'Personal Service Occupations', 9 in 'Sales and Customer Service Occupations', none in 'Process, Plant and Machine Operatives' and 4 in 'Elementary Occupations'.

This shows that there is a lack of representation of those in manual work – the two relevant categories being 'Skilled Trades Occupations' and 'Process, Plant and Machine Operatives'. This may be a failing of the study, as some people I spoke to in bars and pubs told me that they did jobs which might be classified along these terms, and explained that was why they did not wish to participate; they were too busy or tired to take the time, and did not want to spend their evening talking to me. For example, of those who chose not to participate, one man said he ran his own building business, seeming to suggest he was a manual worker involved in the practical business (though his managerial status might well place him in the top bracket), while two other men described doing 'shift work', which could imply a wide variety of occupations. However, as noted in Chapter 1, Bournemouth has always been a town focused primarily on tourism, leisure industries and, more recently, financial services. It has never had a particularly strong manufacturing or manual sector, with this being more characteristic of neighbouring Poole.

The other category that lacks any participants is 'Managers and Senior Officials'. These positions tend to be at the latter end of a career based on moving up steps on the status ladder, and thus would tend to be on average older than those in other categories. The lack of such positions, therefore, can be explained by looking at the age profile of the participants, as discussed below.

It is possible that those who I spoke to and did not receive background information from worked in one of these under-represented categories. However, there is no reason to suppose that these categories would be any

less likely than others to disclose their occupations, and so it would be reasonable to assume that the pattern of the 43 is roughly representative of the rest of my sample, given that I employed the same approach throughout.

When these data are re-classified according to the NS-SEC model, they give a picture of the overall social status of the participants, where the SOC2000 pattern shows more plainly the type of work that they do. According to this schema when narrowed down into the three tier model, there were 19 participants in 'Managerial and Professional Occupations', 12 in 'Intermediate Occupations', and 12 in 'Routine and Manual Occupations'. This suggests that while the sample may have lacked manual workers, it did not lack what are considered 'low-status' workers. This appears reasonably representative of Bournemouth's economy as explored in Chapter 1.

When one looks at the detail of these classes, similar patterns emerge as for the SOC2000 classifications, in that there were no 'Employers in large organisations' or 'Higher managerial occupations', the highest group; nor any 'Employers in small organisations' or 'Own account workers', indicating a similar level of management and control. Finally, there were no 'Lower supervisory occupations' or 'Lower technical occupations', reflecting the lack of technical workers in the sample.

It should be noted, however, that these absences may be explained by the use of the 'simplified' method to transfer SOC2000 data into the NS-SEC system. I did not have precise data on the number of people who worked at the organisation, the number of employees under the control of participants, or the nature of their work as to whether they supervised themselves or had a direct superior. This means that naturally those categories with management and supervisory roles may be under-represented. The overall spread on the three tier system, however, seems reasonable.

These occupational data suggest that the economic background of the participants was relatively similar, in that all those I spoke to about work had jobs. This is to be expected, since participation in the legitimate night-time

economy is contingent on spending power, and so those without such power will be excluded (see e.g. Chatterton and Hollands 2001).

The focus of this study was on young people, as they are the focus of government and media coverage of binge, or high-street drinking. Government discussions of binge drinking classify it as primarily a problem for 18- to 24-year-olds. As noted in Chapter 3 I tended to select people who I felt fitted this age profile. I do not have detailed age information for all participants, so as with the initial sampling my discussion here is based to some extent on my estimates. Taking accurate data where available, rounding approximations from participants – with ‘early 30s’ being taken as 32, for example – and using my own estimates, the average age of the drinkers I spoke to was 24, with a range from 18 to ‘late 30s’. According to these figures, the median was 22, and 71 out of 113 drinkers were aged 18-24, the government’s age bracket for likely binge drinkers. This suggests that I was able to talk to people of a variety of ages, but focused on the 18-24 age group. This distribution is not solely a consequence of my selective sampling, but reflects the nature of the night-time economy, which is largely the preserve of those who are younger, for cultural and practical reasons. As more than one participant noted, for example, it is much more difficult organising a night out when you have children.

Almost all my participants would be ethnically classified as White British. However, I did not ask participants to self-define themselves, for the same reasons of rapport that limited my knowledge of participants’ work and family backgrounds, and so any ethnic claims can only be my estimates. Three students appeared to be non-white, though I do not know how they would define their ethnicity. There were also some international participants. I spoke to two Bulgarian Master’s students who had done their first degrees in Malta, and a Danish student on a Master’s course in Britain as part of a Master’s based in Denmark. I also spoke to two Turkish men and two women who were in Bournemouth to learn English. Only one non-student participant was non-white and one other participant was not British, though I did not find out her nationality. This largely corresponds to the ethnic make-up of the pubs and bars where I recruited, and is a consequence of the setting of Bournemouth.

This is a study of what some might call 'mainstream' or 'high street' drinking (e.g. Hadfield 2005), and in Bournemouth this is a strikingly white environment. This is not to say that there are no areas of Bournemouth that are more ethnically diverse, but it should be noted that at the 2001 Census 97 percent of the population was defined as 'White' (Office for National Statistics 2001b), while the national average for England was 87 percent (Office for National Statistics 2001a). There would certainly be scope for studies of drinking cultures in other areas of Bournemouth, or other types of drinking, which might capture more data from the non-white ethnic groups, but unfortunately this is beyond the scope of this study.

Out of the 113 drinkers I spoke to, 74 were men, and 39 women. The higher numbers of men can be put down to a number of factors. First of all, there is the possibility that there are more men than women participating in Bournemouth's night-time economy, or at least in the drinking-centred aspects. This may well be true, as some understandings of the pub as a masculine haven may persist (Hunt and Satterlee 1987; Scraton and Watson 1998), and women may still bear still bear more domestic responsibility than men, meaning perhaps that in a family with young children women are less likely than men to go out drinking. However, there is little empirical evidence on this topic for Bournemouth, and so this explanation must remain speculation. Certainly, as shall be seen in later chapters, women were more likely to see Bournemouth at night as somewhere to be careful, or even to avoid if possible, but this does not prove that there are more men than women out drinking.

Another possible explanation is my sampling; women may have been less confident talking to me than men, or I may have been less likely to approach women than men. I do not believe that I made any selections on the basis of gender, though I did find that men were more willing to talk to me while drinking than women were. The audio recorded interviews I conducted with drinkers were all with women, suggesting perhaps that women were more comfortable talking to me in a different setting. This may be because this would prove my credentials, or alternatively because women were less likely to want to interrupt

their conversations on a night out to talk to a researcher. It seems likely that a combination of these factors affected the gender balance of the study.

When the background information about men and women is considered, a pattern emerges. Even allowing for the preponderance of men in my sample, women were distinctly under-represented in the higher levels of the formal hierarchy of occupations. To give an example, although 13 participants were employed in the category 2 of the SOC2000 schema (professional occupations), only one of these was a woman, and she was a higher education lecturer rather than an investment banker. In contrast, all those who were in categories 6 (personal services) and 9 (elementary occupations – the category for the bar workers) were women. The same pattern could be discerned when the data were transferred to the NS-SEC schema, with women being half or more of the participants in the Intermediate and Routine/Manual categories, in contrast with 2 out of 19 in the Managerial and Professional category.

The participants here are a small segment of the British population, and therefore do not neatly correspond to the mapping of class carried out by sociologists such as Bourdieu (1984) in France and his followers such as Savage *et al.* (1992) in Britain. The majority of participants are not particularly rich in any of the forms of capital except perhaps cultural, having undergraduate degrees, and some studying for postgraduate qualifications – though in the more informal aspects very few mentioned any pastimes such as opera or theatre which might be understood as high in conventional cultural capital. The closest approximation of this was attending comedy nights at a local club. However, what is interesting is that despite broad similarities, elements of distinction remarkably similar to those noted on a national scale can be found on a smaller scale in this study. Distinction is concerned with *relative* judgments – one is defined by one's opposition to someone or something else – and thus the same ideas and mechanisms can be seen at play on any level. The following sections seek to outline how ideas of distinction work in practice, and how participants made such distinctions themselves, more or less explicitly.

Despite significant differences many participants have comparable economic capital. Even with degrees most are at the beginning of their careers and almost all will earn less than the national average, which for full-time employees in 2008 stood at £25,123 (median) or £31,323 (mean) (Office for National Statistics 2008: Table 1.7a). However, differences and distinctions remain. Samir, an investment banker in his mid- to late-20s, can be expected to be earning considerably more than a full-time bar worker like Natasha, or telesales workers like Chris and Joey, or Frank, a graduate who works in a high street bank, or Ellie, who is a higher education lecturer. Moreover, this form of economic capital has wider effects than simply purchasing power as it is linked with other forms of capital in order to create a more general sense of worth of the self through the broader workings of class.

Bourdieu (1977: 187) has claimed that educational qualifications are the most obvious formal indicators of cultural capital. The participants here had a variety of educational backgrounds, many having or studying for undergraduate degrees, some studying for Master's degrees (whether having undergraduate qualifications or not), some having left school at 16, some having done vocational further or higher education. Here I am concerned to point out the links that were evident between cultural capital and the other forms in order to demonstrate how class was understood and distributed amongst participants. I begin by looking at the case of Samir, who is particularly illuminating as to how this can be played out in practice.

Negotiating Capital

Samir

I met Samir at about 9.30pm on a Friday night, in *Silver*, a bar that was frequented primarily by employees from his firm, near the centre of the town. Natasha and Emma, who worked at *Silver*, felt that the bar would do better up the other end of town, where other venues that target more affluent people are – as Natasha put it, places which might be called 'upper class'. In this venue, most women seemed to be sharing bottles of wine, with men split between pints of lager and spirit-mixers in tumblers. It was quite a small venue, but loud, with

about 20 people congregated at the bar. Samir was sitting on a table with two work colleagues, one British (Steve), one German (Kurt), both men in their late 20s, and they were all still wearing their work clothes: suits.

Samir worked as an investment banker, and jokingly described himself as a 'good archetypal Muslim' as he sipped his alcoholic drink. He had a degree in Electronics from Birmingham University, and was currently studying for an MBA via distance learning, as he wanted this to come from a 'more reputable university' than Bournemouth. According to the SOC2000 classification, depending on his precise role, he would be classified as 242 (Business and Statistical Professionals) or 353 (Business and Finance Associate Professionals), which amounts to a 1.2 or 2 rating on the NS-SEC scale respectively.

In contrast to many other participants, Samir was eager to discuss the methodology and purpose of the study, demonstrating a confidence in the academic field. When discussing this he spoke in terms of 'demographics' and 'key drivers' behind people's behaviour, arguing that behaviour and abilities were likely to be closely linked to occupational data. While talking to me, Samir revealed that he would be talking to me quite differently were I an undergraduate rather than a PhD student, but particularly if I were someone 'you might call stupid', like a 'bin man' or simply a 'blue collar worker'. He also stated that people from different occupations would drink differently to him. Someone on a 'low income', 'doing the same job' on a '9 to 5' – these characteristics were summed up in the term 'townie' – would be likely to go out and deliberately get drunk as the primary aim of their night out. Samir thus linked drinking practices, occupation, income and intelligence together to make a broader judgement about the symbolic value of people. This is precisely how Bourdieu (e.g. 1984) describes class as operating.

This understanding of class was also linked to gender and broad moral values. Samir told me that the biggest change in British society over the past 10 to 15 years has been 'girls' now go out and act like 'boys' and this is now socially acceptable. However, there was a clear caveat to this statement: such

behaviour was only considered socially acceptable *by those in his demographic*. He wondered aloud whether people in different occupations would have the same conception of appropriate behaviour for women, stating that he and his friends were in the 'top tier', where the hierarchy was some combination of wealth or income, status, and intelligence.

I suggest that the way in which this statement related to his behaviour is illustrative of the way class operates as a way of understanding behaviour. Samir's group of friends all told a story together which they found extremely amusing. They described how a woman from their company, when having drinks in a bar, was talking to a man who was well above her in the company hierarchy when she described having an orgasm. The group was also almost constantly engaged in highly sexualised and homophobic teasing, which led me to believe that in certain situations such masculine 'banter', as another group put it, would be perfectly appropriate, even with a higher-ranking individual. The group also discussed with laughter how Samir and another employee had been stopped from conducting recruitment interviews because they had selected women on the basis of their attractiveness – whether or not they were 'hotties', as they put it. Samir himself even started to boast about the particular women he had recruited and how sexually attractive they were. Such behaviour sits at odds with Samir's presentation of his friendship group as part of a 'top tier' which has a tolerant, liberal attitude towards gender equality.

In Chapter 1 I mentioned how Skeggs (2004b: 53) has claimed that the arguments of sociologists such as Giddens and Beck can be understood as part of a 'symbolic struggle for the authorization of their experience and perspectives', since they downplay the significance of structural features such as class while emphasising choice and the free construction of a self. I suggest here that the behaviour of Samir and his friends, coupled with his discourse of the tolerance of the 'top tier' can be understood in the same way. He emphasises the freedom women have these days to act like men without being judged for it, before going on to judge such behaviour himself. In this way, gender inequality and sexism are denied even as they are described as affecting the recruitment process in the firm.

Importantly, distance from sexism and acceptance of gender inequality is expressed by projecting such failures onto the classed other. Samir stated that tolerance and equality were values only truly embraced by the 'top tier', and when he later condemned some colleagues who had taken clients to a strip club as corporate entertainment, the key point was that this was 'chav' behaviour that the management would look down upon, where 'chav' is understood to refer to those from a lower socio-economic (and moral) position.

In this way, occupation was read as a signifier of 'cultural' capital not only in terms of what someone knows and their cultural preferences, but also a person's moral beliefs. Samir was evidently relatively rich in economic capital, but his desire to link economic to ideas of cultural capital supports the idea that class and systems of distinction should incorporate all three forms of capital, which are inextricably linked.

Jane

Not all participants have such clearly defined capital in both economic and cultural spheres. I met Jane shortly after 10pm on a Saturday night with a large group of friends out for a birthday party in *Coliseum*. This is a large pub which stays open past 11pm on Fridays and Saturdays with a large dance floor space by a DJ booth. The bar itself is huge, as is the venue as a whole. I did not really talk to Jane at the time, but she got in touch with me and we arranged a recorded individual interview. She was 22, and had recently completed a degree in Human Geography at a new university in the West of England, and moved back home to Bournemouth to live with her parents. Her father is a 'tax man', and her mother is an examinations officer at the local college. She was currently working as an insolvency officer, earning about £17,500 p.a.

Without knowing precisely what her job entails, Jane's is very difficult to classify. According to the SOC2000 coding she could be either 4121 (credit controller) or 7121 (collector salespersons and credit agents). Her NS-SEC classification according to the former would be 'Intermediate Occupations', but the latter

would put her under 'Semi-Routine Occupations', along with the sales assistants, telesales workers and care worker I spoke to.

However, I argue that given her degree qualification and her parents' generally middle-class occupations, this latter classification would be misleading. Jane's discussions of work and life more generally, along with her educational and family background, are illustrative of how class can be constituted as a worldview. Jane was well aware of the potential incongruity of her job, making it clear that this was 'not what I want to do in the long run, but it's OK for the moment'. When I pressed her about this, she explained that she wanted to get 'a graduate job so I get proper money', because 'I really am motivated by money and that's so shallow, I know it is, but that's just me ((laughs)).' This involved a 'little plan' of how her career and life would develop.

Jane's discussion reflects an idea of progression and work on the self that is characteristic of the neo-liberal, 'reflexive' approach to life associated with the middle class described in Chapters 1 and 2.³² She sought to downplay the significance of her current occupation in favour of emphasising her desire to progress to a higher paid job. Her belief in entitlement to this job was based on educational qualifications, as she would get a *graduate* job, thus presenting cultural capital as a route to economic capital. However, at the same time as desiring this outcome, Jane sought to distance herself from the basic desire for money, as this is 'shallow'.

Natasha

I met Natasha in *Silver* like Samir, but at about 5pm on a Monday afternoon as she finished her shift working there. This job is 9225 on the SOC2000 chart,

³² This is not to say that working-class people do not aspire – indeed Skeggs (1997) posits this as a crucial characteristic of the women in her study: they were constantly trying to escape their class position. However, as Savage (1998) has pointed out, the women in Skeggs' study were exclusively those studying for 'caring' occupations, and so perhaps this 'aspirational' quality and the *disidentification* Skeggs herself notes are characteristic not of working class women in general, but those who do have a 'plan' and are aspiring to gain formal cultural capital through educational qualifications.

under 'Elementary Occupations' and leads to an NS-SEC classification of 'Routine and Manual' as part of the 'Routine' group, below the 'Semi-Routine' classification of those above.

Natasha was aged 21 and lived in Talbot Woods in Bournemouth, a relatively affluent area. She had been to a local independent, non-selective church school, but left at 16 to go to a local sixth-form college for a three year performing arts course. However, when she finished this course she decided she did not want to go into performing arts as a career, and started to work full-time at a bar in central Bournemouth which is part of a national chain famous for heavy drinking, and has occasionally fallen foul of the local Town Watch's voluntary code.³³ At this venue she worked her way up to assistant manager, but as a result of a disagreement with the manager and discomfort with the work hours, she moved to *Silver*, which was owned by the same national company, but was much quieter.

I suggest that this narrative is at odds with Jane's clearer idea of a 'little plan'. Natasha may have worked her way up to be an assistant manager of a venue, but the way in which she told me this made it seem as though this was by chance as much as design. There was no attempt to link her educational experience with her occupation, whereas Jane, without specifying what sort of job she might go for, was explicit in the idea that her education would be the grounds for the job. There is no sense that Jane's education would be any more related to her work than Natasha's, but the narrative is significantly different.

Dawn

A similar narrative pattern can be discerned from my interview with Dawn, aged 21, who was also a full-time bar worker. She had been working *Silver* for about a year, and had also been working in another bar in a different part of town for 6 or 7 months. Dawn was from Springbourne, a suburb of Bournemouth which borders Boscombe and is where the borough's oldest pub is located (Protz

³³ Source: interview with Town Watch chair.

2008: 136). She went to a local school and rather than studying for A-Levels went to college to study childcare. She told me that while on her placement she argued with her superior, and the college could not find an alternative placement for her so she quit the course. Other qualifications she had included a Level 2 award in sports, and she had done a two week summer school comprising four courses: Hair, Beauty, First Aid and Sign Language. She had been working at one bar for about a year, and another in addition for the previous 6 or 7 months.

I argue that Jane's narrative style, which portrayed her life as a progression, can be usefully contrasted with the life stories of Dawn and Natasha, both bar workers, who presented their path to doing bar work as a series of accidents, rather than a conscious choice, but did not talk about aspirations for the future. Their stories seemed to be more about negotiating obstacles and muddling through. This is not to say that Jane's – or any other participant's – career has been any more carefully planned, but a key difference is the way in which these stories are told. Dawn and Natasha have not attempted to place their current position in a rational narrative, though their agency in *choosing* to quit their previous courses or pursue an alternative career is mentioned.

Christina

Class, as in Samir's discussions, can be figured through linking the cultural with the economic, in order to form a general idea of value. It is this 'value' that can be understood as symbolic capital. Such links, however, are not universally accepted, as shown by the example of Christina.

Christina was another young woman, aged 21, who worked at *Silver*. She had lived in Boscombe, a relatively deprived area of Bournemouth as mentioned in Chapter 2, all her life. She had gone to college, and also studied at university in Wales for a while before dropping out, both in order to do sports coaching. She told me that she had known even when she was 18 that she wanted to do bar work at some point. However, when she described this desire to do bar work, it was clearly contrasted with going to college and trying university, rather than being seen as a natural progression. She had now become disillusioned with

bar work, saying she was on her 'last legs' in the job, because she felt like a 'slave' and people were so rude. She had scaled back her bar work because she had taken up a part-time sports coaching job, thus using her college qualification.

Although such a narrative might hint at an idea of progression – moving from bar work to using one's qualification in a job that is perceived to have better working conditions – Christina seemed to reject the ideas of hierarchy that were more or less explicit in Samir's and Jane's accounts. Christina told me a story of how one of her colleagues had got chatting to a man who regularly came into the bar, and had arranged to meet up with him outside of work. When she was then introduced to his friends, they sneered at her for working in a bar. It was clear that the woman's job said something to them about what she was worth as a person. Christina condemned the man's affluent friends who snubbed her colleague, because they could not see beyond her job and read this – her class and symbolic capital – as indicative of her value. She also challenges the 'slave' nature of the job and implies that this is not inevitable – it is a result of the rudeness of the customers, who would see themselves as above the staff in this hierarchy.

The reaction to the bar worker in Christina's story was not based on 'economic' capital alone. The men are not sneering at the bar worker because, for example, she cannot buy her own drinks. The story is an example of Bourdieu's (1994: 135) concept of 'symbolic violence', whereby a worldview is imposed on people, producing a kind of mental alienation, as an assumption is made about the bar worker on the basis of a particular hierarchical status system. Christina challenges this conception of symbolic capital.

Frank and Simon

Christina, then, challenges the assumption that economic capital, or occupation, can be read as signifying symbolic capital. In Samir's case, and to a lesser extent Jane's, ideas of cultural capital were employed to legitimate economic capital; occupation was read as signifying something broader about the person. However, as Bourdieu (1984) suggests, cultural and economic capital are not

always aligned. He notes the strategy of the 'dominated' fraction of the 'dominant' class (teachers, academics for example) to emphasise the value of cultural capital, in which they are rich, over economic capital, where they are relatively disadvantaged. The example of Frank and Simon shows how class cannot simply be reduced to occupation, because of the influence of cultural capital.

Frank and Simon were both graduates doing administrative work at a high street bank. I met them at about 7pm on a Friday evening at a branch of the *Rose and Crown*, a major national chain known for its cheap food and drink, described by one participant as somewhere people go to spend their 'green giros', implying an association with the unemployed. They were there with 3 other work colleagues, sitting outside in the smoking area at a wooden picnic table.

Frank was 25, from Bournemouth originally, and had studied Hospitality Management at Bournemouth University. Simon was slightly younger, having finished a degree in Film Studies the previous summer at a small new university in the south of England. Originally from Milton Keynes, he had moved to Bournemouth with a friend who had done a PGCE and had come to the area for her first teaching post. Their job would be classified as 412 (Administrative Occupations: Finance) according to the SOC2000 system, which translates into '3' on the NS-SEC hierarchy: 'Intermediate Occupations'.

In terms of both economic capital and formal cultural capital, then, Frank and Simon would be considered very similar. However, my time with the group made it quite clear that class distinctions were still felt keenly. Frank brought up the topic of class by commenting that Simon was 'posh', because of his 'protected' upbringing, his Australian 'heritage' and joking that he liked horses and polo. He later criticised Simon for drinking wine, saying it made him look like a woman when all the other men around the table were drinking pints of beer.

Simon responded to these jokes in similarly classed terms, explaining that he was only being teased for drinking wine because Frank did not have 'good taste' – precisely the concept on which Bourdieu's (e.g. 1984) ideas of distinction are based. Also, it is interesting to note that Simon was clear that he was in this job as a 'temp', and it had simply been the first that he had been offered after moving down and signing up with an agency. He did not see it as a long-term prospect, perhaps implicitly distinguishing himself from those like Frank who were permanent employees, and creating a similar narrative of career progression as shown for Jane above.

Just as Frank joked about Simon's class, so he was the target of such jokes in turn – though from the opposite perspective. The cultural capital of his degree was called into question by a colleague – he had 'only' done Hospitality Management in contrast with Simon's Film Studies. Film Studies itself is not necessarily considered a high-status subject when considered alongside History, for example (e.g. Clarke 2007), and yet there remains an apparent status distinction applied that places it above Hospitality Management – perhaps that of the academic as opposed to vocational subject.

Moreover, Frank was teased for wearing clothes from Primark and George (ASDA's clothing brand) both known as being cheap places to buy clothes. The teasing therefore tied together elements of wealth and culture, both in terms of formal qualifications and everyday preferences and beliefs. It is interesting to note that as these people do roughly the same job, and therefore one would assume receive roughly comparable wages, the claims regarding wealth are about Frank being *cheap* by buying low-priced clothes, rather than being poor. It is not that he does not have the money – an attack on his economic capital would undermine them all as they do very similar jobs – it is that he does not have the taste (the informal cultural capital, or 'habitus' in Bourdieu's theoretical terms) to match it. In this way, his actions are read as revealing of his true class background.

Frank's taste was further criticised when he complained that he generally did not like the music played in clubs in Bournemouth, and went on to claim that

this would probably be even worse in those clubs, or on those nights, aimed at foreign visitors to Bournemouth. His friends seized on this comment, stating that he was being a 'townie'. This is a term of abuse with class undertones, as noted above in the example of Samir, and is commonly understood to be a synonym or regional variation of 'chav', 'pikey' and other such terms as discussed in Chapter 1 (see Hayward and Yar 2006; Hollands 2002; Tyler 2008). It is particularly used to contrast students with permanent residents of university towns. I argue that he is condemned for not displaying the 'tolerance' and celebration of different cultures that is characteristic of the flaneur and respectable individual self discussed below. Taking all this discussion into account, then, cultural distinctions are important even when people are ostensibly of very similar occupational backgrounds – and this can operate strikingly through ideas of 'taste'.

James

Not all claims to cultural capital are between reasonably affluent graduates fighting over status. Some are made in order to sure up doubtful economic capital. James was a part-time sports coach, aged 23, working 12 hours a week. I met him at about 9pm on a Saturday night also in the *Rose and Crown*. He too was sitting outside in the smoking area with his twin brother Carl, drinking a sambuca-based long drink, which tasted extremely sweet – he was so proud of having discovered the concoction he insisted I try it. As I approached them, they were sitting in silence each writing text messages on their mobile phones. They said they were planning to go out to a club nearby, part of their usual Saturday night routine, and would probably stay till 1am, which they thought was not all that late.

The only relevant category for their work on the SOC2000 system is 'Sports coaches, instructors and officials' (3442), which places them in the overall category of 'Associate professional and technical occupations'. This translates into 'Lower professional and higher technical occupations' according to the NS-SEC schema, which is in the top class of the three-tier system, 'Managerial and Professional Occupations' – the same as the investment bankers and academics I spoke to. I would argue that the lived experience of their lives is

quite different from the investment bankers, for example, however, as they appeared to still be living at home with their parents until the coaching takes off. Moreover, they did not have university degrees, though I do not know what other educational qualifications they had taken. The money that could be gained from 12 hours work was not really a lot but, as Carl, who did the same job, put it: 'it pays for the booze'.

This description of work as a means to an end – drinking – echoes Winlow and Hall's (2009) characterisation of young people's behaviour in the night-time economy, and supports their arguments regarding consumption replacing production as the key structure in identity formation. However, it should be noted that consumption, although it may be one duty of the neo-liberal citizen as discussed in Chapter 2, is also balanced by the idea of work in the neo-liberal formulation. As Clarke (2005) has noted neatly New Labour likes to see its citizens being 'busy'. Moreover, I suggest that the discourses surrounding work are important in the constitution of a classed self. Here I suggest that James and Carl's attitude to work can be understood as in contrast to the ideas of life as a project of the self, of which work is a central part. Their work is not seen as valuable in itself or presented as part of a project. Importantly, this can be contrasted with the approach of Samir and his friends, who made precisely the opposite argument, claiming that that drinking was beneficial for their work as it made them more comfortable with each other, and therefore more able to ask each other for help.

James and Carl were therefore not rich in economic capital, nor in conventional cultural capital. Nevertheless, the theme of distinction continued to run through their discussions, as they explained that they now go out in what they consider to be the 'nice' end of town with 'classier' venues. These were precisely the venues described by other participants as being 'upper class' or the 'West End' of Bournemouth (see Chapter 5). Carl and James saw this as being related to their age. Going out in the other end of town is apparently fine 'until you're 21', and then it is just boring. The main problems with it were described as violence and 'sluts'. Carl explained that they used to go to one particular club in this part of town frequently because they had about 20 'hard' mates who were

keen on it. Now they seemed to go out with fewer friends, who were not so concerned with violence. I would argue that their assertion that they visit 'classier' venues in the 'nice' end of town is a way of presenting a claim to (admittedly unconventional) cultural capital. They accept some mode of distinction and focus primarily on cultural capital rather than the economic capital where they are weak.

Joey

A similar pattern was displayed by Joey, a 23-year-old who was relatively weak in economic capital, being a telesales worker. I met Joey in a pub that is part of a subsidiary of one of the UK's largest pub companies. However, it is not called by a widespread chain name (only one other venue with the same name is listed on the company website), and it does not have a clear 'theme'. It serves real ale as well as lagers on tap, and there is a wide selection of spirits and wines. There are leather sofas, and dining tables as well as high tables and stools, all made of darkly varnished wood like the bar. Joey was there as part of a group of friends celebrating the 21st birthday of his friend Chris, who was also a telesales worker but for a different company. Most of the friends I spoke to also worked in telesales, at the same company as Chris. Joey was drinking pints of lager while Chris preferred pints of real ale, though shared some wine with one of the young women as the evening progressed.

Joey's job would be classified as 7113 (Telephone Salespersons) according to the SOC2000 system, which translates into the 'Semi-Routine' category in the bottom group of the three-tier NS-SEC model. I have no information on his educational background, but he did not mention going to university, and certainly at least some of his friends were too young to have attended. He lived with Chris and Aidan, another man in his early 20s who also worked in telesales with Chris.

There is an intriguing contrast between Joey's formal economic and cultural capital and his informal cultural capital – the way he positioned himself relative to other people out drinking in Bournemouth, and in society more generally. This was particularly clear in his descriptions of the night-time economy in

Bournemouth, which will be covered in Chapter 5. Here I will confine myself to discussing the non-drinking aspects of cultural capital, focusing on the idea of cosmopolitanism.

Moran and Skeggs (2004) argue, following Žižek, that cosmopolitanism is a cultural resource that allows people to take the benefits of difference and exoticism but retain their universalist position of distance. They note that enacting a cosmopolitan identity requires 'knowledge and cultural competence' (2004: 138), and argue that these resources are not equally available to all. Those with high economic, social and cultural capital are alleged to have easier access to these, and Skeggs (2004b: 158) has argued that by being 'cosmopolitan' they accrue more value to themselves.

I am concerned here to emphasise how this cosmopolitanism can be understood as part of the individual, neo-liberal self as analysed in Chapters 1 and 2. According to this model the ideal subject is one who is rational and exercises choice and individuality. Cosmopolitanism can be linked with the idea of the 'flaneur' or the cultural omnivore, in that it seeks to deny a fixed identity, focusing on diversity and choosing aspects of various cultures to embrace (Featherstone 1991; Peterson and Kern 1996). In this way it is a clear expression of individual choice and identity. However, as with much identity work, if one is to be cosmopolitan, there must be an 'other' who is not cosmopolitan, and this, it is argued, tends to be the white working class, constructed as bigoted, intolerant and tied to tradition – in a word, irrational, and thus not true individuals (Haylett 2001; Skeggs 2004b).

Joey certainly laid claim to a cosmopolitan identity. He sought to distance himself from people he spoke to at work – both fellow employees and clients – whom he felt were racist, and presented his anti-racist stance as an aspect of self that marked him out as an individual. He described how growing up in Yeovil he had almost been brought up to be racist, and yet was not. He emphasised that he liked the different groups of people in certain Bournemouth drinking venues. For example, he told me that the Polish people in the *Rose and Crown* are a nice change from the normal 'Bournemouth skinheads'. As

the comment regarding racism at work suggests, Joey needed an 'other' against which to define himself. His idea of cosmopolitanism excludes the 'Bournemouth skinheads' themselves. He complained about racism in Britain more generally, and explicitly explained the rise of the BNP as being the fault of the white working class.

I do not seek to belittle the racism that Joey has encountered, or to claim that his beliefs are insincere. However, I think it is important to note that he sought to emphasise that he valued the presence of Polish people *as non-British* (and specifically, not from Bournemouth). In this way, the Polish people are considered something exotic to be enjoyed, a cultural asset to be presented, and thus a way of distinguishing himself from the Bournemouth skinheads. This is precisely the way of understanding foreign cultures that is central to Moran and Skeggs' (2004) conception of cosmopolitanism. I argue therefore that this is a claim to cultural capital by a young man who lacks economic capital or formal cultural capital, and it is echoed in his comments on people and places in reference to drinking, discussed in Chapter 5.

He made other claims to informal cultural capital during our conversation, discussing his trips to the gym, and his occasional choice to read a book in his bedroom rather than go out to the pub with his housemates. Like cosmopolitanism, Featherstone (1982) and Bourdieu (1984) have noted the importance of the body beautiful and the culture of health amongst what Bourdieu calls the 'new bourgeoisie', the group which Featherstone (1991: 44) argues has 'a learning mode toward life'. That Joey explicitly emphasised his anti-racist, cosmopolitan stance when I was enquiring about drinking suggests a desire to present a particular identity – one that might be thought to contrast with the occupational information I already had.

Lisa

One final example serves to illustrate most clearly how class can be lived out in ways that do not necessarily match structural factors. Lisa was a first year media student in Bournemouth in her late teens. I met her at about 10.30pm on a Wednesday evening in *Coliseum*. She was with another young woman,

Sarah, who was on the same course as her, and a young man, Pete, who was doing a foundation course at the local further education college and planning to start at the university in the next academic year. Lisa and Sarah were wearing fancy dress: Santa outfits, as it was late December. These had very short skirts, and Lisa and Sarah complained that some men in the previous bar they had been in hassled them as a result. Pete was wearing jeans and a t-shirt, with a collared (but not smart) shirt over the top. They planned to go on to *Sizzle*, a national chain of themed bar at 11pm, which was their usual time to move on there, and then perhaps onto a large club.

Lisa had lived in Bournemouth with her parents all her life. She did not seem confident in the academic world, and seemed to be finding the course quite difficult. Similarly, Sarah told me that she found essay-writing very difficult, and she was better at 'practical' things. All three seemed not to really understand what a PhD was, asking me questions like what course it was, and whether it was some kind of foundation.

When they asked me what I planned to do after my PhD and I suggested teaching, Lisa warned me against this because a relation of hers had started teaching at a primary school and was finding it very hard-going. Lisa also said that the pupils at her own single-sex school had been terribly behaved. She told me that girls were at least as bad as boys, describing how one had pulled a whole chunk of hair out of another's head. She described how most of the other girls who had gone to her school were pregnant or had already had children, and even while they were there most were thinking about getting married and having children. She was clear in her disapproval of this choice and presented herself as having chosen to avoid the fate of her classmates.

This narrative could be seen as the construction of life as an active project where people have the freedom to choose alternative courses. However, I wish to highlight how Lisa did not feel entirely comfortable in the world she now inhabited. This discomfort can be understood as a tension between Lisa's classed 'habitus' and the 'field' of academia, to put it in Bourdieu's (e.g. 1990) terms. Not all students should be seen as unquestionably middle-class, as they

have different family and educational backgrounds and relate to the academic environment differently. Moreover, Lisa's account highlights how people's choices remain structured by ideas of gender. Getting married and having children, deliberately getting pregnant as a life strategy – which is how Lisa understood the decisions of some of her classmates – are unquestionably gendered choices.

Lisa's discomfort can also be viewed in more structural terms. Moran and Skeggs (2004: 118) have noted how being a student can allow one to be 'different' without losing respectability. Students are frequently understood as outsiders in towns, and Moran and Skeggs argue that the presence of students can thus aid the construction of university towns as cosmopolitan. However, as a recent study by the National Union of Students (NUS) and the bank HSBC revealed, students from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to state that they chose their university because it was close to home than those from higher brackets (Shepherd 2008). If cosmopolitanism is understood as part of the idea of a rational, tolerant, individual self, going to university outside of one's home town can be understood as investment in (and statement of) some idea of cosmopolitanism, being open to new experiences. If this choosing a university outside one's home town is linked to socio-economic status, then this suggests that the cultural capital associated with being a (cosmopolitan) student is classed. As a student in her home town, Lisa is not investing in such cosmopolitanism, and thus may feel greater pressure to be successful in the academic aspects of her university life, leading to her discomfort.

Social Capital

This chapter has primarily discussed the interplay between cultural and economic capital, and the ways in which they relate to constitute impressions of class. However, Bourdieu's schema includes a third form of capital – social – which measures access to powerful networks and contacts. In terms of the participants discussed here, and indeed throughout the thesis, I suggest that this can be understood as being generally congruent with cultural and economic capital. I was unable to acquire data that mapped participants' social contacts and networks, but most were drinking with friends with people with similar levels

and trajectories of symbolic capital. The people I spoke to knew their friends from school, college, university or work, and with all these there will be shared capital. Colleagues from work, particularly when within departments such as with Frank and Simon at the high street bank, Samir and Steve at the investment bank, and Chris and Emily in telesales, are likely to have similar wages and thus economic capital. Similarly, Mike and Craig had gone to school together, and were still close friends at 19 years old and did similar jobs, one working as an administrative assistant and the other in customer services (both classified as 'intermediate' occupations on NS-SEC). Michelle and Charlotte were school friends, and now worked as a pharmacy assistant and a care worker respectively, both counting as 'semi-routine', according to NS-SEC. Fellow graduates can be understood as having comparable formal cultural capital, as will people who went to college together. Those who went to school together may have diverged, but I found that though Dawn's primary friendship group was composed of people she had known from as far back as primary school, they all had degrees.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate how class and gender can be lived out through various factors such as work, education, cultural outlook and life story. These factors are considered to be part of class and gender because they are ways of understanding the distribution of economic and symbolic rewards in our society. Samir's claim that a 'bin man' is less intelligent than him can be read as an attempt to employ dominant understandings of what constitutes value in a person to legitimate his economic advantages. Jane saw the structure of society, where taking a degree leads to a higher paid job, as just and natural – or perhaps more accurately as 'doxic', to use Bourdieu's term, where it is unquestioningly accepted as part of the nature of things (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992).

Not all participants were comfortable in this classed and gendered system, and some challenges were made, as by Christina. This prefigures the idea of the carnivalesque and the use of the anti-pretension critique specifically, discussed in the next chapter. I argue that such challenges can be seen as part of

symbolic struggle over worldviews, which constitute class and gender. This thesis argues that the night-time economy is a key site of the symbolic struggles in contemporary British society, a claim that is made in earnest in the next chapter. This chapter has tried to place the accounts and practices that will be analysed in the following chapter in a wider context.

Chapter 5: Drinking Styles

Introduction

As discussed in previous chapters, gender is an impression constituted through a set of acts, and this impression can be understood as ‘corporeal style’ – a way of being in one’s body (Butler 1999a: 177). Similarly, drawing on Diawara’s work on black working-class masculinity, Skeggs (2004b: 1) claims that classed judgements can be made on the basis of a person’s ‘cultural style’. This chapter seeks to understand participants’ drinking in these terms – that is, thinking about participants in terms of *drinking* styles, which are both corporeal and cultural. I argue that drinking styles are ways of understanding drinking that are drawn on to explain, and also motivate, drinking practices. Drinking styles can therefore be considered classed and gendered in two ways: they may be enacted and expressed by people of a particular class background or gender, or they may be considered cultural resources that serve to construct a particular gendered or classed impression.

I argue that there are two ‘ideal type’ drinking styles which can be placed at either end of a continuum used to make sense of participants’ drinking practices and their understandings of these: the ‘carnavalesque’ and the ‘everyday’. The carnivalesque is associated with excess, irrationality, community and the dissolution of hierarchies, and can be seen as linked to government and media discourses of ‘binge’ drinking discussed in Chapter 2. Here the emphasis is on unusual behaviour and interaction, with value placed on features such as dancing, drinking games and funny stories of being drunk, and alcohol being treated quite openly as an intoxicating drug which is taken to achieve an altered mental state. In contrast, the everyday drinking style emphasises how drinking practices are not in conflict with norms of everyday social interaction, and the intoxicating properties of alcohol are played down, with the focus being more likely to be sitting down and talking to friends rather than dancing or playing drinking games.

These two styles are inherently in opposition to each other – they are defined in large part by what they are not and can be understood as part of the symbolic struggles that Bourdieu (1987; 1989) considers part of how class operates. The everyday style draws on ideas of moderation and responsibility familiar from the dominant discourses of government and media analysed in Chapter 2, and can thus be understood as constituting symbolic capital, authorised by these discourses. This symbolic capital can be understood to be constitutive of class as well as power more generally, particularly through the ways in which it is linked by participants to certain categories of person such as ‘chav’ and ‘townie’. In contrast, the carnivalesque is liable to be (mis)recognised as ‘binge’ drinking, which has no real symbolic value for those who enact it (or are seen to enact it). Some participants constructed their drinking practices as complex and purposive, in contrast to the facile, sensate pleasures of the carnivalesque, often employing explicitly classed discourses, including words like ‘chav’ or ‘townie’, to distance themselves from the practices of ‘binge’ drinkers. In this way, structural socio-economic factors were linked with particular models of consumption and behaviour, such that ‘binge’ drinking as defined by the government was recast as a problem resulting from particular – classed – people, rather than young people in general. On the other hand, through the carnivalesque style, ideas of community were emphasised over individuality and claims to symbolic capital and distinction were challenged as being pretentious. Links between drinking and other, wider operations of distinction and classed life can be detected through the broad connections between the views expressed and the backgrounds of the participants quoted.

Although femininity has commonly been associated with modesty and abstention from alcohol consumption, this does not mean that the carnivalesque is somehow ‘masculine’ and the more demure everyday is ‘feminine’. Rather, men and women negotiate their participation in the night-time economy in different ways, but these drinking styles are still useful in understanding how gendered norms are constructed and lived with. Although the image of the out-of-control, excessive, drunken young woman may be figured in the media as lacking in femininity (Day *et al.* 2004; Skeggs 2005), and this was also the impression given by some participants, gender remains important in

understanding the nuances of carnivalesque drinking style. For all women I spoke to there appeared to a 'fine line' which they felt they should not cross (Farrington *et al.* 2000), and although the definition of this line varied for different people, ideas of fear, responsibility and decorum remained across all the women's accounts.³⁴ That is, women's attitudes to alcohol, even within the apparently transgressive carnivalesque drinking style are still structured by gendered norms. Men's attitudes to alcohol can also be understood in terms of gender, as their relative lack of fear of violence within the night-time economy – and indeed their choice of becoming intoxicated to overcome any fear – shows. Nevertheless, there is not one single, monolithic gendered ideal that remains regardless of class or drinking style. There may be continuities between ideas of gender in accordance with the carnivalesque and everyday styles, but there are also key differences in terms of what behaviour is tolerated and admired.

In this way, this chapter addresses the research questions: 'How are drinking practices described and understood by men and women of different socio-economic backgrounds' and 'How do these descriptions and understandings employ notions of class and gender?' The chapter begins by outlining the conception of drinking styles that lies behind the analysis presented in this chapter, before going on to examine the idea of the carnivalesque. I then consider how this carnivalesque style is negotiated by those participants who distance themselves from it – and conversely how such distinctions are undermined by other drinkers through what Skeggs (2004b: 114-116) has referred to as 'the anti-pretension critique'. The final major section of the chapter considers how discussions and practices surrounding the managing of desirable and undesirable drunkenness can be seen as performative of respectable (and therefore classed) femininities and masculinities.

Drinking Styles

The first point to note about drinking styles is that these are etic terms I have chosen to employ to make sense of the data. However, this does not mean that

³⁴ Some instances of unusual behaviour were considered amusing, perhaps because of the apparent transgression of dominant norms of femininity, as in Papagaroufali's (1992) research.

participants would not understand the idea of different types of drinking with different associations. As Sarah put it most simply, 'There are many many many different kinds of drinking'. Participants themselves had different ways of understanding their own drinking practices, or indeed those of other people. For example, at a simple level, some outlined how different occasions meant having different drinks. Jamie described how he would drink vodka on a 'special' night out in London and Ellie talked about a 'Smirnoff Ice night when you know you're going to be drinking all night', which could be contrasted with, for example, 'Sunday walking and an ale'. Derek explained that if he was out to listen to 'rock' music (he talked about going out for 'a rock night') then he would drink whisky and coke, though he did not quite know why.

Individuals themselves might be associated with particular drinks. Stuart described himself as a 'lager boy' who always drinks 'Stella', while Lisa commented that Sarah was a 'beer girl'. According to such formulations, people's preferences for particular drinks are understood to say something fundamental about them, a theme which has been noted in previous research (e.g. Brain 2000; Galloway *et al.* 2007). There is not the space in this thesis for me to take up this theme in much detail, but the associations of drinks such as Stella Artois and WKD with 'binge' or carnivalesque drinking, in contrast to wine, for example, are worth noting. This may be a fruitful area for further research.

More generally, student Martin described how the whole approach to drinking could change if someone suggested going to a club – it would then become 'Yeah, we're gonna go out tonight', and people would start drinking with the aim of getting drunk. When he talked about this he contrasted it with people who go to the student union bar and simply have one pint. He claimed he could not understand this drinking behaviour.

Such styles can be associated with particular venues. For example, Natasha, a bar worker, made the comparison between two venues she had worked at, and claimed that 'everything' was different between them, and she could not think of a 'single thing' they had in 'common'. These differences were the 'clientele', the availability of food, the opening hours and general atmosphere. One served

food, was open during the day and was generally quiet, in contrast to the other, which only opened at night, was loud, packed with people and did not serve food. This seemed to follow her characterisation of Bournemouth as having two distinct areas for going out. Similarly, talking about her own drinking habits, fellow bar worker Christina distinguished between the nights when she goes out to 'more chilled out' places just to be with friends, and those when she goes out to get 'hammered', a distinction also made by Nicole. Chris explained that his nights out tend to have one of two aims: to go out to meet girls, or to listen to music. What type of venue he goes to depends on what he is looking for. Sarah more clearly explained that where she goes depends on who she is with, and would either be 'busy night clubs or maybe a more reserved bar'.

Despite this fluidity in practices, some participants seemed to identify with a particular drinking style. The different types of venues and drinking are seen by some drinkers as more than just different ways to spend an evening. Some drinkers build up an affinity with particular places, and Robert even claimed that all venues in Bournemouth simply had a regular clientele and people would go to the same places time after time. While Dean simply dismissed certain places and activities as not his 'scene', others were stronger in their identification. Toby, talking about particular clubs in the town explained that they were 'not for our kind of people'. This view sees venues, the music and the behaviour associated with them as indicative of a particular 'kind' of person. Rather than seeing a particular 'kind of people' as being prior to drinking practices, this can be understood as performative: by going to that particular club, you are constituted as a particular kind of person. There were also clear hints from participants that these identities related to class, as when the investment banker Samir complained that Bournemouth needs a 'higher class' of venue and his friend Steve echoed this as places for 'people like us'.

Participants, therefore, understood drink choice, venue choice, and the aim of the night out as constituting something which could be understood as approaching a drinking style. The phrase 'drinking style' has been used by a number of researchers to describe young people's drinking practices. Galloway *et al.* (2007) and Lindsay (2006) use it in passing to refer to a set of drinking

practices, whereas Harnett *et al.* (2000) take a more formal approach, modelling young men's changing drinking practices as 'transitions' from one 'drinking style' to another. This latter use seems to take into account participants' motivations and attitudes towards alcohol, and Measham and Brain (2005) similarly take a broad approach, using the phrase to refer to participants' state of mind and general attitude to alcohol as well as their actual practices.

I argue that my use goes beyond this, as I am concerned to investigate how these 'styles' are used to position practices more generally. I do not see drinking styles as accurate, objective descriptions of actual drinking practices; they are, rather, ways of understanding drinking practices, and thus also discourses to be drawn on and negotiated. Thus, I do not wish to argue that all participants would agree with my ideas of the 'everyday' and the 'carnavalesque', but I feel these concepts help to explain the spectrum by which drinking was understood by the people I spoke to. The drinking styles are therefore an amalgam of: practices as I observed them, participants' presentations of their own and others' practices, and my own interpretations of these practices and understandings.

This chapter shows how participants did or did not embrace the carnivalesque, and how their attitudes constructed drinkers as gendered and classed. The everyday drinking style is understood to emphasise drinkers' adherence to dominant norms of behaviour and social interaction, in contrast with the altered state of mind and norms associated with the carnivalesque. However, this does not mean that 'everyday' drinking is considered simply another part of everyday (working) life. Alcohol still acts in some ways as a signifier of a change in activity. I have noted above how MacAndrew and Edgerton (1970) theorised drunkenness as 'time out', but Gusfield (1987: 81) has outlined how drinking alcohol can act as a 'cue to a changed agenda of behavior [sic]', even when the quantities are too small to induce (pharmacological) intoxication, and when

carnavalesque behaviour remains unsanctioned. Simply drinking something which is known to be alcoholic can be symbolic of a shift to 'leisure' time.³⁵

In this way, I wish to make clear that both the everyday and carnivalesque drinking styles can be understood as leisure, and opposed to work. Clearly the carnivalesque can be understood as an antidote to working life – indeed theories such as those of Bakhtin (1984b) and Stallybrass and White (1986) suggest that carnival was an outlet for the resentment and frustration that may have built up by living a structured, working existence. Bakhtin (1984a: 9) even describes carnival as the people's 'second life'. In addition, though, leisure can still be part of 'everyday' life – Gusfield's idea of a 'changed agenda of behavior' does not necessarily imply a significant change in norms.

Participants opposed drinking to work in expositions of both drinking styles. For example, Sarah, who told me that she usually drank to get drunk, and if not drunk then at least 'merry' – in her phrase: 'drunk enough to be satisfied' – explained that going out was for her 'all about rewarding yourself from a week's long work!', describing how 'getting drunk feels good, it takes away the stress from your life and puts u [sic] in a cheerfull [sic] and happy mood'. Similarly, Jake described how he would now 'save it for the weekend', when he would go out drinking to relax after 'five days hard work', and Michelle said that she found drinking 'relaxing' after a 'stressful' week. All three could be said to adhere broadly to the carnivalesque style. Steve, in contrast, was clear in presenting himself as an adherent to a more 'everyday' style of drinking, and worked for an investment bank. However, he also explained that he and his friends might go out for a drink during the week after a particularly bad or late day at work when they felt they needed to 'unwind'. Interestingly, the focus of such an evening would frequently be talk about work, rather than unusual behaviour and letting one's hair down.

³⁵ In this way, although the drinking styles could be seen as similar to Lindsay's (2004) spectrum for understanding nights out that runs from the 'serious' to 'spectacular', I suggest that this is misleading because the 'everyday' drinking style is not necessarily *serious*, as it is still undertaken for fun.

In sum, then, drinking styles are sets of attributes and beliefs that can be mobilised in either positive or negative discourses. For example, the communality of the carnivalesque might be celebrated as ‘having a laugh’ with your ‘mates’, or it might be condemned as the unthinking, out-of-control behaviour of a crowd. The term carnivalesque is more useful than ‘binge’ in understanding young people’s drinking practices and understandings because whereas ‘binge’ is a term almost universally acknowledged as having negative connotations (and thus rejected by all participants as a description that could be applied to them) the idea of the carnivalesque conveys how the discourse can be mobilised from either a negative or positive perspective, along with a sense of public communality. The remainder of this chapter discusses how these drinking styles were exhibited by drinkers themselves, and how they were infused with ideas of class and gender.

The Carnivalesque

As outlined in Chapter 1, unusual behaviour and a sense of the world being turned upside down are key features of the carnivalesque. Such features, frequently understood as desirable, can also be traced in many participants’ discussions of their drinking practices and motivations. These expressions can be seen as distinctly at odds with the government and media discussions of ‘binge’ drinking analysed in Chapter 2, which condemned unusual behaviour of just the sorts participants described. This section is broadly introductory, offering an insight into the sort of behaviour and attitudes that might well be labelled as ‘binge’ drinking in media and government discussions. Although I do discuss in this section the formal class background of the participants quoted, subsequent sections in the chapter address the forms of participants’ classed and gendered negotiations of drinking styles in more detail.

Unusual behaviour and funny stories

The kind of unusual behaviour I am referring to is best illustrated by recounting a number of incidents from Chris’ birthday party, when he went out drinking with friends. As it was coming up to closing time in the pub, Sienna complained that she would never finish the bottle of wine she and Emily had bought to share if

Emily was going to spend all her time outside with people who were smoking. Chris jokingly offered to help her out, and started to drink straight from the bottle. Sienna clearly did not approve of this behaviour, and ostentatiously wiped the rim of the bottle before topping up her own glass. When Chris later decided he could not finish his own pint of lager in time, he put it into Emily's handbag, hoping he could carry it out and drink it on his way to wherever they would go next. Earlier, Bradley, who seemed to me to be quite drunk, shouted 'Cunt, cunt, cunt' and later, 'Sex, sex, sex' – as if trying to provoke a shocked reaction from staff or other customers – recalling Bakhtin's discussion of carnivalesque 'profanity'.

At moments like these, Chris more than once turned to me and, with a smile on his face, jokingly explained that they were examples of 'binge drinking'. This evening shows that certain drinking practices – which I call the carnivalesque – imply different norms from everyday behaviour. It is clear from Chris' statement that these actions are examples of 'binge drinking' that this is behaviour specific to and characteristic of a particular approach to drinking alcohol.

This shift in norms is frequently understood as being amusing. For example, Chris himself laughed when Joey told me how Chris had once set fire to some public bins in a park on his way home from a night out. Hannah had a particularly attention-grabbing story of walking out of the toilets in a pub with her trousers and underwear still around her ankles because she was so drunk. She explained that initially such incidents can be embarrassing but they can soon become amusing:

You think 'Oh God', and a few, maybe a few months later on you think 'Oh that's really funny', you tell it to all your friends and they laugh and you laugh.

She then laughed herself, remembering the incident, and, thinking about it, declared: 'It was brilliant though'. This was considered 'brilliant' despite the fact that later in the evening she was sick and fell over a small wall – and still bears the scar from the fall. These are precisely the sorts of actions that were

condemned in the recent 'Would You?' campaign run by the government and discussed in Chapter 2.

In these cases, the unusual behaviour is identified with and if it is not celebrated at the time then it is still transformed into a 'funny' story later. It is not shied away from or entirely veiled in shame. Indeed, for many people this behaviour is not simply an unintended side-effect of drinking; it is the very reason for going out – most notably because of the consequent 'funny stories'. Ollie explained to me in no uncertain terms that the best thing about drinking is that 'unusual' stuff happens which makes the night 'legendary'. He acknowledged that 'unusual' events might seem 'bad' at the time, but afterwards would be funny. Similarly, on the same night, Noel told me how Phil (who was standing next to him at the time) had 'got his cock out' at the end of a night out when they had gone back to someone's room, and started hitting it against a wardrobe. This was considered amongst the group to be hilarious, and Phil's reaction seemed to be one of a mixture of shame and pride. Here there are clear resonances with Bakhtin's idea of grotesque realism and carnival laughter. The laughter is shared amongst the group, and what is amusing is Phil's use of the sexual body, which in everyday life is covered and to some extent unacknowledged. This is not to suggest that everyday life is not sexualised – a study of advertising, for example, could quickly challenge such a claim – but to state that there are certain *legitimate* ways of displaying the body and expressing sexuality. Hitting one's 'cock' against someone else's wardrobe is not one of them. This unusual behaviour should be understood in the context of government attitudes to drunkenness such as those illustrated through the 'Would You?' campaign, as discussed in Chapter 2, where personal morality and appearances are the target of government intervention, alongside issues of crime and personal security.

The same group of participants noted that with all their friends having accounts on the social networking site 'Facebook', photos from nights out were put up quickly and contributed to people's impressions of the night out. They even suggested that people now do things for the camera on nights out, knowing the resulting photo will be put up on Facebook. According to this approach, it

seems that the more outrageous behaviour there is the better. The point is to act differently from the norms that govern everyday behaviour, and a lasting memory of this behaviour is cultivated and celebrated through stories and photographs. This is in direct contrast with the discourses examined in Chapter 2.³⁶ The *Daily Mail*, for example, ran a story condemning the 'Ladettes who glorify their drunken antics on Facebook', with the report commenting that:

Drunkenly dancing on tables or collapsing in the street used to be a source of acute embarrassment for young women the morning after the night before. Today, they are more likely to boast about it – to the world, with pictures – on social networking sites (Levy 2007).

Interestingly, this article focused on young *women's* 'antics', and the lack of shame associated with them, finding this disruption of traditional femininity particularly worthy of comment. It is worth noting that those who explicitly stated that funny stories were the *purpose* of the night out were all men. It may be that although funny stories may be celebrated after the fact, it is still unfeminine within the carnivalesque to actively engineer such apparently uncontrolled behaviour. I discuss this possibility in more detail below under the section on managing drunkenness.

It is worth noting the backgrounds of the participants quoted in this section, as they reveal a certain pattern, all lacking conventional economic and cultural capital in terms of the conventional conceptions from government definitions such as the NS-SEC discussed in Chapter 4. Chris and his friends all worked in sales at two call centres, and Hannah, Ollie, Noel and Phil were all undergraduate students. As noted in the previous chapter, the telesales workers would be ranked in the bottom tier of the NS-SEC socio-economic schema, and these jobs are considered by Winlow and Hall (e.g. 2006) to be characteristic of the new, insecure working class. Students are more

³⁶ Griffin *et al.* (2008: 31) found that their participants told similar 'funny stories' of being drunk, and suggest that these can be seen as a challenge to the 'neo-liberal social order', as they constitute a 'death of the self'. I agree with this analysis, but am concerned here to draw attention to how making such a challenge, whether deliberately or not, constitutes people as classed and gendered.

complicated to categorise, as they are considered simply to be not in employment according to this schema, and as I suggest throughout the thesis, in terms of my participants' understandings and those in the media, time as a student is considered in some way to be 'time out' from the normal bounds of categorisable behaviour.

Drinking to get drunk

Alcohol had an important role to play in the apparent shift in norms that was so important for some drinkers. Drinking in order to get drunk has been outlined by Measham and Brain (2005) as the distinctive feature of a new 'binge' drinking culture that has evolved out of the dance culture of the late-1980s and early-1990s, which relied on the mind-altering properties of Ecstasy. The 'determined drunkenness' they describe treats alcohol as an intoxicating drug and seeks a particular level of intoxication. However, as this section suggests, this attitude to alcohol is not universal amongst young people – or at least is not expressed as such.

Going out to get drunk was one of the most common recurring themes in discussions with participants, and the consumption of alcohol was often linked with the changed norms of the night-time economy as noted above. Indeed, thinking about why people might drink, Nick stated baldly that the attraction must be in part the 'injection' of 'chemicals' into the bloodstream, and, as I noted above, Ollie told me that without alcohol there would be no 'unusual' behaviour, and therefore no 'legendary nights'.

A corollary of this approach is that alcoholic drinks may be viewed in a functional manner, as a means to an end: getting drunk. Nicole, for example, explained that wine gets her really drunk, and so she would drink this if she was looking to get drunk, whereas she was 'immune' to vodka, and so this would be her drink of choice on a night out where she didn't want to get drunk. Penny had precisely the same approach, choosing wine to get drunk and vodka and a mixer otherwise, while Jane explained that she tended to drink wine at the beginning of a night out because it gets her drunk 'quite quickly'.

This functional attitude can lead to choices of drinks being based on price. For example, Pete stated simply that he chooses the cheapest beer available. Similarly, Pete's friend Sarah seemed to show a disregard for any concern with her material circumstances by writing brazenly of her most recent trip out drinking:

We went to just one club because we did a lot of drinking beforehand (...) We drank before going out because we wanted to save money. It worked!

Megan noted that her (student) friends do the same thing, and the same point seemed to be made by Jane when she noted that drink in 'nightclubs' is 'more expensive, so I try not to do that. I try to drink before'. This attitude towards price seemed to be linked to other elements of the carnivalesque, with Lee for example listing 'cheap' beer as an attraction of his favourite venue, along with the unpretentious 'cheese' music, and other carnivalesque elements such as meeting up with school friends, everyone being 'up for dancing', most people having had a drink and not having to worry about 'making a tit of yourself' because everyone else is doing the same thing. This general approach is in direct contrast with the discussions I had with other participants where 'good taste' or 'different' beers were emphasised and price was largely unmentioned, as discussed below.

Overall, then, some conception of intoxication is central to the meaning of drinking within the carnivalesque model – the carnival atmosphere is unavoidably linked to the consumption of alcohol (amongst other things). This could be understood as linked with Bakhtin's (1984a: 39) idea of 'festive madness', which he sees as crucial to the turning of the world upside down – a link also evident in its temporary nature as it only applies during the carnival.

I should acknowledge that, as in other research with ideas of *controlled* loss of control, or *controlled* or *bounded* hedonism (e.g. Hall and Winlow 2005b; Measham and Brain 2005; Szmigin *et al.* 2008), there are limits to the apparent loss of control implied by the carnivalesque style. For example, Hannah stated:

[D]rinking and going out and having a good time is a good idea to a certain extent if you're [Megan: Yeah] responsible with your drinking [Megan: Peter's isn't] and you limit yourself

She also suggested: 'it's quite a good idea sobering up during the night'. Here, she is still treating alcohol as an intoxicating drug, and sees intoxication not as something to be avoided *per se*, but rather as something to be managed. The section on managing drunkenness discusses this in more detail below. By contrast, some other participants were largely silent on the possibility that alcohol might be intoxicating, or played this down as being essentially irrelevant to their practices.

Looking at the background of the participants cited here, again the beginnings of a pattern emerge. Nicole, Penny and Ollie who all seemed to embrace ideas of intoxication, were undergraduate students – as were the friends referenced by Megan – and Nick was a postgraduate, while Jane had graduated just a few months previously and was working as an insolvency officer, which could place her in either the 'Intermediate' or 'Routine and Manual' categories of the NS-SEC schema.

Social Interaction

This breakdown of everyday norms that is central to the 'funny stories' I was told and the incidents I saw can also be seen in altered forms of social interaction – the way people relate to each other – as well as how they behave as individuals. For some people, as with the general unusual behaviour and funny stories, this change is something to be celebrated. However, it was also one of the key identifiers through which classed figures were constructed. According to the discourses of the everyday drinking style, the 'binge' drinker is someone who cannot interact and form intelligent relationships, which go alongside some notion of 'higher' pleasures following the Kantian aesthetic.

The carnivalesque mode of interaction recalls Bakhtin's (1984b: 160) description of the carnival as involving 'bringing one person maximally close to another (everything is drawn into the zone of free and familiar contact)'. For example, Hannah described how one night when she got back to her shared

student house, having been out drinking, she was chatting to a housemate on the landing when she realised she needed the toilet, and so went in but did not close the door, and her friend carried on talking to her for a short while before she thought 'Wait a minute', and told him to go away. As Hannah herself explained, it was 'a bit strange' for him to be 'watching me pee', but that this was not immediately apparent to either her or her friend suggests that expectations of how you might relate to people are different in the carnivalesque mode of drinking.

The change in interactive norms within this style does not have to be as striking as this however, and need not always relate to friends. Lisa explained to me that one of the good things about going out is the chance of meeting new people – you can just strike up a conversation with someone in the toilet. Similarly, Tilly explained that, at least in her first year as a student, going out drinking had been a good way to meet new people – though now this was not the sort of drinking she did now.

Some participants explicitly made the link between these apparently changed norms of social interaction and the consumption of alcohol. Jake explained simply that alcohol 'loosens you up' so that talking to people is easier, while his friend Connor agreed and clarified that this effect happened 'regardless of intelligence', and meant that you could talk to someone you had never met before in the street, when you would never do this sober. At this, Jake chimed in again that after drinking 'everyone's on the same level' and life is not a competitive 'struggle' between people any more. Interestingly, all those quoted here were students, though at various levels – Hannah and Lisa were in their first year of undergraduate degrees, and Tilly was in her final year, while Connor and Jake were studying for Masters degrees. This reveals an association of the carnivalesque with being a student which, although it cannot be analysed in detail here, suggests an interesting topic for further research, as discussed in the Conclusion.

The idea of the carnivalesque and the community was not always so directly related to alcohol; frequently, participants talked about the pleasures of going

and meeting friends, with some taking particular enjoyment in unplanned meetings with friends. Dawn, a bar worker, explained that one major attraction of going out for her was bumping into people she knows, joking that it can take her up to an hour to get to and from the toilets in some clubs because she meets so many friends and gets chatting. This lies behind her choosing particular places and areas rather than others – she likes meeting these people by chance. Similarly, brothers Ross and Lee explained that they go to *Rapture* and the *Coliseum* more than any other venues because they can be sure they will meet people they know. Lee explained that on Sunday nights in *Rapture*, a chain club owned by a nationwide company, he will always see school friends by chance. Ross explained that a good night would involve bumping into people you had not planned on meeting. Ross worked as a sales rep, while Lee worked in a plumbers' merchants. This placed them in the 'Intermediate' and 'Routine and Manual' categories of the NS-SEC system respectively. Student cultures seem to have a similar attraction. Emma, a part-time bar worker and full-time student, said that liked being in places full of students where she would meet people she knew, and Frank told me how this was the only reason for going to the student union nightclub, as it was not a particularly nice place otherwise. It is worth noting, again, how these expressions tended to be made by those who were either students or from socio-economic groups low on the NS-SEC schema and such scales.

'A Different Environment'

Central to the change in norms and the coming together of people that lie behind the features of the carnivalesque discussed up to this point is the general environment in which the drinking and socialising takes place. Different drinking styles, as noted above, can be associated with a particular environment and atmosphere and this is one of the best ways to convey how the carnivalesque and the everyday were lived out in practice. Perhaps unsurprisingly, carnivalesque venues are full of people. Jane effectively described the busy chaos of a joint night out for her birthday and a friend's going away party before she left to work abroad:

(. . .) then we moved on to *Sizzle* [WH: Yeah], where we met loads of other people. There were only about six of us to start off with I think. And then we met loads of other people in *Sizzle* that I didn't know cos they were just her friends from work, and ended up losing them and finding each other all night (. . .)

Sometimes this chaotic busy atmosphere is actively sought out. Nathan told me that a good night out involved being in a 'packed' venue. Though Ellie and Claire were discussing how they now increasingly liked to sit down and talk to their own friends rather than new people, Claire explained that she did like 'the odd occasional night' like this, commenting: 'Deliberately to be crammed in and dance or whatever and that's, that's quite fun'. Ellie continued the theme, saying:

If you're going out dancing you know you're going to be crammed in and that's part of the energy of going out, you know, to go dancing.

Interestingly, Ellie associated this being 'crammed in' with the kind of free and familiar contact described above: 'And then sometimes that's fine we'll speak to strangers'. Overall, she summed up the feeling as 'a different environment'. This 'different environment' could also encompass music, as when Hannah explained that she would enjoy totally different music in clubs from what she would listen to at home – suggesting again a change from the everyday.

Dean stated that now a particular club night had moved from to a different, bigger venue it was not as good, because if the new venue is not busy then it has no 'atmosphere'. The promoter of this night describes it on its website as 'playing great records in the right order to maximize dancefloor mayhem' (Fat Poppadaddys 2009). It seems this 'mayhem' requires a room being packed full of people. The same reasoning seemed to lie behind Adem's claim that people particularly liked two clubs in Bournemouth because they were so large, and they like the feeling of being in a large venue. Interestingly, given the discussion of the anti-pretension critique below and its links with the carnivalesque drinking style, the promoter describes its approach as 'a mission to play only good music in whatever form it might take without pretension or ego'.

I felt the sense of a 'different environment' most clearly when I went along with a group of students on a night out to *Red*, one of the major nightclubs in the town. As I walked in I told Damian that I had never been to this venue before and he told me effusively that it was 'amazing'. He led me into the huge darkened room and up a couple of steps towards the bar, from where we could look out over the dancefloor. Lights from the ceiling swept over the seething mass of people on the dancefloor, and the bass from the music was so loud that I could feel my body vibrate. When I spoke to Matt about this a few minutes later, in a slightly quieter room in the venue, he explained that although he does not take drugs, he thought the feeling of being swept away in this crowd and atmosphere could be compared to the feeling of being on drugs. Notably, this sort of environment was not referred to by most of the participants who emphasised the normality or everyday nature of their drinking behaviour, who tended also to be higher on conventional schemas of socio-economic background, as discussed below.

Any distinction between forms of behaviour and interaction on the one hand and some notion of 'environment' on the other is somewhat artificial, as people's actions and attitudes comprise the general 'atmosphere' in the venue as well as the music and lighting and other more material features. One clear aspect where it is particularly difficult to separate these two elements is the matter of clothing, which is intimately linked to cultural style, as is discussed in more detail in the section below on misrecognition. Smith (1985: 299), in his ethnography of a 'rough working-class pub', suggests that dressing up can give an air of 'festivity and a special occasion'. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that Michelle, who worked as an assistant in a pharmacy, and told me that going out was about 'having a good time' and loved dancing and the 'laid back atmosphere' of town centre venues, thought that getting ready was part of the fun of going out, and indeed 'dressing up' is fun in itself. Costumes and dressing up were, for Bakhtin (1984a: 39-40), a key aspect of the carnival, with the mask being an important element in turning the everyday upside down.

Interestingly, in terms of dressing up, the carnivalesque has two formats. The first – the perceived virtual uniform of (for men) jeans, brown or black leather shoes, and a smart t-shirt, shirt or jumper – was denigrated by a number of participants, as discussed below. The other is fancy dress, which is quite common in Bournemouth on ‘hen’ and ‘stag’ nights and also for other drinking parties, as my observations or a quick glance at the photo galleries for local venues will show (see Figure 15). This fancy dress, however, is confined to certain venues. Figure 15, for example, shows drinkers in characteristic carnivalesque fancy dress, posing for the camera. This particular photograph is taken from the website of Bar:[ME] in Bournemouth. Its very name, a pun on ‘barmy’, is suggestive of the sort of atmosphere it tries to foster. On its website (Bar:[ME] 2009), the venue makes a point of mentioning that there is ‘fancy dress a plenty [sic]’ and it is clear that this fits in with the archetypal carnivalesque character of the venue:

There is literally nowhere else in town where you can let your hair down and go crazy as at Bar:[ME] seven nights a week. With no pomp or pretense [sic], everyone here is just up for a good time.

It would be hard to find as clear an exposition of the carnivalesque drinking style. That the venue has this reputation locally is clear from youth worker Ethan’s comment that it is diametrically opposed to drinking in traditional pubs, and Ed and his friends claiming that people ‘down WKD’ there and there is a glass ceiling so that people can see up girls’ skirts when they are upstairs. This was the same venue that Jane said always had police around it and Matthew cited as an example of breaking Town Watch’s ‘responsible promotions’ policy, showing that it is subject to the forces of ‘repression’ cited in Chapter 2.



Figure 15: Fancy Dress at Bar:[ME]

Available from http://www.barmebournemouth.com/photo_gallery.php

The carnivalesque and the media

Through the discussion in this chapter thus far I hope to have shown how many participants embraced precisely those features of the night-time economy that apparently so concern policymakers and the media, namely unusual behaviour and deliberate intoxication in an environment that is quite different from the everyday, and where different norms seem to apply. While this has been noted in much previous research, though terms such as ‘determined drunkenness’ (Measham and Brain 2005), I wish to emphasise here how these attributes can often be viewed positively, and without notable guilt. Even after the event, young men and women can be found celebrating their embarrassing stories of drunken escapades. It is partly for this reason that I have chosen the term carnivalesque to describe their approach to drinking, in order to capture the positive, fun-loving abandon of the drinking.

There are, then, notable similarities between these accounts and the characterisations of ‘binge’ drinking to be found in government and media discussions of young people’s drinking, and the possibility of comparisons being made was not lost on participants I spoke to. They were aware of the prominent media coverage surrounding ‘binge’ drinking – as Claire noted, for example: ‘It is very big, you can go on the BBC News website and it’s always binge drinking’. However, this coverage was not accepted as necessarily fair.

Indeed, Ross cared so much about the issue of media coverage of young people's drinking that when it came up in our discussion Lee groaned to express his boredom and frustration, knowing that his brother would have much to say on the topic. Ross disliked the way the media give 'a general impression' of a 'binge drinking culture', which means that young people are 'tarred with the same brush', when they don't all deserve it. Hannah similarly complained:

I think the media have made drinking and going out drinking a bad thing because of [WH: Mm-mm] the minority of people who really do get quite bad.

The exchange that followed this comment shows that Hannah felt going out and getting drunk should not be condemned out-of-hand, and that the problem was one of misrepresentation:

Hannah	I think the general, generally going out and getting drunk is not a bad thing but they, the media is eh always making it bad I think.
Megan	They make it worse than it is.
Hannah	They heighten it.
WH	Right.
Hannah	They heighten everything to make it into an epidemic when really it's not because you've got, in headlines in pr--, in papers 'Booze Britain' when...
WH	Mm-mm
Hannah	...it's not.

Lisa, similarly, suggested that media discussions were 'old people' putting 'labels' onto 'young people'. I suggest that behind these criticisms is a feeling that the carnivalesque drinking style was being misrepresented. Ross himself liked to go out and get drunk, as shown by his wistful recollection of his last night out as a 'rare opportunity' because he now has children and finding a babysitter is difficult. He conveyed the impression of a chaotic, unplanned night, in which a large amount was drunk – something in 'every pub' between his two favourite venues, *Coliseum* and *Rapture*, however much that may be. This is at odds with the ideal model of sober, moderate, planned nights out conveyed by government public education campaigns. Hannah described with a laugh her funny stories of getting drunk. However, both presented these occasions as something pleasurable to be enjoyed rather than to be

condemned, with only momentary guilt if any at all. On the other hand, as the next section will discuss, other participants, rather than challenging the dominant discourses surrounding 'binge' drinking, mobilised them in order to construct an image of a an irresponsible (classed) 'other' in contrast with their themselves. Again, there are hints that there are also correlations with broader notions of social background, as measured through occupation and educational qualifications.

Misrecognition and the Everyday

Not all participants agreed with the view which celebrated unusual behaviour and placed consumption of alcohol at the centre of the account of a night out. As in Stallybrass and White's (1986) analysis, the carnivalesque 'other' is key to the construction of a responsible, controlled individual. In forming this binge drinking 'other', there are two key points that are constitutive of class. The first is that the discourses draw on concepts and narratives familiar from the government and media discussion analysed in Chapter 2, and thus access symbolic power. The second is that the actions and attitudes that are so condemned are linked with ideas of cultural and economic class, particularly through terms such as 'chav' and 'townie'. In this way, 'binge' drinking as condemned by the government and the media is constructed as a classed problem – something that is the fault of 'chavs', and that can be linked with other cultural practices and beliefs as part of a broader system of aesthetic judgement and thus a symbolic economy.

Discussing media attitudes to drinking, David stated in a similar fashion to Hannah, as quoted above, that, 'As with the rest of the media it's sensational and the focus is on the exceptional few rather than the mass majority'. However, though this might appear to echo the criticisms of Hannah and Ross cited above, its congruence with government discourses became clear when he was vociferous in his criticism of the exceptional few. He stated: 'Don't like to see the completely drunk people who have no self-mastery and have lost their respect of other people'. This would have provided others with amusement – indeed losing one's 'self-mastery' can be seen as being at the heart of the 'funny stories' participants described.

It was clear, therefore, that some participants distanced themselves from the idea of the 'binge' drinker, as portrayed in the media, while retaining this figure that lies at the heart of the characterisation of 'Booze Britain', as Hannah put it. This figure was then used as an 'other' against which to define themselves as responsible and distinctive. Tilly and her friends, for example, lamented that the media portrayals were 'pretty accurate'. Nicole observed that reports are usually accompanied by videos or photographs, and so there is evidence which cannot be manipulated that much. Craig commented that as well as being 'accurate' this was 'pretty disgusting'. These three friends, then, did not condemn the media for exaggerating this behaviour, as others did; they attacked the people who drink in this way, arguing that a focus on problems with such drinking is quite right and fair and stating that, for example, British drinkers 'ruin' places abroad such as Amsterdam. This section considers how these attacks were formulated – often in more oblique ways – and how they can be understood as being constitutive of class.

Individualism and Distinction

One of the most obvious ways in which distance was drawn between this figure of the 'binge' drinker and participants themselves was, as Bourdieu might anticipate, through taste. Taste preferences were frequently constructed as forms of distinction through the obvious word: 'different'. When Frank was describing the venues available in Bournemouth, he started off by stating that there were certain 'student' places, but then *The Chalk and Cheese* occurred to him, and he told me this was quite good because the music was 'different' from other venues, and it even had some 'different' beers. When making such claims, there is a more or less implicit notion of mainstream drinking practices against which participants define themselves. For example, when Frank made these comments, Anna chimed in, telling me 'everything is different' there. She had just before responded to one of the questions on the back of my flyer – 'What do you like or dislike about a typical night out?' – by saying that what she disliked was the very fact that it is 'typical', and described this as comprising 'Alcohol, drugs, girls – girls not well dressed – and sex, girls and boys'. She could do little more to indicate that the 'difference' she was referring to was

defined by its distance from the carnivalesque drinking style with its embrace of intoxication and apparently easy sex.

It was also *The Chalk and Cheese* where Chris and Joey felt you could chat with the bar staff, and student Tilly described it as somewhere that one would go to sit and chat, making links to the everyday style of drinking. Tilly also praised it for having strawberry beer available, 'quirky' glasses and a nice smoking area, and fellow student Nicole commented on the fact that it is 'laid out' nicely, and is somehow 'alternative'. Tilly even claimed that there is a 'diverse range' of people there, which is 'different' from other places.

The idea of 'diversity' and 'difference' is valued in dominant discourses surrounding the night-time economy. Matthew, a bar manager, told me that *The Chalk and Cheese* was a good model for venues in the town and what the night-time high street needed, while the night-time economy coordinator stated 'we want to encourage a more diverse offer in Bournemouth so that we have more diversity in the town'. This 'diversity' is largely defined through its opposition to 'binge' drinking, as in the night-time economy coordinator's response to the recent initiative implemented in Oldham town centre, where 'the social disease of rapid consumption of alcohol' was to be counteracted through encouraging 'diversity among night-time visitors' (quoted in Bailey 2009).

Importantly, the 'difference' and 'diversity' that was so valued by these participants and the night-time economy coordinator were not without exclusions. I outlined in Chapter 4 how Skeggs has analysed the 'cosmopolitan limit' as being constitutive of class, as it constructs the white working class as undesirable even as something that is itself 'different'. In these discussions, too, one can discern a more or less explicit classed (and gendered) figure against which distinctions are drawn. In an example of one of the more explicit characterisations of such a figure, Chris told me that he admired what I was doing for two reasons. First, 'binge drinking' was 'clearly a problem' in Britain, and secondly, he would be afraid of approaching random people. This figure of the violent British drinker was then refined, as Chris and his friend Joey made a link to the cultural attributes of such people. They explained to me that there

was a 'sort' of person who dominated Bournemouth, pointing out some men who went past wearing jeans and smart ironed shirts and a group of young women sitting at a table in the venue as illustrations of these people. Chris and Joey proceeded to link these people to a general malaise in the Bournemouth night-time economy – which the night-time economy coordinator himself had hinted at – whereby venues were dominated by the 'same sort' of people who, amongst other things, liked the 'same sort' of music. In terms of musical taste, this was contrasted with what members of the group variously termed as 'independent' or 'alternative'. The connection was made, therefore, between 'binge' drinking, particular clothing and some idea of a mainstream without individuality, which is directly contrasted with the good taste of others who make an 'independent' choice to listen to 'alternative' music.

In some other participants' discussions of this idea of difference, the idea of cultural capital was perhaps more explicit, and related to broader aspects of nightlife. George, a youth worker, picked out *The Chalk and Cheese* and described it thus:

[I]t's deliberately different and often that type of person can be perceived to be enjoying diff--, being alternative in eh inverted commas, often simply for the sake of being alternative.

He explained that 'it gives you a sense of, of cultural snobbery'. The same idea of is might be seen as lying behind Toby's claim that only a few venues in Bournemouth 'stand out', explaining that they played 'different music'. These venues are understood as 'standing out' from an implicit crowd or mainstream, which plays the same music in contrast to their 'different music'.

As noted above, dressing up was for some participants a key feature of the carnivalesque. Whether this was dressing smartly or wearing 'fancy' dress, such clothing can be understood as 'keying' a change in norms just as Gusfield (1987) argues with respect to alcoholic drinks in general. However, perhaps because of its associations with altered norms, dressing up was criticised by many of those drinkers who distanced themselves from the carnivalesque. Clothing and cultural style were an area where worldviews of the night-time high

street were distinctly at odds with each other. As I mention below, Dean was concerned that a 'chav' might start an argument with him on the basis of what t-shirt he was wearing, suggesting that 'chavs' placed too much emphasis on cultural style. On the other hand, Natasha, a bar worker, complained that people who go out in what she said might be called the 'upper-class' end of town are too concerned with trying to show off how much money they have through their clothing, whereas in the 'chavvy' end of town she liked people can just wear a hoody and jeans, suggesting that in fact the 'chavs' Dean fears are unpretentious and do not care about clothing. This is precisely the form of (mis)recognition that is at the heart of class and identity formation as discussed by Bourdieu. Dean's comment which links clothing to violence through the figure of the chav, as discussed in Chapter 1, begins to show how particular classed figures are constructed through these symbolic struggles, a theme the remainder of this chapter develops further.

The clothes that were seen to be worn by some drinkers were denigrated in aesthetic terms as well as for their associations with violence, for example. This was expressed particularly clearly by Kieran, who lamented that the nightlife in Bournemouth was not as good as in Leeds, where he had been a student. He explained that in Leeds the nightlife was more oriented towards students. When I suggested that Bournemouth had its own share of venues that were aimed at students, he countered by saying that in Leeds he could go out anywhere in 'scruffy' jeans and a t-shirt, whereas he had to 'dress up' in Bournemouth. At this point he gestured towards the clothes he was wearing at the time: a thin non-wool knitwear jumper, jeans and brown leather shoes – an outfit my observations suggest was almost a uniform in town centre venues, and can be linked to the references some participants made to men in 'stripey shirts' or Chris and Joey made to the 'same sort' of people. I suggest that one of the reasons that dress codes as described by Kieran were disliked by some participants is that they are seen as limiting people's opportunities to demonstrate the sort of individualism that is prized according the dominant neo-liberal creed and the idea of distinction. Jake, for example, used particularly illuminating language when he expressed his dislike at being 'forced' to wear shoes in the town centre when would have liked to be able to wear flip-flops if

he chose, as some venues had allowed him in Southampton, where had been an undergraduate student.

In some cases, the connection between clothing and class was made more explicit. Tilly mentioned an article she had read in *The Guardian* (Jeffries 2007) about drinking in Liverpool, which she found embarrassing for 'our nation'. When I emailed her a link to the electronic version to check that I was thinking of the same article, she commented on the picture embedded in the article (copied below as Figure 16): 'don't the girls look classy?!'



Figure 16: Illustration from Jeffries (2007)

For Tilly, it seems, the gestures, but also the fancy dress costumes, mean that the women cannot be considered 'classy'. At one level it can be argued persuasively that the attack contains criticisms of fancy dress as being facile, and that in this particular case its links with an article discussing the dangers and negative aspects of heavy drinking suggests some sense of 'irresponsibility'. In addition, I would suggest that Tilly's objection to the picture is based on the hand gestures from the women and the hyperfemininity of their costumes; that is, they are disrupting her norm of respectable, 'classy' femininity. Importantly, however, these objections are couched in terms of class. In this way, we can see echoes of Skeggs' (1997; 2001; 2004b) discussions of how, from a middle-class perspective, working-class femininity is read as *excessive* femininity. However, in this case, the femininity is

deliberately excessive, as part of carnivalesque fancy dress. The very idea of this turning of norms inside out is anathema to Tilly. The carnivalesque, therefore, when understood as the 'mainstream', 'binge' drinking night-time high street, can be (mis)recognised as both overly prescriptive in terms of dress codes, and excessive, uncontrolled and not sufficiently 'classy'.

The aesthetic arguments presented to me in such discussions did not solely value choices made on the basis of individuality, as in the account given by Chris and Joey of 'independent' and 'alternative' music, or that given by Jake and Kieran of dress codes. There was also a clear point to be made regarding the nature of certain practices themselves that made them more worthy of respect. Bourdieu (1984) argues that in the Kantian tradition the key aspect of the judgement of taste, which lies behind the whole mechanism of distinction as he describes it, is distance from immediate (or 'facile') pleasures, taking delight in complex tastes. This was neatly expressed in respect of music by Dean. His friend Oscar explained that he liked 'rocky' or 'alternative' music, echoing the ideas of independence and difference discussed above, though he might like a bit of 'cheese' if he was drunk enough. Dean then stated that it was easier for them to go to a club and dance to 'cheese' than it would be for someone else to come to the sort of place that they might go to for music and dance or appreciate it there. Their taste is, according to Dean, not as accessible as the mainstream ('cheese').

Parallels might be drawn here between the ideas of complexity and individuality expressed by some of my participants and those of the dance music aficionados Thornton (1995) understood in terms of 'subcultural capital', as discussed in Chapter 1. However, I suggest that to understand such forms in terms of *subcultural* capital would be to miss the connections with more orthodox forms of cultural capital. In the first place, certain aesthetic choices were clearly linked with undesirable 'binge' drinking not only in my discussion with Chris and Joey, as already noted, but also when Rachel and Jane both separately described *Rapture* as a place where people get too drunk and listen to 'horrible', 'cheesy' music. Joey also explained that he had got extremely drunk in *Coliseum*, simply because there was nothing else to do, as he did not

like the music and he was unable to talk to people. Here drunkenness is constructed as a last resort when more respectable tastes are impossible, and something that is associated with failed venues. In this way, a connection is made between 'binge' drinking, violence and mass taste, recalling conceptions of the uncultured mass discussed in Chapter 1 and drawing on dominant discourses familiar from Chapter 2. The classed nature of these claims to (conventional) cultural capital is made more apparent through the terms such as 'chav', also discussed in Chapter 1.

Notably, price had a key role in the discussions surrounding modes of difference and distinction. Sometimes, price is most visible by its absence. Tilly, for example, despite being a student, made no mention of the costs potentially associated with choosing 'different' beers, and many participants never referred to price or the cost of going out.

Other participants were more explicit in how price relates to culture and growing up. Ellie explained when she was younger she drank more beer because it was better value than other drinks. Frank more clearly presented his student self in order to construct his current practices as different from the 'younger generation' that now dominated Bournemouth. In doing this, he noted that, amongst other things, when he was a student he was interested in 'cheap drinks', whereas this was not of concern now. Notably, when his work colleague Simon responded to Frank's teasing of him for being 'posh', he told me that Frank was only interested in getting 'pissed' and cheap drinks. Caring about price is clearly something to be avoided for these 'distinctive' drinkers – and access to such a discourse depends on one's actual material circumstances. This is a clear echo of the rationale behind government and media discussions of price policies analysed in Chapter 2, where I showed how there is an underlying assumption that those who need and desire cheap alcohol will behave more irresponsibly when they have drunk it.

On the other hand, I do not want to claim that those who were interested in distinguishing themselves from carnivalesque or 'binge' drinkers were indifferent to the price of drinks. In one way, being a rational, sensible drinker means that

one does not pay over the odds for one's drinks. When discussing why one major town centre nightclub was a bad place to go, Robert explained that they use a sliding price scale so that the price of drinks increases as the night goes on, and so you would have to be 'wankered' to buy a pint in there as it can cost as much as £4.50. Ken, a university lecturer, made precisely the same point.

All the same, there remains a tension between ideas of distinction and price. It is this contradiction that lies behind Tom's joke that part of the attraction of Oranjeboom beer was that 8 cans only cost £5 at Iceland, when he had just described it as 'a really good beer', seeming to emphasise his good taste. This was only funny because of the apparent contradiction between it being 'really good', and being cheap at Iceland. I argue that access to these discourses is affected by class background. For example, Tom was able to make this joke with irony because of the capital that lies behind him in terms of his degree and graduate job, in a way that Pete, as a student at an FE college, could not when he told me that he simply chooses the cheapest beer.

Drinking to some purpose³⁷

Further expressions of complexity as opposed to the facile pleasures of intoxication could also be detected in participants' discussions, with strongly classed undercurrents. Many participants rejected the idea of drinking to get drunk as described above in the section on the carnivalesque. Simon expressed this neatly when he told me 'I enjoy a drink, rather than drink to enjoy myself', and 'I drink and have a laugh' contrasting this with those who drink *in order to* have a laugh. He explained that, for him, drink *is* involved, but for most other 'people today' drink *has* to be part of their night out. This is quite different from Hannah's outline of her desire to manage drunkenness, and the other instrumental views of alcohol cited above. Importantly, in characterising his own drinking, Simon drew heavily on a portrayal of other people's.

³⁷ Susan Stebbing (1939) might well disapprove of this sub-title – a play on the title of her book *Thinking to Some Purpose* – given that the use of the phrase is more for effect than clarity of argument. However, it might be argued that the title is more apt than at first glance, as it is precisely the effect of such rhetorical and similar devices (and their obscuring of arguments and causes) that concerns me, as it concerned Stebbing in more formal, logical terms.

Although such comments reflect government discourses analysed in Chapter 2, this does not imply a direct acceptance of the government discourse. Certain aspects of the dominant discourse were taken up and emphasised, while others were played down or even directly challenged. For example, Sam challenged government recommended consumption limits while emphasising ideas of responsibility familiar from the discussions in Chapter 2. He argued that the concept of a 'binge' is a 'stupid' way to think about drinking. He and his friends had been drinking in the *Rose and Crown* since 12.30pm and it was now about 7.30pm yet they were not about to 'kick off', even though according to the government definition they had binged in terms of quantity of alcohol consumed. As far as Sam was concerned, quantity was irrelevant; what he was concerned about was people's behaviour, and he stated in his defence that he and his friends were probably the 'sanest' people there, certainly more so than some 'eighteen-year-olds' who had had 'a couple of pints of Stella'. The adherence to everyday norms is made clear here – Sam and his friends are 'sane', in contrast with the implied insanity of 'binge' drinkers, rejecting carnivalesque 'madness'. The same point was made by David, as quoted above, when he condemned 'the completely drunk people who have no self-mastery and have lost their respect of other people'. These perspectives resonate with government and media discussions of self-control and being autonomous. The theme of 'respect' in particular recalls Tony Blair's 'Respect' agenda (see Waiton 2008). In this way, familiar themes with associations of legitimate capital are drawn upon but manipulated in order to authorise the speaker.

Sam may have been particularly eager to present this argument because he had been drinking all day – and in a specific venue. When I was in conversation with Steve, he identified the *Rose and Crown* chain as 'a bit chavvy'. Similarly, Leo and Richie characterised *Rose and Crown* venues as places that were full of people who had been in there drinking all day, spending their 'green giros', a clear reference to being unemployed. The form and location of Sam's drinking, therefore, rendered him liable to be labelled a 'chav' – a possibility he may have been aware of, and which may help explain his insistence on his 'sanity' despite the quantity of alcohol he had consumed.

The links between drunkenness and classed terminology were clear and widespread. When I asked Jane if she felt that drinking might be a problem for some people more than others, she replied 'Yeah, definitely', going on to suggest that some people were more likely than others to get drunk 'on a regular basis' than others. When I asked if there were any reasons for this, or if she was referring to any particular people, she went on, after a pause:

I don't know, oh I would say that quite often the really drunk people I see are quite chavvy looking, say that quietly.

She then went on to question this idea, acknowledging that she saw drunk people come out of particular venues, and 'they don't look particularly chavvy'.

Samir, an investment banker, told me unequivocally that he expected 'demographics' to be very important in my study, as people's jobs, incomes and backgrounds were the 'key drivers' behind their behaviour. He explained that a 'townie' was someone on a 'low income', 'doing the same job' on a '9 to 5', and suggested that they might well just go out to get drunk. In this way, the desire for intoxication was directly linked with class.

Andrew, who was in his late twenties, described his drinking to me in similar terms, stating that he did not miss being a student, when he could start drinking at 10am if he wanted. Rather, he emphasised that he enjoyed the 'structure' and 'responsibilities' in his life now. He acknowledged that he probably did go over the 'weekly limits' that were set by government, saying that he might have '6 pints' on a Friday night, '8 pints' on a Saturday night, and maybe one on a Sunday and so on. However, he said that he was a 'moderate' drinker, and not excessive – though he did point out without any sense of irony that he had had 6 pints that evening. At one point as he walked off to go to the toilet he knocked into a waist-high barstool, to the amusement of the work colleagues he was drinking with.

If participants were not drinking and going out deliberately seeking intoxication, their narratives required a different emphasis. One way in which this was done

was to implicitly emphasise the facile nature of the carnivalesque by presenting an alternative that had ‘substance’ and ‘purpose’. The idea of substance draws upon the Kantian aesthetic of complex, higher pleasures, while the idea of purpose draws on Clarke’s (2005: 448) claim that New Labour likes to see its citizens busy, and ideas of work on the self discussed in Chapter 2. If a leisure activity has a purpose, then it can be understood as part of a development of the self³⁸, and thus linked to the concept of the ‘enterprising self’ (Rose 1992) associated with neo-liberalism. This link, made in accordance with the dominant aesthetic, can be seen as constitutive of class. As argued by Bourdieu (1984), taste classifies, and this classification serves to produce a self of particular symbolic capital, value and power, and therefore *class*.

Ellie’s discussion of Bournemouth town centre offers an example of how this operated in practice. Claire noted that the centre of Bournemouth, in terms of the night-time economy was ‘Just, well clubs really isn’t it?’ to which Ellie responded that it was not for ‘thirty-somethings’. When Claire pointed out that they did occasionally go to one particular venue in the town centre the conversation continued:

- Ellie There’s bars along Bournemouth beach I would definitely go to but in the town centre...
- Claire We’ve been to *The Regency* haven’t you, which is kind of central.
- Ellie Oh yeah.
- Claire Yeah.
- Ellie I’ve been to *The Regency* quite a few times actually. That’s actually...
- WH Okay.
- Ellie ...got a different vibe about it.
- Claire Yeah.
- Ellie Because it’s usually you go there for, um, to see something like a comedy night or...
- Claire Mm.

³⁸ Stebbins’ (1982) theory of ‘serious leisure’ may be considered illuminating on this point, but as with Lindsay’s (2004) spectrum of the ‘serious’ to ‘spectacular’ for describing drinking practices, the terminology may obscure the fact that practices are fun and enjoyable in themselves, and not necessarily taken ‘seriously’. Indeed, a central aspect of the ‘habitus’ as discussed by Bourdieu (1984) is that practices that are valued by the dominant system of value are ‘naturally’ desired and enjoyed by the dominant class.

Ellie ...um, or a, a band night or something. So that's kind of got a different, that's got like a, a purpose. You're not just going to a bar.

Claire Yeah.

WH Yep

Ellie You're going somewhere so therefore that's slightly different...

WH Mm-mm.

Ellie ...I think, um but that is in town.

Claire Yeah.

Ellie I never feel like I'm going in town when I go there.

Claire Don't you?

Ellie No I'm just going to *The Regency*.

Claire Oh right.

Ellie You know you're going to do a something.

Claire Yeah.

Ellie An event.

This idea of entertainment was somehow for Ellie connected with having a chat, since she also went on to discuss how she would not consider a particular pub to be 'town' because it is somewhere they would go with friends to sit down and talk, quite different from the 'intense' space that she associated with the town centre.

Therefore, despite 'entertainment' being different from everyday conversation it is contrasted implicitly with the assumed carnivalesque of 'town': these practices have 'substance', as Simon put it. He contrasted his preferences on a night out with his colleague Frank's, who he joked liked cheap drinks and getting 'pissed'. Simon started off by saying he did not want to stereotype, but then stopped himself and said, 'but I will stereotype' and, after the qualifier 'it sounds bad', told me that he liked nights out with 'a little more substance'. It was while discussing this that he made the comments about alcohol not being central to his nights out that were cited above.

The 'purpose' of drinking could be even more apparent, as in the case of Samir and his friends discussed in detail in Chapter 4, where they argued that their drinking together was constructive and enhanced their productivity at work. This can be directly contrasted with other participants, who were very clear in wanting to let off steam after a hard week's work, who embraced the carnivalesque style. When I asked Michelle, who worked as a shop assistant in

a pharmacy, for example, who she went out with, and suggested people from work, she was instantly dismissive saying she would never want to go out drinking with them. For her, drinking was an escape from work, not an opportunity to talk about it more.

Assessing the backgrounds of the participants according to conventional measures of class, a pattern again emerges. Of those for whom I had classifiable information, all were clearly middle class. Simon and Jane were graduates working for a high street bank and credit control respectively, while Andrew and Samir worked as investment bankers. Claire was a graduate currently working as a temp, having recently lost a job of conventionally higher status, while her friend Ellie was a higher education lecturer studying for a Master's degree.

It is important to recall that this characterisation of the carnivalesque as being solely based on drinking does not match what other participants told me about their nights out. As is clear from the discussion above, the carnivalesque within the night-time economy is about much more than simply drinking and becoming pharmacologically intoxicated. There are all sorts of other aspects of a night out that make it enjoyable – the free and familiar contact, funny stories and unusual behaviour and the sense of community are not automatic consequences of drinking alcohol; they are sought out and fostered.

Consequently, the everyday style did not have a monopoly on the idea of 'entertainment'. Nathan, who liked venues to be 'packed', had a routine to his nights out and went out looking for 'totty' (all features of the carnivalesque drinking style), explained to me that a night would be memorable if there was some 'entertainment', by which he meant good music, or more specifically a good DJ. Similarly, Max and Ben had a firm going out routine involving clubs and bars on Portsmouth's main street, they liked to get pretty drunk and played drinking games, but had come to visit Bournemouth to see a particular DJ, and would get 'pretty drunk'. They understood this as an added bit of entertainment worth paying for, like Ellie and the 'band night', but they did not present the night out as 'a purpose' which meant that they were not 'just going to a bar'.

Rather, this was figured as a fitting addition to a night out drinking that could still be understood as being carnivalesque. Importantly, Ellie's comment that 'You're going somewhere so therefore that's slightly different' prefigures the ideas of individualism, difference and distinction discussed below. Throughout these discussions there is a generally implicit figure of the carnivalesque 'other'. The section on individualism and distinction below addresses more specifically how this figure is classed.

The phraseology and the forms of cultural identification and distinction outlined in the previous sections can seem almost rational and calculating, and so it is appropriate to recall the element of disgust through which class frequently operates, as discussed in Chapter 1. For example, when describing how he felt he had to get drunk at *Coliseum* in order to have any fun, Joey described it as a place where you would have to wipe your feet on the way out of. Notably, *Coliseum* was one of the places praised by Ross and Lee for being relaxed and welcoming where people were out to have fun. Joey was not necessarily making a claim about how clean the venue is *per se*; he was putting all the features of the carnivalesque together, such as people deliberately getting drunk and playing 'cheesy' music, and portraying these as dirty and disgusting – and perhaps all too clinging.

At a more prosaic level, it is important to note that this disgust was expressed at different phenomena, and with varying emphasis. Rachel told me of her disgust when her friend's hand was vomited on in a nightclub, and yet it would not be difficult to imagine Hannah or Ollie seeing this as a funny story to tell. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that ideas of cleanliness and self-control, as well as disgust, exemplified by expressions such as Joey's, have longstanding associations with class (e.g. Skeggs 1997). Moreover, they can be linked with the government's exhortations to young drinkers not to get vomit in their hair, urinate on their shoes or spill food on their clothes (NHS and Home Office 2008a, 2008e). This government advertising campaign, as suggested in Chapter 2, can be understood as an attempt to mobilise middle-class disgust – precisely that emotion that Rachel professes to have felt rather than engaging in the carnival laughter at the bodily function that Bakhtin describes.

It should be noted, however, that just as with class more broadly, the ways in which participants negotiate the drinking styles are fluid and complex. Chris, for example, despite his characterisation of the 'same sort' of people who were violent, 'binge' drinking and conventional and simplistic in their tastes, gladly admitted to drinking to get drunk, and made it clear that he felt he had no 'problems' and was not 'depressed'; he simply enjoyed the feeling of being drunk and found it helped him talk to girls. He had also set fire to public bins in a park when drunk, as noted above. For many people, deliberately drinking to get drunk and setting fire to public property when drunk would be considered behaviour characteristic of a 'binge' drinker. Chris, however, had no desire to live with such an identity, and thus eagerly presented the idea of the mainstream and his own distance from it.

'Chavs' and Door Policies

When Tilly spoke of the 'diversity' and 'different' clientele that could be found at *The Chalk and Cheese*, her friend Matt pointed out, with a tone that suggested scepticism of Tilly's claims of diversity, that it was 'quite elitist' and did not allow 'chavs' or 'skanks' in. Tilly then took this idea up, commenting favourably that she had seen 'chavs' being turned away for not having a membership card, and confiding with some obvious pleasure that she and her friends did not have membership cards either, but had never been asked. This attitude is summed up neatly in Skeggs' (2004b: 162) phrase 'the cosmopolitan limit'; diversity can still be exclusionary, since not all 'difference' is equally valued. This seemed to be what lay behind Frank's one reservation about this venue, which he praised highly for its 'different' features: the 'bouncers' were 'apparently dickheads'.

This idea of turning away particular people was confirmed by youth worker George. Commenting on the 'West End' area of Bournemouth, discussed below, he said that there was less 'aggro' or violence there, 'especially with *The Chalk and Cheese* because it's very discriminating. I mean not discriminating in a naughty way but door policy, you've got to be a regular to get in'. He came back to this theme later:

George Sometimes people try and come from one to the others but the bouncers won't let them in because they're not going to be regulars and so.

WH But you wouldn't get that sort of door policy down in the middle of town, like the other end?

George No. No that's the only door policy like that, in, in the whole of town. Bizarre door policy. I thought it was insane when they started it but I think they're, it's actually made...

WH So it's not just one of them?

George Sorry?

WH It's not just one of them, it's all...?

George No it's only *The Chalk and Cheese* that's got...

WH Oh right.

George ...that door policy. I don't know what the door policy is at the others.

WH So you thought, sorry, you thought it was insane but?

George Oh it's been really good because they knew the vibe they wanted...

WH Mm-mm.

George ...and they've managed to maintain the vibe. If somewhere gets popular, for a particular reason because a particular type of people like going there for a particular vibe, type of music, atmosphere, décor, everything, um, it becomes popular, everyone wants to go there and like I say, I mean there's never been any trouble in there and there is a real... And because it's lar--, because it's like at least 50% Arts Institute students...

WH Mm.

George ...I mean there, there is a vibe of lots of people know each other and if I'm in there with a couple of friends who are students then they'll know some other people and there's a real, there's, it's, it's a nice vibe in there which would be lost if it, if they were letting every--, not, and I don't mean that in a nasty way.

This extract illustrates that, according to George, the venue has chosen to exclude a certain sort of person in order to foster a particular 'vibe', which can be understood as a drinking style: the everyday or 'distinctive' model. Tilly's account informs us that the judgement is not in practice made on the basis of a membership card³⁹; rather it is made on the basis of people's appearance and manner – to be precise, their 'corporeal' or 'cultural' style, to go back to the

³⁹ That these membership cards do actually exist was confirmed when I visited the site for observation (15th December 2007), and picked up a flyer for their New Year's Eve Party, which stated 'Priority entry for regulars [sic] card holders'.

theories of gender and class of Butler and Skeggs discussed earlier. Tilly's term 'chav' therefore has broader implications than just a choice of clothing.

Not only were exclusions from the implicit definition of desirable difference made on the basis of class (or 'chav' identity); such people were also understood to dislike difference. As noted in Chapter 1, the term 'townie' has similar connotations to 'chav', and Frank was called a 'townie' when he suggested that bars or particular nights that were targeted at 'foreigners' would have worse music than normal nights, the understanding being that 'townies' were less tolerant of difference than other people. There are clear similarities here with Joey's discussion of 'Bournemouth skinheads' and the racism of the white working class, as noted in Chapter 4. This apparent lack of tolerance of diversity was then linked to cultural style by Anna, who cited as Frank's cord trousers as further evidence of his being a 'townie'. She joked that they probably came from Primark, which he grudgingly admitted to, but he then seemed to try to sustain some pride in this, going on to state that his jumper came from George at ASDA.

This illustrates how class is fluid and fine-grained. Although Frank was a graduate bank worker, who would have been classified as middle-class according to the NS-SEC schema – indeed in precisely the same grouping as Anna and Simon who both teased him using tropes permeated with classed ideas – the more cultural elements of class, and how it is played out at an individual level, illustrate the infinite gradations and differentiations that can be made through the forms of distinction and taste discussed throughout this thesis. These exchanges demonstrate how class is constantly being 'made' through everyday interactions including drinking.

Another interesting case that illustrates the fluidity and performative nature of class, however, is that of Chris and Joey. As already noted, they were telesales workers – an occupation considered to be characteristic of the new service-based working class – but they were very keen to emphasise their difference from the 'usual Bournemouth skinheads' and the 'same sort' of people who apparently drank in most bars and clubs in Bournemouth. Classed tropes were

therefore employed to establish some cultural capital to counteract the position that Chris and Joey found themselves in – telesales workers without degrees, lacking formally recognised economic capital through income or occupation, and cultural capital through educational qualifications, for example. These cases support the conception that while class may have roots in economic exploitation, its effects and the way it operates as a mode of distinction and affects how people see the world, often through forms of identity, cannot be based simply on ‘objective’ position.

Nevertheless, despite this emphasis on the importance of the cultural, and informal classifications put together by participants themselves, there remain links to more formal structural conceptions of class. Those participants that emphasised their ‘difference’ from the mainstream and ‘chavs’ tended to have particular socio-economic backgrounds. David, Frank, Anna, and Matthew were all graduates, working as an investment banker, high street bank workers and a bar manager respectively. Tilly, Nicole, Craig, Dean and Oscar were all final-year students seeking to distance themselves not only from ‘townies’ but also fellow students.

Violence and Sexuality

As was clear from the discussions in the Introduction and Chapter 2, sex and violence are frequently associated with ‘binge’ drinking in media and government discussions. Drinkers themselves also made such connections. Some linked the general carnivalesque atmosphere to violence, and expressed this in terms that could be understood using the concept of the habitus from Bourdieu’s work, saying they were afraid or uncomfortable in the town centre at night. There is not the neat fit between habitus and field that generates comfort and capital as described in Chapter 1, and some participants explained that alcohol helps them reconcile this disconnect.

Derek, a graduate who worked in higher education, described how he did not feel at ease in the town centre on Saturday nights because it is busy, loud and violent. The only solution in this situation, he told me, is to get ‘legless’ yourself. In this way, he distances himself from his actual practice of getting ‘legless’ –

rather than being a sign of his being a carnivalesque drinker, this counter-intuitively becomes evidence that he is definitely *not* carnivalesque, since without the alcohol he is naturally incompatible with the carnivalesque atmosphere. Kieran, a recent graduate, similarly suggested that Bournemouth's night-time economy was more violent than that of Leeds, where he had been a student, and also more boring. He explained that he therefore drank when he went out in the town centre, but not to feel safe so much as to make the night 'interesting', echoing Joey's explanation of his night drinking heavily in *Coliseum*. In this way, he is apparently driven to drink in a carnivalesque manner because the town centre lacks any substance or interest – the culture is too facile for his tastes.

It is notable that these participants were all graduates, and were making a comparison with the general Bournemouth town centre atmosphere of the carnivalesque, linking violence to other broader aspects of cultural style associated as analysed through this chapter as being linked to class. These expressions of drinking as an escape from an uncomfortable or dangerous situation – all by men – also offer an interesting gender difference. When women were afraid, my research suggests that they took (or said they took) steps to manage their drunkenness and to stay in control. When men felt the same way, they deliberately drank to get rid of the feeling.

Violence was also more directly classed through its association with the term 'chav'. Sally characterised the whole of the town centre of Bournemouth (in contrast to the 'West End', discussed below) as 'chavvy' and 'aggressive'. Dean, a final year student like Sally, similarly complained that the town centre on a Friday night is full of 'chavs' drinking and 'getting fighty'. He elucidated this by saying he did not have the time for an argument with a 'drunken chav' about 'what t-shirt' he was wearing, suggesting that as well as liking getting excessively drunk, and fighting, 'chavs' have a different sense of style – or 'taste', to think in Bourdieusian terms.

Jake, a Master's student, outlined this link between violence and cultural style even more clearly. As noted above, he criticised the apparent prevalence of

dress codes in Bournemouth town centre. He contrasted this approach with that in Southampton, where he had recently been an undergraduate, where there were some venues where the managers knew that students would be sick and do things that would not be tolerated at other places, but accepted this as a part of running their venue. As well as this, they let people come in wearing whatever they liked, including trainers, or even flip-flops as fancy dress for a beach-themed night. It was at this point that he complained that if you were wearing trainers you could not get in to most clubs in Bournemouth; instead you have to wear 'shoes'. One of the reasons he gave for disliking this policy was that it was wrong-headed policy because would not stop 'trouble', as 'chavs' wearing their 'crappy shoes' would be more likely to cause this than him, wearing his trainers. This policy on footwear was so important to him that he told me that he would prefer to go out during the week, when things would be more 'relaxed', partly because he would not have been 'forced to wear shoes'. The way in which clothing is linked with cultural style through the term 'chav', and also violence, is illustrative of how class operates within the broader night-time economy. The same phenomenon has been observed by Chatterton and Hollands (2003: 115), for example, who have noted how 'townies' were criticised for 'dressing up'.

Georgina, who worked in a town centre bar three or four days a week, also made the link between 'chavs' and violence, as she began to tell me, without any prompting apart from my usual preamble introducing myself as researching drinking, 'chavs are the worst'. When I asked what she meant, she explained that they were the most likely to cause 'trouble' (suggesting violence again) and were simply rude to the bar staff, expecting to be served first even if someone else had been waiting at the bar longer. This distaste for whatever a 'chav' is was expressed quite shockingly by Toby, a graduate aged 28, who when asked what he liked to do when he went out replied as a joke 'killing chavs'. When he said this, his friend Abbie agreed in more banal terms, saying 'chavs' were 'annoying'.

Alex, a graduate who worked for a high street bank and described himself as a 'financial analyst' (though his friends joked that all he did was 'data entry'), used

the word 'pikey'. He was explaining slightly jokily that, for him, a good night in realistic terms would involve 'not getting into a fight', and this was closely linked with there being a 'lack of pikeys' in the venue. It was clear that this word was slightly unacceptable, as Alex then asked with a laugh how I would represent that in my research. When I said that I would just put it inside quotation marks, Fred joked that I should reference it as 'Smith 1999' who first used the term. I would suggest this uncertainty is because it is understood to be a 'politically incorrect' word as shown by the complaints and sanctions when it is used on television, for example (e.g. BBC 2003b, 2008a). Pikey, then, in this context, seems to be associated with little except violence, though the previous associations suggest that it could be tied to particular consumption patterns.

When Samir, Kurt and Steve were discussing the dismissal of someone from their firm for choosing to 'entertain' a set of clients by taking them to a strip club, Samir described this as part of a general rule: there is a 'line' the management do not want you to cross. He then explained that the policy could be understood simply as the fact that the management do not want their employees to behave in a 'chav' way – he said: 'they don't use that language, but that's what they mean'. 'Chavs' are here associated with sexual excess – going to a strip club. Notably, all those who made these references to violence (or sexuality) and linked them directly to the terms 'chav' or 'pikey' were graduates, apart from Georgina.

A place to 'sit and chat'

The same form of distinction could be found, though perhaps less overtly, in relation to types of drinking environment. It would be hard to exaggerate the difference between the dark, loud, packed, open space of *Red* described above, and the design of, say, a well-lit J D Wetherspoon's pub during the day, where no music is played and the space is full of tables, chairs and sofas designed to match the everyday style with its emphasis on chatting with friends. Given that the primary activity of the everyday drinking style can be seen as chatting to one's friends, there is a particular sort of venue that suits this. Ellie drew a clear contrast between what I would call a carnivalesque and an everyday drinking venue. She described a recent night out when she had been to a major chain

bar and complained that it was ‘absolutely full and horrible of lots of people and very, um, intense, not a lot of space and not a comfortable drinking space’.

When Claire said that it was loud, Ellie agreed that it was ‘very loud’ and she outlined what is required in an everyday venue:

And perhaps that’s what you like when you’re younger but I don’t know but I like to be out, either sit down or be able to stand round and actually speak to [Claire: Yeah] my friends, now.

Similarly, Holly, a physiotherapist in her early thirties, described how she liked *The Lighthouse* in Bournemouth because it is ‘airy’, you can sit down, and the music is quiet so you can have a conversation. Revealingly, she linked this with having a good selection of wines – a theme of distinction through taste that I discuss in more detail below. She was surprised that she liked this bar, because she has found other branches of the chain in London to be smoky and ‘packed’ with people. Brendan, a university lecturer, also said that he went out for conversation, and agreed with Ken, who also worked at the university, that frequently the music could be too loud for this to be easy, while Joey, one of the telesales workers, approvingly described one pub as ‘a nice place to have a chat’.

When they talked about venues, it became clear that some participants linked particular types of venues, and drinking styles, with particular types of people. Steve told me that Bournemouth needs more places for ‘people like us’, explaining that he was referring to venues with ‘leather sofas’ where you could ‘sit and chat’. He contrasted this with current venues in Bournemouth, which ‘cram’ people in and ‘whack up the prices’, particularly in the summer when there are many hen and stag groups visiting the town. Samir expressed this as the town needing a ‘higher class’ of venue. Rachel, similarly, said that Bournemouth needed places with more ‘couches’ for people to sit on. Samir’s explicit linking of leather sofas and people like us described by Steve with class symbolises how the everyday drinking style is associated with a class hierarchy.

This association is also reflected in structural factors. Looking at the backgrounds of the participants quoted here, those advocating the everyday style once again broadly represent the intermediate and professional occupations, including university lecturers, investment bankers, a physiotherapist and a graphic designer. Moreover, the description of the 'different environment' outlined above precisely echoes the discussion in the 2004 Alcohol Strategy quoted in Chapter 2, according to which 'a crowded and noisy environment can increase the risk of disorderly behaviour' (Cabinet Office 2004: 12). In this way, to express distance from such a drinking environment is to express an affinity with governmental norms of drinking behaviour and therefore claim symbolic capital for one's own practices, meaning that drinking is constitutive of symbolic power, and thus class.

'Chavs' and Students

Hollands (1995) noted the importance of the distinction between 'students' and 'locals' in some of his work, reiterated in his research with Chatterton (Chatterton and Hollands 2003: Ch 6) and confirmed by Holt and Griffin (2005). However, in more recent work (e.g. Hollands 2002) he has outlined how the student-local distinction has become blurred with the expansion of higher education and the tendency for students to be more fashion-conscious.⁴⁰ I investigate such potential distinctions, discussing how the student-local dynamic can be played out as well as broadening this analysis to include class distinctions amongst the 'local' population itself.

The reference to 'townie' in previous research conjures up ideas of such division between 'town' and 'gown', or students and 'locals'. Hayward and Yar (2006: 15), for example, locate 'townie' as being a term common in Oxford and Cambridge, and other university towns. This division, although many participants seemed unaware of it, was affirmed strongly by some students.

Here I copy a section from my fieldnotes:

⁴⁰ Hollands (2002: 160) also significantly points out how there are many young people who are priced out of the formal, town-centre night-time economy. The focus of this study, however, is on those who drink within this setting.

At this lull in the conversation, I asked if they felt there was a distinction in Bournemouth between students and people from the town, and Nicole immediately said 'completely'. Friday and Saturday night were agreed to be completely different sorts of nights to the rest of the week. Matt mentioned men in 'stripey shirts', and Nicole talked about 'local idiots' starting fights. Tilly said that the locals' 'manners' weren't as good, with particular reference to them 'touching up' girls in nightclubs.

I argue that this construction of the 'local' cultural style opposed to the (final year) student cultural style is classed. As in Chris and Joey's discussion of the danger of approaching unknown people on the night-time high street and Jake's denigration of dress codes, a link is then made to a separate cultural feature: 'stripey shirts'⁴¹. Sally stated that *Red* was particularly 'chavvy' and 'aggressive' at the weekends in contrast with student nights during the week. Penny made the same distinction, saying she liked *Red* during the week when it was filled with students, but not at the weekends. In this way, depictions of violence and dangerous sexuality, as well as the general impression of excess, and irresponsible, unsafe or even simply impolite behaviour are linked to cultural style. It is through this characterisation of the local 'other' that these young people are able to construct a narrative of responsible, respectable drinking despite their ambivalent 'objective' positioning as students with little economic or formal cultural capital.

Intriguingly, Tyler (2008), discussing the figure of the 'chav', argues that students have been constructed as almost the polar opposite of chavs, and this is illustrated by the prevalence of 'chav nites' held at student union venues across the country, where students dress up as 'chavs'. As Tyler (2008: 31) puts it: 'Carnavalesque chav nights held in student union bars across contemporary Britain play out class warfare on campus'. Bournemouth University's own student union nightclub, The Old Firestation, has recently run such events almost every term, for example on Monday 4th February 2008,

⁴¹ Perhaps this is an indication of a change in fashion: in 2000, Skeggs found that the defining feature of the mainstream, working-class 'binge' drinker was their 'opal fruit' *checked* shirt (Skeggs 2004b: 162-3).

when it was called the 'Über-Chav Party'⁴², and the 'Chav Ball' on Monday 17th November 2008 (see Figure 17). *The Chalk and Cheese*, as noted above, was the most clearly anti-chav venue in the eyes of my participants, and this was revealingly identified by George (and also bar manager Matthew) as being full of students from the Arts Institute – the other higher education institution in the town apart from Bournemouth University.

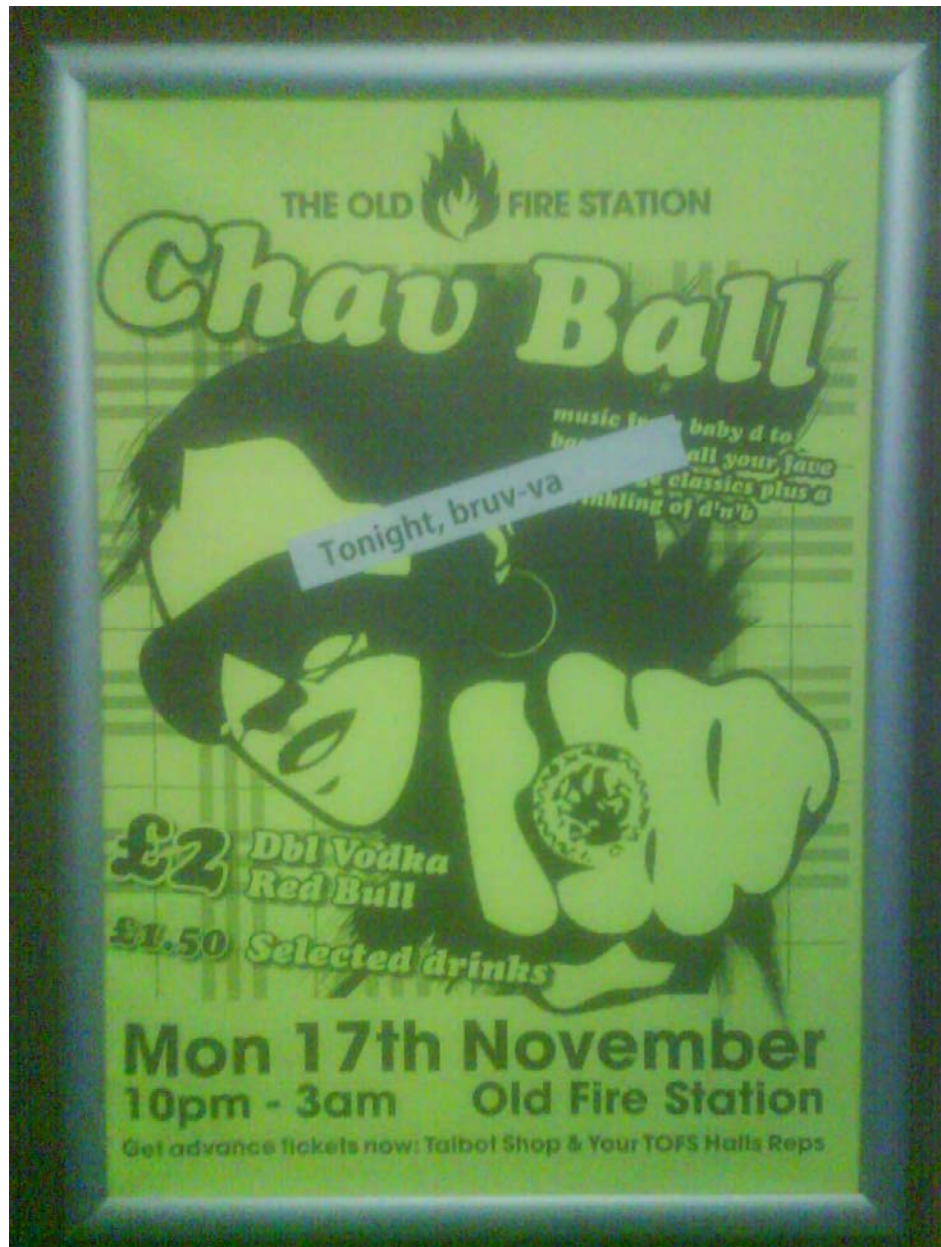


Figure 17: Students' Union Bournemouth University Chav Ball poster November 2008

⁴² This is from *The Old Firestation Events Guide, Spring '08, 14.01 – 28.03*.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Moran and Skeggs (2004) have discussed the particular place of students in their conception of the cosmopolitan which they argue illuminates the operation of gender, class and sexuality in contemporary Britain. Students, they argue, are often conceived of as 'outsiders', partly through being away from home and therefore not 'local' – and therefore being part of the cosmopolitan, which is opposed to the local in their analysis. They found that participants in their research felt that the presence of a significant student population in Lancaster helped to give the town a sense of cosmopolitanism. On an individual level, being understood to be a student was felt by one of their participants to have been a way of escaping being seen as a lesbian for having a very short hair cut. In this way, as well as students offering a town a sense of difference, so time as a student can be understood as time out from the normal conventions of society. Participants felt that being understood to be students was one way of avoiding being labelled homosexual and somehow strange – they were seen as simply students, and therefore acceptable in their deviation from norms.

My discussions with students also fit this model of time as a student as (respectable) time out from more restrictive everyday norms. However, this period of time out, although it offers them the opportunity to engage in carnivalesque drinking without being labelled 'townies', for example, also entails some insecurity of position, as students somewhat lack conventional cultural, and certainly economic, status. Looking over the rest of this chapter, one can therefore detect notable instances where students such as Tilly and her friends, and Dean and Oscar were insistent in their attempts to distance themselves from 'binge' drinkers, and occasionally other students, most commonly 'freshers' (those in their first year at university). For example, Tilly and Nicole in particular – third (and final) year students – were vociferous in distancing themselves from the drinking practices of freshers, who, I was told half-jokingly, get so drunk that they are liable to be sick in your mouth if you kiss them. Once again then, disgust was mobilised as a powerful force of distinction. In more prosaic terms, Dean and Oscar were clear that they now engaged in more individual and complex, aesthetically refined practices than in their first year,

going to pubs to talk rather than, as previously, following the crowds to bars with cheap drinks where cheesy music was played.

It is notable, however, that not all students made these kinds of cultural claims, most notably Sarah, Lisa and Pete who, as well as being first year students (though Pete was not at university as yet, but rather a local FE college), all lived locally, making them less able to claim the cosmopolitan difference that was accessible to students from outside the town. My claims here on this theme are necessarily tentative, as these ideas regarding students and their negotiation of classed norms need more investigation, especially in the light of the recent expansion of higher education in the UK, which, as Hollands (2002) suggests, may have blurred the distinction between the student and the local.

The anti-pretension critique

As noted above, participants were generally aware of the ways in which 'binge' drinking is condemned in government and media discussions, and made attempts to negotiate these discourses. Participants were equally aware of the different ways in which their practices might be understood by other drinkers. As the previous section has outlined, some participants had a view of the night-time economy that would label many drinkers as 'chavs', 'pikies', 'townies', or other classed categories. A central claim of this thesis is that the carnivalesque drinking style itself can be understood as a challenge to the dominance of this discourse within the symbolic economy. This section considers briefly how some participants who were aware that they were liable to be labelled in such ways dealt with the threat of this symbolic violence explicitly through the anti-pretension critique.

As outlined above, Bourdieu (1984; 1987) has discussed how taste can classify and distinguish people from one another, and how struggles over taste can be seen as class struggles over worldviews. Skeggs (2005: 975) has explained how this is then lived out so that there is

a daily cultural struggle around authorization, in which those who are positioned to make judgements of other's [sic] subjectivity are continually de-authorized by those who are positioned to be judged.

What this means in practice is that when classed judgements of taste are made, those who are claiming high status are challenged as being 'pretentious' – an approach Skeggs calls the 'anti-pretension critique' (see Skeggs 2004b: 114-116).

This was precisely the challenge made by some drinkers who embraced the carnivalesque. Sarah complained that some clubs were more about 'image' than having 'a good time', and her friends Lisa and Pete agreed. The clubs Lisa and Sarah mentioned as examples of this were from the end of town that James and Carl went to, where *The Chalk and Cheese* is also located. The night-time economy coordinator described this area as: 'what we'd call where the West End of clubs are in Bournemouth (...) they're quite nice clubs (...) So it's quite a nice area'. Another professional, George, also described this as the 'West End'. Sarah and Lisa though disparaged this area for its 'celeb clubs', which Pete described as too 'stuck up'. The three of them then contrasted this with their own approach to choosing a venue, which was simply that they did not mind where they went so long as it had a 'good atmosphere' and you could have 'good fun' there. As examples of such places, they named *Red* and *Sizzle*, both town centre clubs owned by large companies, with *Sizzle* being a nationally recognisable name. Notably, *Sizzle* was the venue where Jane had her archetypally chaotic carnivalesque night out, and *Red* was the club which Sally felt was chavvy and aggressive at the weekend. The venues can therefore be seen as carnivalesque, but they were also explicitly labelled as classed by one participant. George, reflecting on the way class might relate to drinking, picked these two venues out as the places he would have gone to when he was younger, and which he therefore thought of as 'working class'. When Sarah made the comment about liking going to such venues, she then felt the need to go on and explain that price was not an indicator of the sort of night you would have, as she had once paid £15 to get into a club and she had not had a good time, whereas she used to go to clubs in Poole – which she described as not being that 'great' – but have a good time, mainly because of the people she was with. The same disregard for distinction seemed to lie behind her statement that when she is out all she is looking for in terms of music is something with a

strong beat, so she can dance easily, which was echoed in Lisa's preference for R&B and 'dance', and Pete's for 'dance' and 'cheese'. I could not imagine Chris or Joey making such statements. In this way, therefore, we can see that carnivalesque drinkers are aware that their practices might be denigrated, or seen as less valuable than others, but a common response is the anti-pretention critique, whereby what are seen to be simple, honest pleasures are held up as against the superficial, status-driven behaviour of others.

Natasha, a bar worker, made a similar point regarding the 'stuck up' end of town. Initially she described what George called the 'West End' of town as 'what you might call upper-class' venues. She clarified this by explaining that she thought people go to these places to say 'look at me and how much money I've got' – before correcting herself: 'look at me and how much money I'm pretending I've got'. The symbolic value of this (display of) economic capital was thus challenged, and was contrasted with the approach prevalent in the other end of town – 'the more chavvy end', as Natasha put it – where drinkers are more 'up for a laugh' and out simply to have a 'good time'. When I mentioned Natasha's description of the end of town as apparently 'upper-class', Danny challenged this, saying:

I wouldn't say it's so much showing off their money but it's very much showing off their, who they are. There's a very, yeah, there is a sense of status. I mean the girls, even if it is unbelievably shallow. [WH: Mm-mm] I'm not saying they're shallow, I'm saying that veneer of status or whatever.

He continued:

Their jeans will cost £150 upwards, um, I mean their shoes will look almost exactly the same as ours but they'll know that there's a little label and everyone else in that place will know that [WH: Right] that means they cost three times as much as the shoes we're wearing. I don't know, it's, it's the stuff which only matters to them and which we probably wouldn't quite understand.

It is worth noting the background of Natasha and Lisa and her friends, as outlined in Chapter 4, to put their challenge to these claims of distinction into context. Natasha was a bar worker who had left school at sixteen to go to do a

three-year performing arts course at a local college, before deciding on finishing that she did not want a career in this field, and turned what had been a part-time bar job to earn some spending money while a student into a full-time job. Lisa was a first-year media student at Bournemouth University, who had lived with her parents in Bournemouth all her life, and seemed to feel uncomfortable on the course.

Attempts were therefore made by some participants to de-authorise others' claims to distinction. Similar expressions have been noted by Chatterton and Hollands (2003: 116), for example, who found that venues that were presented as 'cosmopolitan' but still exclude certain people were criticised by some drinkers for being 'pretentious'. The links with class are shown in the backgrounds of the participants concerned, but also in the association of distinction with money, and the broader framework of an apparently uncomplicated culture that emphasises immediate pleasure. In this way, drinking on the night-time high street can be seen as an element of the broader symbolic economy whereby economic capital and aesthetic schemas are intermeshed. Intriguingly, Natasha, jokingly it must be said, claimed the term 'chavvy' as something positive – and in contrast to the depictions of the town centre by some others regarding dress codes, emphasised that one can go out in a 'hoody and jeans' and still be allowed in, which would not be the case in the other end of town.

Managing Drunkenness and Gender

Sam's idea of staying 'sane' despite drinking large quantities of alcohol, with its references to maturity as discussed above, has striking parallels with the 'traditional' drinking outlined by Gofton (1990), where men should 'hold' their drink and not be overtly intoxicated in order to demonstrate their status as mature and masculine. However, I argue in this section that ideas of self-control are not confined to men and that in fact it would be more sensible to follow Mullen *et al.* (2007) in seeing young masculinity as valuing a state of intoxication. The same, however, cannot be said for young femininity. It is not accurate in the contemporary UK to claim that 'if femininity is related to alcohol at all, it is to its absence' (Bjerén 1992: 162). Particular gendered forms need

not always mirror the dominant forms. As Vitellone (2004) has suggested, drug cultures may still be gendered despite a complete opposition between the dominant formulation of femininity and being a drug user. Moreover, for those engaged in carnivalesque drinking, alcohol is not directly and completely opposed to conventional forms of femininity; as this section illustrates the ideas of responsibility and risk-management familiar from Chapter 2 still play a role in the relations of gender in this culture.

In the previous sections I have outlined how a state of mind altered through intoxication is a central part of the carnivalesque drinking style. However, as Ellie put it:

[I]t's not nice to get to the point when you're drunk so you can't stand up, um, and throwing up, that's obviously [WH: Right] not nice because it's just uncomfortable, if nothing else.

It is therefore important to note that the 'carnival' has limits, and this section will consider how different people articulate these limits. One important point is the voices which are absent – who did *not* speak to me about limits.

The idea of limits is clear in the ideas of 'controlled loss of control' found in previous research (e.g. Hall and Winlow 2005b; Measham and Brain 2005), discussed above. These accounts, focusing on the structures which help to shape the drinking – such as town planning and capitalism – concentrate on how the element of 'control' within hedonism is seen as characteristic of the consumerist self in advanced capitalism, following Featherstone's (1982; 1991) idea of 'calculating hedonism'. According to such a model, this consumerism is 'within limits' because the industry does not want the disorder and excess that might be associated with fully-blown carnival behaviour.

However, one of the reasons that I have chosen the term 'carnavalesque' to describe this drinking style is that in fact some notion of 'within limits' has always been part of the carnival – it was not an unbounded festival, but rather a controlled letting off of steam, and has always been in some way connected with commerce. Featherstone (1991: 22-23) has noted that fairs and festivals

have always incorporated the selling of commodities, whilst Eagleton (1981: 148) has pointed out how carnivals have never been fully divorced from formal licensing by the authorities. Moreover, the clear ritual elements such as the de-throning of the carnival king illustrate an adherence to some idea of rules and order.

For some people I spoke to there was a very clear line which they did not want to cross in terms of intoxication. There were a number of reasons for this, and one of the most prominent was illness, as in Ellie's account. As Hannah put it, 'I just don't want to ever get so drunk that I have to go to hospital'. Similarly, Sally explained that a good night out was one where she did not end up being 'too drunk'. When I asked what she meant, she said that she was simply referring to being hung over the next day. Sarah explained that one of the reasons she drinks beer is that 'it doesn't give me hangovers', the same reason that Joanne gave for always drinking spirit mixers. When asked about 'bad' aspects of going out, Claire mentioned feeling ill the next day and not being able to go out running with friends. When she and Ellie were discussing how they do not go out drinking heavily as often as they used to, the main reason they offered was that 'the hangovers get harder as you get older', and it was this that meant they prefer to go out on Friday nights rather than Saturdays because that way 'you've got two days to get over it so . . . you still feel like you have a weekend'.

Sometimes this management of potential illness was explicitly linked to meeting personal obligations, recalling the figure of the responsible, autonomous citizen outlined in Chapter 2. Hannah, for example, explained that she preferred to go out during the week because, being a student, her job is on the weekend and she does not want to be hung over at work. On a similar point, Jake explained that now he was a Master's student his course was more structured and so he could not go out drinking so often during the week, preferring to 'save it for the weekend' – though Tilly made precisely the same argument based on the fact that she was a final year undergraduate. On the night I met him, Samir explained to his friends that he could not stay out too late because he had to be up in the morning and driving, and did not want to still be over the legal limit for alcohol in the bloodstream. Notably, then, when men discussed aversion to

illness, as Jake and Samir did, they did so with reference to particular obligations, rather than expressing their dislike of vomiting or feeling sick *per se*.

Fear and Sexuality

Sometimes, the reasons for drawing a line went beyond illness or meeting responsibilities to an idea of safety. Here there were clear resonances with the figure of the (gendered) responsible, risk-managing subject discussed in Chapter 2. Certainly, fear was a common theme in women's discussions of going out in the town centre, and this was linked with male sexuality.

Christina, herself a bar worker, told me that she finds Bournemouth frightening and wouldn't walk around on her own after dark. Similarly, when asked what she would improve about Bournemouth, Jane told me 'in places like the gardens I feel really threatened walking through there at night', and so she approved of CCTV, but felt 'a few more police on patrol would make me feel a bit more comfortable'. Claire and Ellie agreed, and were more specific about why they would not walk around on their own: 'there are big groups of male, male drunk big groups in Bournemouth'. This fear is understood to be distinct from the actual possibility of sexual assault: 'if you were on your own you would be... [Claire: Yeah] ...if you didn't get any hassle from it you'd be so intimidated anyway'. This sense of fear may be related to reporting in the local press, for example in Slade's (2009) recent account of a young woman being violently sexually assaulted in Bournemouth's gardens – the very area where Jane felt there should be more police.

This fear of the dark also seemed to permeate judgements of venues, as when Rachel complained that all the clubs in Bournemouth were too dark. Nicole commented that she strongly disliked the downstairs area in one venue because it was so dark. She said that she preferred places with high ceilings – feeling like you have space is important to her. Similarly, Megan complained of *The Nightowl*: 'I hated it. I felt so uncomfortable in there'. When I asked why, she explained: 'It's like down in the basement [WH: Mm-mm] and it's all black and the ceiling's like there and no it's horrible'. This was in marked contrast

with her friend Hannah's description of the venues they liked: 'They're quite big and open-spacey so you don't feel all claustrophobic'.

The sense of personal space that Nicole talks about seems to be key to feeling comfortable, and therefore safe. The link with male sexuality was made explicit when participants discussed incidents and actual dangers within drinking venues. Rachel and her friends Abbie and Eve sarcastically told me that one particular venue in Bournemouth was the place to go if you wanted to get harassed, and went on to reminisce amongst themselves about how a 'little man' had grabbed one of their arms and the whole dancefloor had turned to look when they pushed him away. Eve had earlier told me not to go to *The Nightowl* because she said that she had got her drink spiked there. Hannah said that her mother was always worried 'that I'm going to get so drunk that some random guy's going to sleep with me', before going on to note that this is related to a general problem: 'Girls getting raped [Megan: and stuff] and not really being able to remember it or being able to remember it [Megan: Yeah] and then nobody believes her'.

Megan and her friends had raised this point when I first spoke to them in a bar. When discussing how they had an idea of 'limits' to their drinking – they liked to get to a 'fun' stage of drunkenness without being 'paralytic' – Megan, Libby and Angela had claimed that this was not the case with 'guys'. Angela went on to explain this, saying that getting drunk was felt to be more dangerous for young women, as it is 'drummed into you' from a young age that rape is something to be concerned about, whereas men do not think about this.

I suggest that these themes of fear, concern and risk-management are somewhat at odds with the carnivalesque. As Bakhtin (1984a: 39) suggests, the carnival is 'fearless'. In it, apparently terrifying monsters are defeated through being rendered 'comic'. Although Rachel and her friends did turn the 'little man' into a figure of mockery and humour, this did not hold for most of these discussions. However, I do not mean to present men as the ungendered, neutral, ideal carnivalesque subjects. Megan, for example, saw gender as being central to young men's behaviour in the night-time economy, asserting

that while 'boys' know in the back of their minds that they do have limits, they disregard these, partly in the face of peer pressure, and the same explanation lies behind their desire to fight: 'they want to prove themselves'. This thesis should not be seen as a celebration of the carnivalesque so much as an analysis of the distinctions and inequalities of cultural capital that infuse it. Stanko (2000: 252) has noted that young men are the group most at risk of violent crime, but fear it least – an approach that is just as gendered as women's fear, and a claim that is supported by the attitudes of those men cited above who told me they drank more alcohol when they felt uncomfortable because of the threat of violence.

Shame and Embarrassment

Not all concerns with levels of drunkenness focused on ideas of safety or illness. Some participants emphasised what is best understood as a sense of embarrassment. Jane was very clear that:

When it gets to a silly stage, that's when I think it's a bit stupid [WH: What, sort of... ?] and that people should stop and people should know their limits.

When I asked what might constitute this silly stage, the problems described could be linked with concerns regarding safety and illness discussed above: 'falling over, and being sick, or getting into trouble, that sort of thing, getting escorted out of a club by the bouncers that sort of thing'. However, when Jane told me an 'anecdote' of when she felt she had gone past her 'limit', one of the main problems was the fact that her friends and family had to look after her, which she felt was unfair on them. I suggest that this reflects an underlying sense of shame and regret, which was echoed at other times when she talked about negative aspects of drinking. She explained the change in her drinking habits as being down to, amongst other things, becoming 'fed up with the same old getting drunk, going out, making an idiot of myself, being drunk and photos on Facebook the next day'. Key to this is the idea that having the photos up on the internet is embarrassing, and she does not actively want to make an idiot of herself.

A similar sense of shame lies behind Megan's care to state that when she goes out, 'I only dance stupidly, I don't get naked or...', and at another point in the same interview: 'I've never done anything bad, drunk, just be sick, that's about it'. Her behaviour when out is not 'bad' – it does not involve getting 'naked', for example. When Angela, a friend of Megan's, spoke to me about the limits on her drunkenness, she made the sense of shame clearer, explaining that she tried to avoid any situation where people might think something like 'who was that girl dancing on the table' – echoing even the words of the *Daily Mail* article about Facebook pictures quoted above (Levy 2007). In this way, it is clear that simply because people go out to 'let off steam' or get drunk does not mean that they do so without concern for how they will be seen. However, it is striking that all the drinkers cited here expressing regret and shame, or how they have avoided these, are women.

I do not wish to suggest that all women were constantly concerned about their behaviour on nights out. As Ellie pointed out, when she is out with her friends, she does not mind about 'making a fool' out of herself, as they won't mind, and Megan talked about how she liked to 'dance stupidly'. Similarly, as discussed above, plenty of experiences that are embarrassing at the time can be transformed into 'funny stories' later. The carnivalesque is not simply the preserve of men. Nevertheless, even for Hannah, who told me the story of her walking out of a pub toilet with her trousers and knickers still around her ankles, there were some things that were too embarrassing or traumatising to talk about. When she described how drinking gives her confidence, Megan pointed out, 'that can backfire on you, as you found out', but both women immediately clammed up, saying:

Hannah: We don't want to talk about that.
Megan: No we don't want to talk about that.
Hannah: Ever, ever ((laughingly)) again ((laughs)).

There remains some sense of shame that means that some mistakes are not to be talked about in public – or at least not to me. This may be related to the concern Hannah mentioned she has when at home, when she worries that her mother will be disappointed in her. Hannah's friend Megan also related her

careful attitude towards alcohol to her family's reaction to drunkenness. Megan also felt she had personal experience of the different norms regarding men's and women's drinking behaviour. She resented what she felt was her father's quite different approach to her own and her brother's drinking. She said that, for her father and brother, 'Everything's a man thing'. Her brother 'comes in absolutely trashed and my dad just finds it funny'. This related to sexuality as well:

Like my brother always brings home girls and my dad's like 'No you're not allowed to bring home guys'. Not that I ever would, cos I'm not really [WH: Mm-mm] like that but eh Peter just gets a pat on the back for everything.

Despite her resentment, Megan does not challenge the application of the norm to herself – she does not want to get as drunk as her brother, and is not 'like that' when it comes to bringing men home, but she is still aware of, and resents, the double standard of behaviour.

What I want to suggest here is that such a sense of shame and concern about how drunken behaviour will be viewed in the cold light of day seems to be stronger and more common in young women than men – though this is not to say that no women tell 'funny stories', as Hannah herself did. Notably Angela's concern is about what someone else will think of her, recalling Bartky's (1997: 140) claim that: 'Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other'. The only real expression of regret I heard from men was from Chris and Joey, who had both slept with someone they did not intend to when drunk. However, their regret was not framed in terms of how others would see them; rather they were concerned for the relationships and friendships that had been damaged as a result. Moreover, it is important to note that the various expressions of fear, embarrassment and 'limits' came from women of diverse social backgrounds: students and graduates, lecturers and bar workers.

Despite this commonality in terms of women's discussions of shame, however, it is important to be attentive to the differences between participants in their

approach to shame, and that these can be understood in terms of drinking styles. Though Hannah celebrated her story of drunkenly walking out of the toilets, it is hard to imagine Tilly doing so, for example. When I was talking to her, Nicole and Matt, Tilly brought up the recent example of her 21st birthday as a 'bad experience' relating to drinking. When asked what had been bad about it, she described a drinking game which involved drinking a mixture of everyone's drinks, whilst the other participants were 'chanting' at her to 'down' it. This made her so drunk that she could not manage to leave the house, and she went to bed shortly after midnight, cutting the night much shorter than she had intended. Once she had told this story, Matt joked that this had been fun, but first Nicole and then Tilly herself strongly denied this, particularly as some of Tilly's friends from home had come specially to visit. Matt argued that even if it had been unfortunate at the time, it should *now* be seen as a success in some way because no long term damage had been done and they could now have a laugh about it. Although Tilly seemed to grudgingly agree, she then suggested that it was a bad night if you were sick or had to go to bed, or lost your phone or purse – the latter two being particularly bad because you know it's your own fault. Nicole remained adamant that a night that ended had such consequences could never be judged funny, asserting that if you lose a single thing it should be seen as a bad night.

This vignette can be seen as illustrating how men and women often differ in their definitions of 'funny' stories, but it also illustrates how it is likely that women differ from each other as well. As the evidence of this chapter to this point suggests, Tilly generally placed her accounts of drinking within an everyday narrative, distancing herself from the 'chavs' and 'skanks' of the carnival. One can quite easily imagine other women – Hannah, for example – embracing Tilly's experience as a funny story worthy of illustrating their fun-loving attitude to alcohol and nights out. Indeed, part of Hannah's funny story of the night she walked out of the toilets was that she vomited on a bicycle. Her friend Megan – who said she did not drink much at all now – said 'I've never done anything bad, drunk, just be sick.' In this formulation, Tilly's night might be disappointing, but it would also be more likely to be considered funny than shameful. One can therefore understand the drinking practices and accounts of the young women I

spoke to as confirming the existence of a 'fine line' relating to feminine behaviour while drinking (Farrington *et al.* 2000), but it is also important to note that this 'fine line' will not be the same for all women. I argue that the ways in which this line is drawn and how those who step over it are characterised are constitutive of class. A link can certainly be drawn between Tilly's condemnation of the women in the photo from Jeffries' (2007) newspaper article and the shame she expressed at having got too drunk at her birthday party. The carnival, it seems, was something Tilly wished to distance herself from, and this seemed to be linked to notions of femininity and appropriate behaviour – but also class.

Strategies for Managing Drunkenness

Given their concerns for safety, responsibilities and reputation, some participants took action to avoid losing control when out drinking, and indeed had particular strategies they applied. I argue that these strategies, like the shame and fear that prompt them, are clearly gendered. Claire, for example, explained that she liked drinking Smirnoff Ice because 'it sort of maintains the drunk level', and Ellie agreed, telling me how she had done this on her 30th birthday because she felt it was particularly important to get just the right level of drunkenness. As she explained, Smirnoff Ice 'maintains the level of drunkenness, but it, and, kind of fun-ness rather than kind of, you know, with your mates at the end of night "arrgghh"...' In a similar way, Jane explained how she manages her feeling of drunkenness through the course of the evening by changing what she drinks. She will drink wine at the beginning of the evening because it gets her quite drunk, but 'towards the end sort of stagger myself with single vodkas and water and diet coke'. Charlotte told me she had a strategy that made sure she was just 'merry' drunk which did not directly relate to what she chose to drink: she takes out a fixed amount of money, and leaves her debit card at home so that she cannot take out more money when she is drunk. This means that she can only afford to drink an amount which she (when sober) considers appropriate.

It is notable again that these strategies for managing drunkenness were all mentioned by women, despite the fact that women constituted less than 35

percent of my participants, echoing the finding of Chatterton and Hollands (2003: 154) that women on nights out are 'self-policing'. As an illustration of this, while Abbie and the other young women with her talked about deliberately getting 'tipsy' and then stopping drinking, the two men in the group told me with no real concern that they would not go out to deliberately get drunk but it would happen without them trying. Similarly, Dean, a final year student, told me that he would never plan to get 'off his face', but equally would not count his drinks and be careful about reaching a limit. Whether he gets drunk or not was apparently simply a function of the situation and who he is with – something left to chance which he did not trouble himself to manage.

Joey was the only man to speak to me about the possibility of managing drunkenness in general. However, he did so with a sense of resignation that he would never put this into practice. As his friend Aidan left the pub at 11.40pm, having been relatively quiet and not having drunk a great deal, Joey commented slightly wistfully that he wished he could be so sensible himself. He then confessed to me that he knew over the next few weeks, as there would be plenty of parties and trips out (it was 13th December, so the 'festive season' was in full swing), he would find himself standing in a club at 1am thinking it was too early in the evening to be so drunk. On this note he mentioned a government advert which shows two potential courses of an evening – one where a young man and woman get together, and the other where they come home separately because they get too drunk. Joey, therefore, had a clear idea that he could – and, moreover, would – drink too much, but accepted that there was nothing he could do about this.

Concern about getting too drunk and strategies to avoid this do not seem to have been simply idle talk for those who mentioned them. The night out I spent with the students offered an illustration of such (gendered) concern in practice. As we prepared to leave the bar where the group had met up, to go on to a club, Noel was dancing ridiculously to everyone's amusement, and when he tried to hold a conversation with me in the extremely cramped toilets he was quite incoherent and only succeeded in getting in the way of other people. He then proceeded to take his bottle of beer, put the mouth of it over his eye and tip

it back so that the beer went into his eye. He seemed to suggest that this would get him drunk more quickly as the alcohol would be absorbed directly into his bloodstream through the surface of the eye. Some of the beer unsurprisingly dripped down his front. As we then walked on to the club, he was arm in arm with two other students, and was singing loudly the same meaningless phrase in a mock-French accent over and over again. He asked if he could call me 'research', and then started to shout 'research, research' again and again in the same accent. All this can be seen as a good illustration of the carnivalesque drinking style: behaving in ways that would not fit in everyday life, setting out to become intoxicated and treating the street as communal space. He continued to behave in a similar way once we were in the club.

This example contrasts with Josie, whom I met in the club. She saw me talking to Matt, and approached me to ask if I was Will, as Matt had told her all about me. She seemed tipsy and effusive to me, but little more. A minute later she grabbed me and encouraged me to sing along to 'Summer Nights' from *Grease*, which I did briefly before making my way back to Matt. When Josie had initially approached me and Matt, one of her housemates, Lucy, had taken her drink off her and smelled and tasted it to check whether it was alcoholic, after Josie had assured her that it was only water – which it turned out was true. I do not know if she had any history of getting particularly drunk, but as far as I could tell, she was no more drunk than Noel. I might put this down simply to my misjudgement of drunkenness, but when I suggested to Matt that this checking of her drink seemed a little heavy-handed, he offered no real explanation. Chapter 2 mentioned how government education campaigns have suggested having friends to 'look out' for you, in case you fail to manage your own drunkenness – 'know your limits' (Home Office and Directgov 2008) – and here was such a strategy in practice.

There was a good deal of disapproval of Josie's apparent drunkenness from at least two of the young women present. It is worth noting that those trying to ensure Josie's respectability and safety were women themselves. This is a precise echo of emphasis in government and media discussions of women's safekeeping, as Moore and Valverde (2000) have observed (with particular

reference to Canada). It is in this way, I suggest, that the fear of sexual assault reproduces gendered norms of behaviour without an external disciplinary gaze enforcing respectable femininity. Young women actively want to invest in this respectable femininity in order to secure their safety.

One correlate of this approach to safety and gender is that just as investments in respectable femininity can be understood as ensuring one's safety, so, vice-versa, safekeeping strategies can be understood as performative of respectable femininities, following Stanko (1997). As one might expect, however, in addition to this figure of the safe, responsible, respectable, feminine woman one can discern an 'other' by which this is defined.

The figure of the apparently unfeminine, unrespectable sexually voracious woman has already been seen to pervade media representations of drinking, most notably in the series *Ladette to Lady* (ITV 2008b). Similar images could also be found in some participants' own discussions of women's drinking. Rhys, a Master's student, told me how certain factors had affected his pattern of going out. For example, he said that having a girlfriend makes a real difference, as then there's 'not so much reason' to go to a 'club'. However, if he did not have a girlfriend then he might go to a club and shag some 'dirty girl'. The idea that someone who would readily have sex with him would be a 'dirty girl' implies an implicit norm of femininity which the girl would be contravening. Similarly, James and Carl talked about how they used to go out in one end of town, but said they no longer liked that area because of the violence and 'sluts'. There is an interesting dynamic regarding these 'sluts' and 'dirty girls', as they are both desired and found disgusting, recalling the attitude of much discussion of women's drinking to be found in the media, where 'outrageous' behaviour is illustrated with pages of 'shocking' images for the entertainment of the reader (e.g. Phillips 2008).

As in many media discussions, women were also the defining symbols of out-of-control, transgressive drunkenness. As described in Chapter 4, Samir claimed that, at least amongst his socio-economic class, 'girls' were now able to act like 'boys'. However, the 'funny story' they told of someone being drunk was of a

woman telling a superior within the organisation of her having an orgasm. The amusement lay in her transgression of normative femininity and established authority. Similarly, when Rachel told me that she did not like *Rapture* because people got too drunk there, she gave the example of going in and seeing a young woman being sick and being carried out of the venue because she could not walk, with her knickers showing. The woman was chosen as the indicator of 'too drunk', and the apparent failing was showing her underwear, as in the case of the 'Sussex Slags' described by the *Daily Mail* (2009). That is, rather than the woman's health being harmed, or that she was putting herself in danger, Rachel chose to pick out the fact that she transgressed normative femininity by showing her underwear as the key indicator of having got 'too drunk' – that is, of having crossed that fuzzily defined but crucial 'fine line'. This understanding of gender is more broadly linked to the carnivalesque, and thus, I would argue, to class. Rachel's dislike of *Rapture* was based on a number of factors linked together in her mind, including that the music was awful as well as the fact that people get 'too drunk' there. Drinking behaviour, then, is once again linked to broader aspects of cultural style: people who drink too much also have bad taste in music. It should be recalled that this was the venue praised so highly by Ross and Lee for its relaxed, carnivalesque where they would know people, and patrons mixed with staff, all having had enough to drink that they were not embarrassed about dancing.

In this way, therefore, ideas of gender infuse the carnivalesque; to drink to what some might see as 'excess' may be incompatible with certain notions of femininity, but this does not mean that there are no relative gendered norms and ideas of discipline within the carnivalesque style. What I have tried to demonstrate is that women's behaviour within the carnivalesque is structured and understood in different ways from men's. Russo (1997) has argued that the carnivalesque has always constructed women's bodies as particularly dangerous and in danger. The same can be said to apply to the 'carnival' of 'binge' drinking. Women's bodies are seen as *dangerous* or worrying in media discourses particularly but also in some of the drinkers' accounts cited here, such as Rachel's, because they are shameful and subvert everyday norms of femininity, but also as *in danger* because of the apparent risks of sexual

assault. Therefore, participants gendered accounts of drinking were linked with those to be found in the media and government discussions of drinking – and ‘binge’ drinking in particular – with parallels in terms of safety, sexuality and morality.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to explain how participants’ drinking practices and ways of understanding these can be seen as on a continuum, with the carnivalesque and everyday drinking styles at either end. These styles could be mobilised as discourses in either positive or negative ways. The distinction and control of the everyday style could be celebrated as being responsible and legitimating Bourdieusian cultural capital. Alternatively, it could be seen as ‘stuck-up’, following the anti-pretension critique. The carnivalesque could be seen as an opportunity to let one’s hair down and enjoy the communal, relaxed atmosphere of the night-time high street, or it could be condemned as an out-of-control, juvenile, facile pleasure that irresponsibly puts oneself and others in danger.

Access to (and desire for) these discourses is significantly shaped by class. Those who expressed the two styles tended to be of different socio-economic backgrounds. However, these discourses are also constitutive of class. Class is determined by one’s symbolic capital, as judged by the dominant system within the symbolic economy. Therefore, as the everyday conception of drinking mobilises ideas of moderation and responsibility familiar from government and media discussions of alcohol, this is more likely to be recognised as symbolic capital than the carnivalesque style of altered norms and funny stories. It is also important to link this figure of the ‘responsible individual’ with the distinctive, individualistic discourse employed by some participants, which also served to emphasise their individuality and capacity for reasoning.

I have also drawn attention to the ways in which class is constructed *negatively*; that is, through oppositional construction of a figure to be denigrated – in this case the ‘chavvy’ ‘binge’ drinker. This form of distinction is mirrored in the anti-

pretension critique employed by those who are aware they are liable to be labelled such 'binge' drinkers themselves. It is important to note that, despite the pictures drawn by some drinkers and other commentators, carnivalesque drinkers are not in reality an unthinking, homogeneous mass, willing agents of consumerism and big business. Different emphases within this thesis could have led to a much stronger emphasis on the ways in which local meaning and community were constructed within the structures of the night-time economy, as suggested briefly here with reference to Dawn's enjoyment of bumping into friends and certain clubs, and the appreciation Ross and Lee had for *Rapture* as a place to bump into local friends, despite it being a national chain.

The two drinking styles were also gendered. This does not mean that the carnivalesque was masculine, and the everyday feminine. Women were more concerned than men to manage their risk-taking in the night-time economy, with particular reference to the possibility of sexual assault, and there did appear to be different norms regarding men's and women's drunkenness, with women being the symbols of being 'too drunk'. However, women's shame, fear and managing of drunkenness can all be seen as consistent with the (gendered) carnivalesque drinking style; they do not imply an adherence to everyday gendered norms or traditional femininity. Part of the fun of young women's drinking that underpins why their drunken stories are seen as 'funny' may be the subversion of traditional femininity. This is an important contrast with the media coverage of such drinking in the *Daily Mail's* coverage of 'Suicide Sunday' (Daily Mail 2009) or photographs of drunk women on Facebook (Levy 2007), for example.⁴³ Some women's attitudes towards drinking can therefore be understood as a particular form of *carnivalesque* femininity that values both funny stories and safekeeping strategies. I have not demarcated a clear line between fun on the one hand and danger or shame on the other because such

⁴³ The media coverage should not, however, be seen as simply condemnatory. There is an element here of entertainment in TV shows such as *Ladette to Lady* (e.g. ITV 2005) or *Booze Britain 2: Binge Nation* (see Hayward and Hobbs 2007), and it could be argued that the coverage particularly of young women's drinking and associated behaviour signals a combination of disgust and desire that is familiar from historical middle-class attitudes to the working class and carnival in particular (see Stallybrass and White 1986).

a line did not seem to be clearly defined amongst the women (or men) I spoke to. Norms are necessarily indefinite, and are constantly constituted through actions that both adhere to and challenge them (Butler 2004). However, it seems clear that drinkers were aware that there was some conception of a line, however undefined, and that crossing it had implications both in terms of participants' gender and class.

Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to investigate how drinking alcohol constitutes young people as gendered and classed. This has entailed an exploration of government and media discussions of alcohol as well as the socio-economic circumstances, educational backgrounds, drinking practices and accounts of drinkers themselves.

An ethnographic approach was therefore taken to address drinkers' own understandings with particular attention to differences understood through the concepts of gender and class. This analytic focus has offered a useful complement to much previous work on drinking in contemporary Britain, which has centred on the construction of the environment in which young people drink, reflecting on planning and licensing laws, policies of local government, the regulation of the drinks industry (or lack of it), and the broader context of a post-industrial, consumer society. In attempting to determine large-scale trends in young people's identity formation, such as an increasing focus on consumption rather than production, the differences between young people have been somewhat neglected, with their drinking practices and understandings tending to be presented as generally homogeneous in matching a 'new culture of intoxication' (Measham and Brain 2005), for example. This thesis adds to the work which has drawn attention to differences amongst drinkers, for example that of Chatterton and Hollands (e.g. 2003). The arguments presented in this study develop such observations of class- and gender-related differences by highlighting how drinking itself does not only reflect, but also constitutes, conceptions of people as classed and gendered, noting the important interaction between government and media discourses and those of drinkers themselves.

The location of the fieldwork also offers an interesting contrast with previous studies of young people's drinking. These have primarily been conducted in major (formerly) industrial conurbations such as Manchester, Newcastle, Bristol and Leeds. My research was conducted in the southern, coastal town of

Bournemouth, which depends (and has always depended) to a large extent on tourism for its livelihood. As a town that was self-consciously middle-class and 'respectable', there was no significant pub drinking culture in the town – at least in the centre, where the 'night-time economy' is now concentrated. Therefore, even if Bournemouth's contemporary night-time economy might be understood in terms of a 'new' drinking culture, the way in which it has reached this point is not the same as for other locations, and contrasts with the de-industrialisation theses that shape previous analyses.

Gender and class were understood in my analysis as performative categories. That is, they are ways of interpreting the social world according to which particular sets of actions are associated with a certain class or gender. Drinking practices can be seen as just such a set of actions. However, these practices should not simply be viewed in isolation; related stories and explanations are also illustrative of how class and gender relate to drinking. There are two ways in which a practice can be gendered or classed. First, it might be enacted primarily by women, or middle-class people and thus could be said to be there 'feminine' or 'bourgeois'. These people themselves would here be categorised according to features other than their drinking practices. In the case of my research, I looked at occupation, educational background, place of residence, and family background, for example, in order to establish some idea of class. How these various factors combine was illustrated in Chapters 1 and 4. However, class and gender are not simply prior to drinking practices; they are also constituted by them. Thus, to consider the second way in which drinking might be classed or gendered, a particular classed and/or gendered self can be constructed through certain practices and discourses. To drink wine might be considered feminine whether or not one is a man or woman, and thus constitutes one as a particular type of man or woman. Class is defined as a group of people linked by shared characteristics in terms of *cultural* capital as well as more conventional economic capital, where this affects one's power. These forms of capital become 'symbolic' capital when recognised by other people. This group might be identified by a sociologist or other members of society, and can be fitted into a cultural-economic hierarchy. Bourdieu (1984) identifies the dominant worldview that determines this hierarchy as being largely

based on a Kantian aesthetic that values apparently complex tastes over immediate pleasures, for example. Therefore, when members of society claim the complexity of their cultural practices, they can be understood to be claiming symbolic capital and establishing a particular aesthetic or worldview that values some practices and discourses over others. I considered how such claims are made with respect to drinking, and how they compare with the dominant worldview as shown through government and media discourses surrounding drinking.

I have tried to offer a balance of the structural and the individual in my analysis, taking into account Bourdieu's (1989: 18) point that people construct their world, but under certain 'structural constraints'. Therefore, although I have looked at how participants presented and understood their own and others' drinking practices, I have tried to place these in the context of broader cultural discourses, as illustrated by the analysis of government and media discussions of drinking presented in Chapter 2. I argue that it is important to consider how these gendered and classed forms as understood by participants themselves relate to those expressed in government and media discussions. The extent to which practices can be transformed into symbolic capital in the wider symbolic economy depends upon their value according to the dominant hierarchy, which is established through discourses such as those transmitted through government and media discussions.

The main problem with young people's drinking as expressed by government and the media is the apparent disorder and temporary loss of rationality through intoxication. Government public education campaigns aimed at the under-25s seek to generate a sense of self-discipline amongst young drinkers, so that they do not behave in criminal, antisocial or embarrassing ways. These education campaigns, combined with the liberalisation of licensing laws, should be seen as part of a broader neo-liberal project to construct free market mechanisms in previously regulated areas. Alongside the construction of these markets runs the simultaneous project of constructing ideal neo-liberal citizens who are active and enterprising, engaging with the market and developing themselves in accordance with the norms of rationality, responsibility and self-control. These

norms are evident in the government's approach to young people's drinking, where it seeks to 'responsibilize' young people so that they look after their own safety and behave in a way that is consistent with neo-liberal ideas of rationality – not tearing their clothes or urinating on their shoes, for example. This ideal is also gendered, with women being specifically warned, for example, not to get into unlicensed minicabs as this increases their risk of being sexually assaulted.

Given the understanding of class as performative, when young people themselves draw on such discourses of responsibility to understand drinking practices they can be understood to be laying claim to symbolic capital. Drinkers' own discourses can be understood as on a continuum from an everyday, distinctive drinking style on the one hand to the carnivalesque on the other. The everyday style was characterised by adherence to everyday norms – sitting and talking with friends in a relatively quiet venue, not seeking drunkenness. In contrast, the carnivalesque emphasised the otherworldliness of the night-time economy, with drunkenness, unusual behaviour and funny stories seen as positive reasons to go out drinking. These styles are discursive resources which can be drawn on to authorise narratives and accounts of drinking. They comprise motivations for drinking, practices while drinking, the environment in which drinking takes place, and beliefs concerning drinking in general. By drawing on the everyday, distinctive style, some participants linked themselves with the figure of the responsible individual noted in government discourses.

These styles were in opposition to each other. The construction of the figure of the responsible drinker depended on an irresponsible other, while the carnivalesque drinker relied upon a 'stuck up' or pretentious other. As well as tending to be identified with by people of different socio-economic backgrounds, the styles employed established ideas of class through modes of distinction. Terms such as 'chav' or 'townie' linked cultural and economic capital with drinking practices. Moreover, participants were very clear that venues in the town centre had distinct identities. Importantly, according to the everyday style these were presented in terms that conveyed the idea of a symbolic economy wherein difference, scarcity and complexity were valued more than immediate

pleasures enjoyed as part of a homogeneous crowd. The idea of drinking practices as an expression of individuality and 'difference' can be linked with the ideas of self-hood associated with neo-liberalism which form the dominant discourse in society, particularly surrounding alcohol. This neo-liberal 'self' is constructed not so much through observable drinking practices or ideas of pharmacological intoxication as ways of presenting and understanding drinking. In contrast, carnivalesque understandings of drinking symbolise a different 'art of living' as Bourdieu (1984: 57) puts it, and therefore a different worldview with different valuing of characteristics. As argued by Skeggs (2004b) and Savage (2003) the neo-liberal view of the self can be understood as a discourse that presents middle-class values as universal, while the conditions and desires for enacting such a self are unevenly distributed. Drinking is one such sphere where such desires are classed.

Looking at the ways that various potentially classed characteristics relating to drinking can be connected to other forms of status and capital, these show mostly congruence, as those espousing the everyday style, for example, and emphasising structure and responsibility tended to be of middle-class backgrounds in terms of education and occupation. However, a key argument of this thesis is that such cultural preferences are not automatic, and indeed form part of the definition of class as a form of power in today's society. It is the inconsistencies – such as Chris and Joey being so insistent on their 'alternative' and 'different' practices despite being located in low status positions according to the conventional occupational hierarchy – that highlight how class position, as Skeggs (1997) noted, does not always translate neatly into class identity, and therefore that in order to understand class fully one must consider the fluid, potentially performative elements of cultural practices. If the drinking practices and discussions analysed in the thesis had nothing to do with class then one could reasonably conclude that this was an unrelated cultural phenomenon. Conversely, if practices were wholly correlated with (other) measures of class position then the study of drinking would offer little further illumination on class than previous research. In fact, this thesis therefore adds to the significant observation that there is considerable diversity within the 'mainstream' of high street drinking the conclusion that such diversity not only reflects cultural style in

terms of music, clothes and even values; it is also constitutive, given the understandings surrounding drinking, of class.

In terms of gender, the themes of safekeeping and care for the self that pervade government discourses on drinking were taken up in force by the young women I spoke to, and ideas of shame and embarrassment were much more prevalent amongst women than men. However, this did not mean that the carnivalesque or 'funny stories' of being drunk were off-limits. Rather, such practices and narratives were balanced by strategies that were explained to manage drunkenness, and the accompanying shame. In this way, participants did not simply adopt government or media discourses wholesale, but reworked the concepts and ideas within them to suggest respectability and responsibility. To convey how ideas of gender and the carnivalesque interact, one need only consider how Hannah expressed ideas of staying safe, managing drunkenness and shame in a way that no man I spoke to did, despite conveying her pride in having drunkenly walked out of a pub toilet naked from the waist down – a pride that Tilly, for example, could not express with regard to her own story of being sick after a drinking game. Importantly, it should be acknowledged that men's relations to fear in the night-time economy were no less gendered. Despite being part of the group most at risk of violent crime, young men in this study expressed little concern for their safety, and when they did this was not followed up by preventative strategies as it was for most women. Rather, some men seemed to deal with feelings of discomfort and fear by deliberately drinking *more* alcohol, not less, in order to overcome their fear. In this sense, given the prevalence of violence within the night-time economy, rather than being celebrated, much of the carnivalesque could be seen as a self-perpetuating, counterproductive strategy emerging from men's gendered relations to their bodily security.

There are two key original contributions of the thesis, therefore. First, the setting of Bournemouth offers a contrast with previous locations of much research, being a traditionally middle-class tourist resort without any significant history of industry or an associated working-class pub culture, unlike many previous locations of similar research. Second, and perhaps more importantly,

this study offers a closer focus on young people's own perspectives on drinking, and emphasises the differences within what has frequently been considered a somewhat uniform mainstream of high street drinking, both in academic and government circles. As noted in Chapter 1, some researchers have taken pains to draw attention to distinctions and divisions within the night-time economy, even noting the importance of the themes of gender and class that have shaped this research. However, I suggest that this study has approached these issues with a somewhat different theoretical and analytical focus, seeking to understand how drinking is constitutive of gender and class more than how it reflects these categories.

This approach and the consequent conclusions are significant in two key respects with respect to the apparent 'problem' of 'binge' drinking as perceived by government and media that prompted this research. Firstly, in general terms, by analysing young people's drinking practices and their discussions of these it is possible to see that the diversity within the night-time economy has implications in terms of power and politics in terms of how 'binge' drinking and the working class are understood. Following Bourdieu's approach to class and power, it can be argued that the way people understand the world affects what action is considered possible within a society, and so the different understandings of drinking – and perhaps more importantly drinkers – may contribute to the ways in which associated problems are framed. As is clear from the work of Nicholls (2009) and Greenaway (2003), approaches to the regulation of alcohol are influenced by the political ideas that are current, with attitudes and possible policies varying considerably from one period to the next. In terms of assessing and addressing any potential 'problem' of 'binge' drinking, it can be helpful to make some attempt at reflexivity – considering what conceptions and structures may frame contemporary discussions regarding alcohol – in order to better understand the issues facing policy-makers and the options available to them. It is clear from the analysis presented in this thesis that gendered and classed figures are central in the way drinking is understood by media, government and drinkers themselves, and therefore these figures will affect the way drinking is constructed as a 'problem' and the consequent solutions proposed. The implications of this for approaches to alcohol policy

are not discussed in detail here as that is not the focus of the thesis, but this is an important area for future work. More generally, the operation of classed and gendered discourses in relation to alcohol can be seen as forming part of a broader arrangement that affects how different people are viewed within our society, relating to the themes of responsibility, hard work, moderation and so forth that have flowed throughout this thesis.

The second key respect in which this research is significant relates to the ways in which discourses surrounding drinking operated amongst participants. Government discourses were frequently mobilised and modified to justify participants' own drinking habits and buttress their cultural capital. It is clear from the analysis presented in this thesis, then, that, as Hanrahan (2006) suggested, though governments may attempt to use discursive means as part of broader strategies of governmentality to address perceived problems, they cannot fully control how such discourses operate and are mobilised by others. This could be seen to have serious implications for policy-makers, in the face of current dominance of public education strategies within the arsenal of the Home Office and the Department of Health.

This study has been focused on the night-time economy in central Bournemouth, with a particular focus on the idea of 'binge' drinking. There are a number of limitations to this approach. The study has focused on a single town centre area of a larger conurbation, and so has not discussed in detail the different outlying areas which may have their own unique patterns of alcohol consumption and associated behaviours and understandings. Linked to this is a sense in which, although I have tried to place drinkers' understandings of alcohol in the broader context of their lives, the analytic focus in the thesis has been on practices and understandings relating to public, town centre drinking rather than domestic drinking.

Moreover, the analysis of the area of Bournemouth itself might have been developed by a more detailed comparative element, with research being conducted with a similar methodological and theoretical orientation but in a different location at the same moment in time. However, comparative points

can and have been made through drawing on particular aspects of previous research and placing these in their local and historical context.

As intimated in this previous suggestion, it is important to note that this research focuses on a particular historical moment, shortly after the implementation of the 2003 Licensing Act which changed the regulatory framework surrounding alcohol in England and Wales. This formal change in licensing can also be seen as part of a longer process of simultaneous liberalisation and penalisation, as traced by Hadfield (2005) and Hobbs *et al.* (2000) for example. This thesis has provided something of a snapshot in time in a particular location. Another perspective, which could have proved illuminating for the analysis of Bournemouth today, would have been more historical. This thesis has placed Bournemouth's night-time economy in the context of its development as a reserved seaside resort and retirement town, but its recent history is also deserving of more detailed analysis, as limitations of time and space have restricted the discussion here. The night-time economy in Bournemouth is a creation of the 1990s and 2000s, and therefore in some ways echoes the themes of the changing regulation of alcohol as noted by researchers such as Hadfield and Hobbs *et al.* cited above. However, Bournemouth offers a unique and particularly illuminating example of how this development has been played out in locally-specific ways, and I suggest this would be a fruitful area for further research.

To continue the historical theme, although this thesis has addressed the sense in which much previous research has presented a homogenised picture of young people's drinking in contemporary Britain, there is another aspect of this approach that should be assessed. In defining a 'new' culture of intoxication, and locating this as emerging in the late-1980s and early-1990s, I would suggest that authors such as Measham and Brain (2005) run the risk of simplifying the 'traditional' drinking of the past. For example, in an ethnography of women's lives working in a textile factory in a midlands town in the 1980s, Sallie Westwood (1984) describes a riotous 'hen party' which would not be out of place in my research a decade before the emergence of this 'new' form of drinking. Women run along streets in high heels to make it into clubs, pass out

under tables, and vomit on the dancefloor, as well as in the club toilets. Moreover, in relation to regular Friday and Saturday night drinking she notes that getting drunk was part of the fun for these women. To go back further, though into the realm of fiction, Alan Sillitoe's 1958 novel *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*, opens with the protagonist, Arthur Seaton, falling down the stairs in the pub where he has been engaged in a drinking contest and orders another pint before vomiting on an older man and being told 'Can't tek the drink, that's what's the matter wi' yo' young 'uns' (Sillitoe 1994: 13). He then leaves the pub and has sex with the wife of a colleague from work. Again, such a night out reported today in the media would certainly be considered evidence of 'Binge Britain'. Such examples, while not offering a thorough critique of the historical background to the 'new' culture of intoxication, certainly point to the possibility that further historical research would be valuable in understanding the situation in Britain today, to add to the more political histories of alcohol already provided by Nicholls (2009) and Greenaway (2003).

The particular snapshot provided of Bournemouth in this thesis is one in which under-18s are largely excluded from the on-licensed town centre venues. This exclusion is part of a commitment on the part of the licensees to be 'responsible', enacted through the local Town Watch organisation. However, some youth workers I spoke to were critical of how this impacted on the prevalence of public under-age drinking, and the way this was policed, suggesting that it would be better for teenagers to be drinking (illegally) in a pub under the scrutiny of the landlord rather than unsupervised in a public area. Moreover, although studies have been conducted of such public, underage drinking (e.g. Cullen 2007; Dean 1990; Galloway *et al.* 2007), there has been less research on drinkers' transitions from these practices to drinking in the 'legitimate' night-time economy as they get older.⁴⁴ This was an issue that

⁴⁴ Although Harnett *et al.* (2000) have discussed how young men's drinking can be modelled as a 'transition' through various 'drinking styles' their data come from interviews conducted once drinkers are adults rather than longitudinal data, and only refer to young men who regularly drink in on-licensed premises, omitting women and those men who do not drink in such locations.

seemed of particular concern to youth and alcohol workers, one of whom said she would welcome research on how this transition did – and more strikingly did not – occur, since in the same group of ‘illicit’ public drinkers one can find individuals aged both 11 and 22, suggesting that these groups are not solely formed by formal exclusions from the night-time economy on the basis of age. There is certainly scope for more research on this process of transition, and the ways in which the discourses surrounding drinking that are propagated by the drinks industry and the licensed trade are understood and re-worked by those who do not participate in the formal town-centre night-time economy.

As Ritchie *et al.* (2009) observe, students face different circumstances to their peers who are not in higher education, and these circumstances pertain only for a limited period. Students therefore offer a second interesting case of transition. I have hinted at ways in which one’s period as (particularly an undergraduate) student might be considered both ‘time out’ from middle-class norms and also something of an apprenticeship in becoming a respectable, middle-class individual, as the narratives of the final year students suggested. There is a sense in which, as in the *Daily Mail’s* (2009) account of ‘Suicide Sunday’, students’ carnivalesque behaviour is not understood in the same way as other young people’s. Rather than being seen as dangerous, there is more of a sense of disappointment. Although comparisons between students and non-students, or ‘townies’, have been made in previous research (e.g. Hollands 2002; Holt and Griffin 2005), I would suggest that there is scope for further investigation, perhaps using a longitudinal study, to examine how drinking students make the transition to becoming drinking graduates, and how this transition relates to practices and beliefs and any changes amongst their non-student peers, placing these transitions in the wider context of dominant understandings of drinking and class.

One final proposal for future research relates to my suggestion that the carnivalesque could be considered a self-perpetuating and self-defeating response to men’s desire for a feeling of security in the night-time economy. Although ethnographic studies of violence have been conducted in the night-time economy (e.g. Benson and Archer 2002; Graham and Wells 2003), I would

suggest that there is further scope for investigating the relationship not only between violence and masculinity, but the broader drinking culture of unusual behaviour. Graham and Wells (2003) have suggested that, at least for middle-class students, violence is often understood not as a form of 'social protest' (cf. Tomsen 1997), but rather as conformity as part of a rite of passage. I suggest that ideas of how this conformity relates to the idea of hegemonic masculinity (see Hall 2002) and drunkenness have been somewhat undertheorised. As well as drinking heavily being seen as a symbol of masculinity – whether this is through 'traditional drinking' and appearing to stay sober (Gofton 1990), or new forms of masculinity where deliberately seeking an extreme state of intoxication is valued (Griffin *et al.* 2009; Mullen *et al.* 2007) – it may also be seen as a *response* to the imperatives of a form of (carnavalesque) masculinity that requires humour and no indication of fear in what is sometimes seen as a hostile or intimidating environment.

It is my hope that this thesis has offered a useful counterpoint to existing accounts of young people's drinking in 21st-century Britain. The research has served to highlight that young people do not all drink in the same way, and do not understand their drinking in the same way. However, these different ways of relating to alcohol are not simply matters of free choice, of constructing a consumerist self in post-traditional society. Divisions of class and gender remain, and consumption can be a signifier of difference, distinction, power and exclusion just as production has been. Dominant discourses of self-discipline, moderation and responsibility are not simply taken up or rejected, but negotiated and re-worked by active participants. Through these negotiations, gendered and classed impressions are constituted, suggesting that the night-time economy is a key site of the formation of class and gender in contemporary British society.

Appendix 1: Transcription Style

((laugh))	non-verbal noise
[WH: OK]	overlapping statement by stated other speaker
(...)	edited break in text
. . .	pause in original speech – <i>Note: when used in quotations from referenced sources this refers to an edited break</i>
Ra--	speech stopped in the middle of word

Appendix 2: Anonymisation of Venues

As promised to bar managers, references to specific venues have been replaced by pseudonyms. The aim of these is that the venue cannot be identified simply by its name. This was promised in order to offer protection to venues, but also to protect individuals. For example, it might compromise the position of some of the bar staff to quote their opinions on venues and state where they work, or have worked in the past – they would be identifiable from this information. It is of course possible that those with detailed knowledge of Bournemouth's licensed premises may be able to deduce the original venue, but I have tried not to relate the pseudonym to the actual name of the venue beyond the broad conventions of pub and club, for example, such that the *Rose and Crown* refers to a pub while *Sizzle* is a club. In some cases, no pseudonym has been used as this is unnecessary as a phrase such as 'that venue' suffices and the pseudonyms are not intended to convey any sense of the venue beyond the description given in the rest of the text. Where venues have been anonymised, the pseudonym is included in italics. Pseudonyms referred to in the thesis include: *The Chalk and Cheese*, *Sizzle*, *Rapture*, *Coliseum*, *Silver*, *Rose and Crown*, *The Regency*, *The Nightowl*, *Red* and *The Lighthouse*. In some cases I have referred to the original name of a venue. I have only done this in cases where the information being referred to is either in the public domain, or no individual is identifiable from their statement regarding the specific venue. To give an example, because the photograph from Bar:[ME] is in the public domain and no participant is identifiable from their statement regarding the venue, I have retained the original venue name.

Appendix 3: Recruitment Flyer



I am running a project at Bournemouth University to find out more about how people drink socially. I would be interested in your answers to questions like:

What do you like or dislike about a typical night out?

Where do you go and how do you plan your evenings out?

How do you feel about media representations of young people's drinking habits?

The project would take about 15 to 30 minutes of your time.

If you would be willing to participate, email me at

whaydock@bournemouth.ac.uk or text/call 07804 283764. I can call you back.

If you'd like to participate with a group of friends, just let me know - I'm also interested in how people drink in groups.

For more information about the project, see:

<http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/hsc/pdf/beacon9.pdf>

Thanks,

Will Haydock

School of Health and Social Care, Bournemouth University

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