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# **"Slobs and Yobs":**

## **Representations of Youth in UK Newspapers**

**1st January to 30th June 2005**

**By**

**Elaine M Robson.**

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### **Volume One**

This Thesis is submitted as a partial requirement for the Degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy,

School of Applied Social Sciences,

Durham University 2008

**0 7 OCT 2008**

I wish to clarify that this thesis is my own work.

The data presented are original and were collected by me over  
a six month period between 1st January 2005 to 30th June 2005.



## **Abstract**

Many authors have pointed to the ways in which newspapers negatively stereotype young people. This thesis aims to engage with and contribute to this debate through a contemporary discursive analysis of newspaper representations of youth, in *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror* during the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005. My aim is to make explicit the discourses, both contemporary and historical, that circulated in the press during this period. It is through such discourses that young people were identified, explained and represented at this juncture. It will be argued that those young people deemed problematic by the press are represented in particular classed ways and understood through a discourse of 'underclass'; by which young people are constructed as victims of their families. Further, in 2005, as in the nineteenth-century, the poor working-class (understood as uncultured/uncivilized) are blamed for societies ills and such a discursive configuration has inevitable consequences and effects for both young people and their families.

## **Acknowledgements:**

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# **Chapter One: Introduction, Background, Arguments and Method**

In the UK today young people are seen as 'problematic': the young person is either a threat or a victim. The understandable 'respectable fears' surrounding young people's involvement in anti-social behaviour, violent crime, drug abuse and theft become, in the hands of the media and politicians, conclusive proof that 'fings ain't wot they used to be' and that society is on the edge of collapse (Garratt, Roche and Tucker, 1997, p1).

Ten years on, the above sentiments still apply. And nowhere is the 'problem of youth' more apparent than in newspapers. Many authors have pointed to the ways in which newspapers negatively stereotype young people (e.g.: Cohen, 2005, Davis and Bourhill, 2004, Hall et al 2002, Muncie, 2004, Neustatter, 1998, Porteous & Colston, 1980, Scraton, 2004). This has caused concern for many including youth groups and charities. Indeed, in 2004 the publication 'Young People Now'<sup>1</sup> launched a campaign to improve the portrayal of young people in the media, as they argued:

Yobs, thugs, louts, monsters, scum, brutes, crooks. Just some of the terms used to refer to young people in the media in the last few years. The media presents young people at best as problems and at worst as criminals: 71 per cent of stories about them are negative and one in three focus on crime.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.youngpeoplenow.com/campaign/index.cfm>



This thesis aims to engage with and contribute to this debate through a contemporary discursive analysis of newspaper representations of youth, in *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror* during the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005. My aim is to make explicit the discourses, both contemporary and historical, that circulated in the press during this period. It is through such discourses that young people were identified, explained and represented at this juncture. This thesis does not undertake audience research.

The study of representations is an important sociological project because representations circulate culturally and thereby contribute to the ways in which individuals understand themselves and others. Culture enables communication. Communication is the generation of meaning: 'meaning is produced –constructed– rather than simply found', inherent in the elements (Hall, 2003a, p5). Representation constitutes things. Culture is a constitutive process.

Meaning is constantly produced in a variety of sites and circulated via a variety of practices from everyday micro practices to macro mass media technologies. Thus culture is a 'theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another' (Said, 1994:xiv). There are many cultural apparatuses (libraries, cinemas, schools, magazines, films, T.V.) of which newspapers are but one. Singularly, the power of each is questionable, yet the combined 'weight of their social gravity is manifested in how they are inscribed on the body, move people to social action, and set limits to the possibilities through which individuals negotiate their identities and sense of social agency' (Giroux, 1994:27-28).

The cultural meanings produced are not innocent but have real practical effects. Meanings are regulatory; they structure and regulate our conduct and practices. Kellner (2003:9) argues that the products of media culture provide the:

Materials out of which we forge our identities; our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female; our sense of class, ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality; and of "us" and "them". Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media stories provide the symbols, myths, and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture.

Consequently the media is a profound source of 'cultural pedagogy'; which instructs us in ways of being: whether this be in the performance of gender, age, class, race, nationality; in consumption and leisure, or in conformity to a dominant system of norms, values, practices and institutions. That is, the media instructs in ways of performing within 'white patriarchal capitalism' (Meyers, 1999, p7).

It is in this context that the study of representations becomes an important sociological project. It is my contention that a sociological examination of newspaper representations of youth is particularly important because:

1. Newspapers are a key medium through which people gain information about and knowledge of the world in which they live. It is especially important in describing events outside of the individual's personal experience.

2. Newspapers are central in the communication between those who govern and those who are governed. That is newspapers are central in communicating politics to the public, and vice versa, they are equally important in communicating (so-called) public opinion to politicians and policy makers.
3. Newspapers (therefore) play an important role in the definition/ construction of social problems, as well as in influencing solutions.
4. The ways in which newspapers interpret and communicate events involve processes which pull-on, perpetuate and exploit various, but limited and pre-existing, discourses and frameworks of understanding (ideologies, narratives, latent mythologies, popular assumptions and stereotypes).
5. Rather than enlightening us, the mechanics of the journalistic field inevitably result in simplification, homogenisation and mental closure (Bourdieu, 1998).

Moreover, through the course of this thesis I will argue that newspapers play a constitutive and constituent role in the construction of social problems and the solutions to these. However, this is done in ways that delimit the field of possibilities, and thus sustain social order.

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I will argue that adherence to news values means that only certain activities are judged newsworthy, these tend to be those that can be perceived as a threat to social order. In this way newspapers present a distorted vision of youthful behaviour. I further argue that the use of inferential structures by journalists means that the vast majority of activities judged newsworthy are accredited to certain (classed) young people. The effect is to cast all threatening behaviour as a classed phenomenon.

Furthermore, I will show that newspapers employ a limited range of discourses in their discussions of young people. I will argue that these have circulated for many years and are rooted in the nineteenth-century desire for social order and from which the 'social question' emerged as a 'problem' and a 'threat' to be contained. I will argue that newspaper attempts to explain those behaviours perceived problematic are therefore delimited by the discourses employed. As such, explanations are simplistic and predictable.

Moreover, the explanations for youthful behaviours that emanate from newspapers contribute to the construction of discursive figures or stereotypes; these are understood as possessing a limited range of simple, essential characteristics. They are conceptualised in dichotomised ways, such as innocent/evil, vulnerable/dangerous, cultured/uncultured, nature/nurture. I will attend to these oppositions throughout. It will be argued that these oppositions are preciously defended in the interests of order – even if this is at the expense of certain young people.

I will also argue that such discursive figures do not represent 'real' young people but that these are applied to (classed) bodies and, through constant repetition, become reified. The result is that some young people are to be protected whilst others are to be disciplined and contained. But whichever side of the dichotomy they are on, all are to be surveyed and regulated.

Throughout the research I will highlight that although discourses of the press consistently identify certain young people as (potentially) in trouble or causing trouble, those perceived to be 'problematic' are rarely blamed for their 'deviant' behaviours. The evidence presented here frequently diverts attention to the young people's families in causal explanation. More precisely blame is attributed to mothers who are judged to be inadequate and immoral. I argue that the result is that explanations forwarded by the press are anti-social explanations; they are cloaked attempts at victim blaming, as Skeggs (2004:114) argues, such:

...judgements and moral attribution to practices, accompanied by lack of attention to circumstances, enable attention to be deflected away from cause and positioned onto the irresponsible individual

In my research, the working-class single mother came to personify the irresponsible individual and it is she who carries the burden of representation as a threat to social order.

## **Thesis Outline:**

Chapters two and three are focussed literature reviews. Chapter two begins with a review of literature concerned with the news-making process and then focuses on literature dealing specifically with newspaper representations of youth.

Consideration is given to both 'lawless' and 'innocent' youth through attention to Cohen's (2005) moral panic analysis of the mods and rockers phenomenon and analyses of newspaper reportage of the murder of James Bulger. This reveals that 'morality tales' are the most commonly told story in the press, such tales frequently reflect, mobilize and perpetuate predominant prejudices and beliefs.

Chapter three considers how youth have been defined in academic literature; it is an attempt to clarify whom it is we are referring to when we employ the category of youth. The chapter shows that our definitions, concepts and understandings of youth are far from fixed. Quite often the category of youth is a moveable feast and is dependent upon adult judgements. Moreover, the discussion illustrates that different ontologies and epistemologies collide (and often coalesce) in relation to young people.

Chapter four introduces a theoretical framework. Here the concept of discourse is introduced and discussed through the work of Michel Foucault. The chapter also attends to methods of discourse analysis and utilizes the work of Siegfried Jäger (2005) and Christine Griffin (1993) to illustrate. Having outlined a theoretical approach to analysis, the chapter then introduces the data from this research. Basic counts are produced and the dominant themes that emerged in news

reporting are highlighted. A case study analysis of newspaper reports on the murder trial of Luke Mitchell is presented.

Chapter five attends to the historical antecedents of discourses of youth.

Beginning in the seventeenth century the discourse strand of youth is traced through the centuries. This discussion reveals that discourses of youth are, and continue to be, heavily dependent upon the discourses of class and family.

Despite numerous discursive developments during the course of the centuries discussed, discourses of youth are shown to have altered little since the nineteenth century.

Chapter six presents an analysis of newspaper reporting on the anti-social behaviour of 'Yobs'. Elements from Cohen's (2005) study of mods and rockers are employed to facilitate analysis. This analysis reveals how historical discourses on youth continue to impact in the present. It is argued that newspaper explanations of 'Yobs' are inherently 'anti-social': they focus attention on individual causes of 'Yob' behaviour and thus deflect attention away from structural causes.

Chapter seven focuses on newspaper representations of young women. Due to the news being dominated by crime stories most newspaper analyses have concentrated upon young men, within this young women tend only to be apparent as victims. This analysis of representations of young women attends to a variety of themes including Internet use, obesity, image-obsession, binge-drinking, sexuality and teenage pregnancy. The concept of childhood innocence as an

absence of malice is called into question. However, I argue that the concept of innocence is preciously defended in relation to young women. Moreover, the working-class single mother emerges in this analysis as a major threat to the stability of society.

Chapter eight considers the concept of the 'stereotype' in relation to newspaper representations of youth. This is done through attention to those articles in which the TV character 'Vicky Pollard' was utilized to identify, contextualize and explain young people deemed to be 'problematic'. Once more this revealed newspaper reporting to present a particularly classed representation of youth. The concept of stereotypes is considered as a strategy of 'othering'. This shows that stereotypes enable middle-class selves to arrogate value whilst denying value to working-class others. Stereotyping thus serves to legitimate social inequality.

Chapter nine will conclude this thesis; it will reflect upon the methods employed, the theoretical approach taken and developed, and the findings presented. It will be argued that the dominant discourse circulating about 'problem' youth closely resembled a discourse of underclass. As a result, in 2005, as in the nineteenth-century, the poor working-class (understood as uncultured/uncivilized) are blamed for societies ills. The effects of this can be seen in the plethora of initiatives targeted towards poor families as part of a 'responsibilisation strategy' (Squires and Stephen (2005).

## **Methods:**

### **Sample selection**

I aimed for a representative sample of newspaper ‘types’, The Guardian, The Daily Mirror and The Daily Mail were chosen.

The Guardian was selected as a ‘upmarket’ broadsheet known for its liberal stance and for its popularity amongst middle class professionals employed in the ‘social welfare’ occupations; including those working with young people (i.e. social workers, youth workers, teachers and so on). Indeed, ‘it is after all the paper which the poverty lobby and ‘caring professions’ look to for support’ (Hall et al, 2002, p103). Ninety percent of Guardian’s readers work in middle-class occupations. The Scott Trust owns the Guardian; they also own the Observer newspaper, numerous local newspapers and radio stations (see appendix two):

The Trust was created in 1936 to safeguard the journalistic freedom and liberal values of the Guardian. Its core purpose is to preserve the financial and editorial independence of the Guardian in perpetuity, while its subsidiary aims are to champion its principles and to promote freedom of the press in the UK and abroad<sup>2</sup>.

The Daily Mirror was selected as the only ‘popular’ left-wing tabloid (indeed newspaper) with a predominantly working-class target readership (sixty-two percent of its readership are classified social grade C2DE). Trinity Mirror PLC, which is a major media conglomerate, owns the Daily Mirror; they claim to be the UK’s largest newspaper publishing company and that ‘forty per cent of the UK’s

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<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> <http://www.gmgplc.co.uk/ScottTrust/tabid/127/Default.aspx>

population reads one of [their] titles' (see appendix three). The Daily Mirror does not (explicitly at least) claim a 'grand vision' of journalistic and editorial freedom and integrity. Rather its expressed goals are related to market expansion<sup>3</sup>:

Our goal is to build a growing multi-platform media business, by developing and sustaining strong positions across print and digital, with products and services which meet the needs of our customers, both readers and advertisers<sup>4</sup>.

The Daily Mail was selected as representative of a mid-market, right wing tabloid whose readership is generally perceived to be middle class though approximately one third of its readership are classified social grade C2DE. It is the only newspaper to have a greater proportion of female readers (fifty-five percent). It is owned by Daily Mail and General Trust plc, another large media conglomerate (see appendix four). The Daily Mail claims to have changed the course of history:

In a century of adventure and disclosure, of courage and crusading, it has probably contributed more to progress than any other newspaper. [...]. It has kept watch over politicians, influenced the minds of leaders and changed the thinking of governments<sup>5</sup>.

Both Critcher (2003) and Thompson (1999) have noted the consistent presence of The Daily Mail in moral panic analyses. Thompson (1999, p27-8) has argued that:

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.trinitymirror.com/group/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.trinitymirror.com/group/strategy/>; <http://www.trinitymirror.com/group/history/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dmgt.co.uk/aboutdmgt/dmgthistory/thedailymailstory/>

In the 1990s The Daily Mail took on the mantle of the media leader in the role of moral campaigner, frequently boasting of its successes in influencing politicians to introduce legislation or to take other action to deal with moral issues about which it had campaigned.

Critcher (2003, p142) argues that ‘no other individual, organisation or group has had such a profound effect on the development of moral panics’. He argues that as a mid-market newspaper ‘it is an exceedingly powerful institution, whose rationale is to speak for middle England’.

The following table details the readership of the three newspapers:

	The Daily Mail		The Daily Mirror		The Guardian	
Total Readers	n. 5635,000		n. 4148,000		n. 1222,000	
(for all numbers)						
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
Social Grade ABC1	3661,000	65	1589,000	38	1099,000	90
Social Grade C2DE	1974,000	35	2559,000	62	124,000	10
Aged 15-44	1894,000	34	1825,000	44	599,000	49
Aged 45+	3740,000	66	2323,000	46	623,000	51
Men	2544,000	45	2216,000	53	733,000	60
Women	3091,000	55	1932,000	47	489,000	40

Source: National Readership Survey, <http://www.nrs.co.uk/> Sept 2004-2005

## **Time Coverage**

In order to understand the ebbs and flows, as well as the consistencies and continuities in newspaper coverage of youth I decided to encompass a longer timescale than is normally used in conventional analysis (which usually ranges between one week and one month). This research covers six months (01/01/05-30/06/05).

## **Article selection**

Articles were selected retrospectively using Lexisnexis, an electronic newspaper database. The benefits of this included cost, manageability, scope and the ability to download electronic files. However, Lexisnexis does not include accompanying photographic images which contribute greatly to establishing a news story as factual due to the assumption that photography is veracious and objective (when really it is 'only ever the result of an arbitrary selection, and, consequently, of a transcription' Bourdieu, 2003, p162).

Further, the articles are disembedded; separated from other news stories of the day. This is particularly relevant as dips in the volume of newspaper coverage about young people coincided with major news stories. The death of Pope John Paul on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2005 serves as a good example, there were ten to sixteen daily stories the week before his death, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April there were six, on the 4<sup>th</sup> April there were three.

The last and perhaps most daunting difficulty was the sheer volume of articles generated from the searches: 9385. Because the research aimed to examine

newspaper representations of ‘youth’ in general (rather than specific types of young people), generalized search terms were used: youth, adolescen\*<sup>6</sup>, teenage\*<sup>7</sup>, young people and young adult. This was very time consuming; searches were required for each day as a week search returned too many articles for the database to handle (272 for 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> January). Moreover, the volume returned would have made any meaningful analysis in the available time impossible. Consequently, during the selection process each article generated was scan-read and only those related specifically to youth were downloaded for analysis.

This was in itself an informative exercise. A large proportion of articles proved not to be about young people at all. Obituaries and stories about adults were infused with references to past youth. The notion that the ‘child is father of the man’ was particularly prevalent in articles covering the Pope’s death. Despite there being only six articles about young people on 3<sup>rd</sup> April the search generated fifty-two finds; most of these were related to the Pope detailing his own youth, his work with youth or his special relationship with youth.

The term youth also invoked a nostalgic longing, for something that is lost, whether it be energy and vitality, physical appearance or ‘the good old days’. Furthermore the search terms, particularly adolescen\*, teenage\* and youth, were frequently used as adjectives or similes to describe adult behaviour – often in a judgemental way. To behave ‘like an adolescent’ is bad; to have ‘youthful good looks’ is good.

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<sup>6</sup> \* to include articles employing variations of the word, e.g.: adolescent(s), adolescence.

<sup>7</sup> e.g.: teenager(s), teenaged.

Moreover, the term youth is employed metaphorically. Newspaper articles use the concept in an attempt to pull on shared meanings as though we know what is meant though what they actually mean is never made explicit.

In terms of an age definition, the newspapers generally attributed the term youth to children, teenagers and young adults up to thirty years old. It was applied as a generational category (the youth of today) and as an individual adjective (a youth was seen).

As already mentioned the initial searches generated 9385 articles. Because this made meaningful analysis impossible I had to be selective. And, as I was aiming to examine newspaper representations of youth in general I decided not to include certain types of articles. No articles about adults that referenced youth were selected for detailed analysis. All articles from the sport pages were omitted, as were references to other 'celebrity' young people<sup>8</sup>. Other omitted articles included those from travel pages, entertainment listings, reviews, and letters. Where more than one of the same article was generated (as happens between different editions) I selected the article with most words. Finally, I have limited the coverage of this research to stories about young people in the UK and articles about young people globally were omitted. Searching The Mirror generated results from both the Eire and Ulster editions; these too were omitted.

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<sup>8</sup> In retrospect this may have reduced the number of positive stories in my sample because I have omitted many 'kids are brilliant stories in which children excel in some way' (Neustatter, 1998, p8).

The selection process resulted in 1885 articles (twenty per cent) being downloaded for analysis, the following table illustrates:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Number of Finds</b>	<b>Number Selected</b>	<b>Percentage selected</b>
Jan-05	1609	341	21
Feb-05	1369	299	22
Mar-05	1580	332	21
Apr-05	1536	254	17
May-05	1657	366	22
Jun-05	1634	294	18
<i>Total</i>	9385	1885	20

**Data Handling**

Each article (text) was initially speed/surface read and coded by the main themes (discourse fragments) covered in the article and where possible by the age and gender of the young person/ people being discussed. The main aim at this point was to enable identification of themes covered and prevalence. It also allowed me to become familiar with the data: the style and language employed.

Moreover, this in itself was quite an experience. Being immersed in so many articles, many of which were quite distressing and/or vitriolic, over a prolonged period of time was almost overwhelming and I can see how exposure to such newspaper reporting could distort one’s view of society. In a strange way this experience affected me, I became more aware and anxious of (certain) young

people's presence when out and about, my anxiety about my own young people's safety increased, and I became quicker at jumping to conclusions/explanations about young people without supporting evidence, indeed the language employed in the articles had invaded my (mental) vocabulary.

After such an exercise it was pretty clear what young people get up to: (according to press reporting), they go to school and in their spare time they are in trouble or causing trouble. The overwhelming impression that one is left with is that the 'young people of today' are an aberration; unlike any previous generation, they are out of control, they eat too much and drink too much alcohol, are addicted to drugs and have irresponsible sex too often and too soon; they have a propensity to criminal activity and violence; they have no morals or respect, their main victims are ordinary decent folk who would do anything for anyone. I could go on.

## **Chapter Two: Newspapers, News-Making and Representations of Youth**

Newspapers are a specific form of media and are an important source from which members of society gain knowledge of their worlds. However, newspapers do not simply report the 'news', rather they are 'news-making organisations' and have particular organizational structures and methods of information production. These constitute the news-making process.

Previous analyses demonstrate that news organizations are powerful institutions that are able to greatly determine what counts as news; they are thus able to legitimate certain concerns and marginalize others. This chapter seeks to review literature concerned with newspapers as sites of hegemonic representation. It will begin by considering news organisations, news production and journalistic practice. The chapter will then focus on literature dealing specifically with newspaper representations of youth. It will consider representations of lawless youth and pay particular attention to the contribution of Cohen's (2005) moral panic analysis of the mods and rockers phenomenon. It will then consider representations of innocent youth and this will utilise analyses of newspaper reportage of the murder of James Bulger.

The review that follows will argue that:

- Newspaper representations construct young people in dichotomised ways (such as innocent/evil, vulnerable/dangerous, cultured/uncultured, natured/nurtured).
- This marks youth as a category to be managed in particular (often dichotomised) ways.
- Such management will always include notions of regulation, supervision and surveillance, but will be dichotomised around notions of freedom and protection or control, discipline and punishment.
- It therefore leads to restrictions upon youth being enforced.

### **The News-making Process:**

According to Critcher (2003, p131) there is general agreement that 'news organizations' actively contribute to the construction of social problems and the solutions to them, however they do not do this in isolation. News organizations are enmeshed in society and in any society there are numerous institutions and sites of discursive production, to which the news media frequently responds. Consequently news organizations play a 'constitutive and constituent' role in problem definition.

Critcher (2003:131) warns against treating the news media as a 'monolithic whole' and stresses the importance of distinguishing between 'types' of news: broadcasting/press, upmarket/mid-market/downmarket, national/local, hard news/background, exploration/commentary. However, recent trends suggest that

news and other media are becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few and that the distinction between news production and entertainment organizations increasingly blurred. Croteau and Hoynes (2003:23) summarize these trends into four broad developments:

1. *Growth.* Mergers and buyouts have made media corporations bigger than ever.
  2. *Integration.* New media giants have integrated either horizontally by moving into multiple forms of media such as film publishing, radio, and so on, or vertically by owning different stages of production and distribution, or both.
  3. *Globalization.* To varying degrees, the major media conglomerates have become global entities, marketing their wares worldwide.
  4. *Concentration of ownership.* As major players acquire more media holdings, the ownership of mainstream media has become increasingly concentrated.
- (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003:23)

All four developments can be illustrated by the growth of Rupert Murdoch's *News Corp.*<sup>1</sup>. Murdoch inherited the Adelaide News and The Adelaide Sunday Mail in 1952 and from the 1960s onwards began to acquire numerous newspapers, initially Australian but gradually global. In 1969 he bought The News of the World and relaunched the Sun in the UK; in 1973 he entered the US market and acquired the New York Post in 1977. News Corp. was formed in 1980 and The Times and Sunday Times (UK) was acquired in 1981. In 1983 Sky satellite television was launched (marking an expansion into entertainment production) with Fox broadcasting established in 1986 (the same year as the Wapping dispute). By 1987 News Corp. was the 'world's largest newspaper publisher'

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cjr.org/resources/>

owning 'approximately sixty per cent of Australian newspapers and thirty-five per cent of UK newspapers' (<http://www.cjr.org/resources>).

Despite a 'blip' in 1990 when the company was faced with bankruptcy these developments have continued apace; as the Columbia Journalism Review asserts 'Moulded under the watchful eye of Rupert Murdoch, News Corp. continues to evolve and serve as a model for the vertically integrated media conglomerate' (<http://www.cjr.org/resources>). News Corp. now owns numerous TV and radio stations, satellite/cable channels, newspapers, magazines, book publishers, film and music studios, sports clubs and Internet portals (including [myspace.com](http://myspace.com))<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, news-organisations tend towards homogeneity rather than diversity. The UK national press has become highly concentrated (London-based) and closely linked in recent decades (Thompson, 1999:27). Many local newspapers now belong to a handful of 'media giants'. This serves to undermine their specificity and independence. It is in this context that Bourdieu (1998:23) argued that though 'the journalistic world is a divided one, full of conflict, competition, and rivalries ... journalistic products are much more alike than is generally thought'. Bourdieu (1998:23) argued that the political tendencies of newspapers (though becoming blurred) hide profound similarities. He pointed to a number of causal mechanisms, most important of which was economic competition. As Bourdieu (1998:23) stated:

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix four

Free market economics holds that monopoly creates uniformity and competition produces diversity<sup>3</sup>. [...] but I observe that competition homogenizes when it occurs between journalists or newspapers subject to identical pressures and opinion polls, and with the same basic cast of commentators (note how easily journalists move from one news medium or program [sic] to another)

An understanding of '**News values**', that is the ability to recognize a good story, and journalistic training partly explains the ease with which journalists transcend titles. Indeed 'processes of selection and presentation are underpinned by 'news values'; shaped by what is deemed newsworthy' (Davis and Bourhill, 2004:28). There are not instruction manuals, rather these are journalistic 'rules of thumb about what does and does not make a good story' and are learned on the job (Cricher, 2003:132). According to Cohen (2005:32) news values include 'intuitive hunches' to determine a good story, through notions of 'giving the public what they want', to 'structured ideological biases, which predispose the media to make a certain event into news'. Hall et al (2002:54) summarize 'news values' as follows:

News values provide the criteria in the routine practices of journalism which enable journalists, editors and newsmen to decide routinely and regularly which stories are 'newsworthy' and which are not, which stories are major 'lead' stories and which are relatively insignificant, which stories to run and which to drop. Although they are nowhere written down, formally transmitted or codified, news values seem to be widely shared as between the different news media, ... and form a core element in the professional socialization, practice and ideology of newsmen.

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<sup>3</sup> In the case of the UK we have a competition between monopolies.

Adherence to news values results in certain events being prime targets for reporting:

News depends on events of sudden duration, which are unexpected, negative in import, serious in implication, seen as part of a pattern personified, made meaningful and rendered morally unambiguous (Crichton, 2003:133).

Atypical events are particularly newsworthy. For Bourdieu (1998:20-21) however, the search for the extra-ordinary has political effects; it becomes a form of 'self-censorship that comes from fear of being left behind or left out'.

**Primary definers** are given utmost importance in analyses of the news-making process (Hall et al, 2002). Contrary to popular imagery journalists rarely go out 'in search of a story'; rather they become reliant upon an 'inflow of official information' from spokespersons, politicians, professionals and experts (Davis and Bourhill, 2004:28). Innes (2003) points to a reciprocal relationship between the police and news journalists. Whilst the police are a key source of information for news organizations, the news is an important resource in police investigations. Through police and family appeals, victim portrayals, reconstructions and publicizing rewards, the police aim to generate new information on the cases they are investigating. 'News values', however, dictate that only some stories are worth reporting: those with a 'good victim', most often 'a middle-class female, attractive woman or a child', or those that signify something else (Innes, 2003:55). As journalists are involved in the communication of 'morality tales' which 'convey the fundamental desirability of social order', stories that (can be made to) suggest something is wrong with society are particularly attractive

(Innes, 2003:55). Consequently, some stories are simply not attractive and may never be reported.

Bourdieu (1998:69) showed that journalists' autonomy and independence is compromised by a reliance on official sources; he saw this as a governmental monopoly on legitimate information. According to Bourdieu:

This monopoly provides governmental authorities (juridical, scientific, and other authorities as much as the police) with weapons for manipulating the news or those in charge of transmitting it. For its part, the press attempts to manipulate these "sources" in order to get a news exclusive. And we must not ignore the exceptional symbolic power given to state authorities to define, by their actions, their decisions, and their entry into the journalistic field (interviews, press conferences, and so on), the journalistic agenda and the hierarchy of importance assigned to events (Bourdieu, 1998:70).

Furthermore, reliance on primary definers together with an adherence to news values leads to conformity in the news:

The combination of the journalist's assimilation of news values, characterized by integrating sensationalism with conventionalism, and a dependence on the contributions of official agencies and experts, creates and sustains conformity in news presentation (Davis and Bourhill, 2004:29).

Consequently, 'much news is, in fact, ritual ... endlessly repeated drama whose themes are familiar and well understood' (Rock, 1973 quoted in Davis and Bourhill, 2004:29). Homogenisation is inevitable for Bourdieu (1998). Bourdieu

(1998:24) highlighted that journalists read more newspapers than anybody else; a daily review of the competition is an essential part of news production: 'to know what to say, you have to know what everyone else has said'. Newspapers are not indifferent to the headlines of other papers, rather they constantly reference each other, but this 'produces a formidable effect of mental closure' (Bourdieu, 1998:24). TV and radio act similarly in their production of news, as Bourdieu argued (1998:24) 'to put together the headlines for the evening news you must have read the morning papers. These are the tacit requirements of the job'. TV dominates the production of news both economically and symbolically (Bourdieu, 1998) and although newspapers are in constant competition they retain a 'constitutive and constituent' role in news production.

Moreover, a general 'tabloidization' has occurred across all newspaper sectors in the UK (Thompson, 1999:27). This is partly due to competition for market position. One consequence is that social problems have come to be 'personalized and sensationalized'<sup>4</sup> (Thompson, 1999:28). A summary of research by Reiner et al (2003) illustrates.

Reiner et al (2003) analysed a representative sample from The Times and The Daily Mirror published between 1945 and 1991. This confirmed that deviance is the stuff of news with crime reports accounting for a 'substantial proportion' of all articles. However the proportion of crime reports had doubled in later decades (from 10% until the mid sixties to 20% afterwards). This was underlined by an increase in the proportion of reports featuring multiple crimes (those not the focus

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<sup>4</sup> Though this is most evident in the newspaper media it is also true of broadcasting (Bourdieu, 1998, Franklin, 1999, Thompson, 1999).

of the report). Such crimes are termed consequential (preliminary crimes: steal car to rob bank) or contextual (unrelated but indicative of a trend), the referencing of contextual crimes rose from 19% in 1945-64 to 44% in 1981-91.

Crime reporting also changed qualitatively; so in the period 1945-1965 crime was reported as:

A series of unfortunate yet relatively isolated incidents. In so far as it was related to social causes, these were regarded as ones that were capable of resolution and were being dealt with by greater understanding and social reform (Reiner et al, 2003:25).

Such representation had altered dramatically by the late 1960s and crime was reported as:

Increasingly threatening and out of control. It was presented as symptomatic of wider social crisis and ever more serious and pervasive in its impact on ordinary people (Reiner et al, 2003:25).

Victims of crime also became increasingly prominent; in 1945-64 the details of 145 victims appeared in 211 reports; in 1981-91 227 victims were detailed in 203 reports. Early reports displayed a measure of concern for criminals (albeit understanding in order to rehabilitate). In later reports the harm crime caused became equated with 'the suffering and distress of victims as well as the potential threat of victimization to readers'. Reiner et al (2003:26) highlight the ways readers 'are invited to identify with victims through portrayals of their ordinariness, innocence and vulnerability'.

Furedi (2007) also found reporting to be increasingly focussed on victims. He compared newspaper reporting of serious flooding in the 1950s and 2000 and found that whilst narratives in the 1950s centred on a sense of community and collective resilience: the 'Blitz spirit', by 2000 the focus was on the emotional pain of individual flood victims.

Reiner et al (2003:30) conclude that newspaper reporting has altered significantly since 1945; it has become increasingly 'personalized and sensationalized' and transformed into 'a battle against one-dimensionally evil villains who inflict dramatic and frightening suffering on individual victims'. They (2003:30) assert that because crime is now reported in 'much more highly charged, emotional terms as a serious threat to ordinary people' it must leave readers with a much greater sense of risk.

Consequently, actions and events are now perceived in individualized terms (or as problem individuals). What Reiner et al identify above is what Young (1996:54) refers to as the 'crime couplet': the opposition between offender and victim; the victim 'is the sign through which the couplet of crime is to be read'. Young (1996) argues that crime provides us with a sense of community:

But our belonging comes not from the fact that we are all criminals, but rather from the shared fact of victimization. It is through our victimage that we come to belong to the social body. To be a victim is to be a citizen (Young, 1996:55)

In news reporting then, criminals are the outsider, the other, 'them'; the binary opposite of the victim, the citizen, 'us'.

The interpretation of events into oppositional categories is illustrative of the **inferential structures** utilized by journalists in news reporting. Inferential structures refer to ‘a structure or system of inferences or underlying assumptions’: a kind of ‘explanatory framework’ (Cricher, 2003:133). Because news values dictate that atypical events are most newsworthy (representing change, unpredictability, and conflict), journalists must re-present news events in ways that readers understand if they are to communicate meaning. This is done through a process of identification and contextualization: events are ‘identified (i.e. named, defined, related to other events known to the audience) and assigned a social context (i.e. placed within a frame of meanings familiar to the audience)’ (Hall et al, 2002:54). Essentially this involves:

Referring unusual and unexpected events to the ‘maps of meaning’ which already form the basis of our cultural knowledge, into which the social world is *already* ‘mapped’. The social identification, classification and contextualization of news events in terms of these background frames of reference is the fundamental process by which the media make the world they report on intelligible to readers and viewers (Hall et al, 2002:54-55).

Consequently, the news media play both a ‘formative and reflective role’ in socially constructing events; and whilst they ‘mobilize and reproduce images’ that resonate with audiences these all too often reflect ‘the prejudices, beliefs and anxieties that hold sway’ (Scruton, 2004:170).

Binary oppositions are fundamental to these ‘maps of meaning’ and are especially prominent when evaluative moral judgements are at play. Cricher (2003:133)

identifies the deviant-normal axis; and argues that this is 'easily exaggerated into a contest between good and evil'; doing so negates the need to 'recognize complexity and competing definitions'. Other common moral oppositions include nature/nurture, civilized/uncivilized (frequently translated into cultured/uncultured), order/anarchy and as we have seen criminal/victim. Crucial to this process is an assumption of consensus (Hall et al, 2002). Because we belong to the same society it is assumed that we share the same 'maps of meaning' and that these reflect our common concerns and values, but as Hall et al (2002) point out, such an assumption simultaneously assumes that there are no conflicts of interest:

Events, as news, then, are regularly interpreted within frameworks which derive in part, from this notion of *the consensus* as a basic feature of everyday life. They are elaborated through a variety of 'explanations', images and discourses which articulate what the audience is assumed to think and know about society (Hall et al, 2002:55).

Consequently, crime reporting frequently pulls on images that 'reflect shared and persistent ideologies' related to age, gender, race and class (Scraton, 2004:172). Scraton (2004:172) highlights 'popular assumptions about racial superiority' which are referenced and reinforced by newspaper coverage of immigration. He also highlights that:

Similar assumptions about 'problem estates' and 'sink schools', reflecting established class ideologies are reinforced by media stereotypes of an underclass which inhabits 'no-go' areas' (Scraton, 2004:172).

Bourdieu (1998:44-45) alluded to this notion of consensus; he argued that if news organizations target a 'broad public' they must 'dispense with sharp edges and anything that might divide or exclude readers', they must 'attempt to be inoffensive' and they 'must never bring up problems – or, if it does, only problems that don't pose any problem'. In the process events become depoliticised. Newspapers consistently address an 'us' and as such 'exercise a very particular form of domination since they control the means of public expression' (Bourdieu, 1998:47). Journalists impose a particular vision of the world and particular analyses of problems and these are based upon shared assumptions and beliefs; this is tantamount to censorship:

There is no discourse (scientific analysis, political manifesto, what ever) and no action (demonstration, strike) that doesn't have to face this trial of journalistic selection in order to catch the public eye. The effect is *censorship*, which journalists practice without even being aware of it. They retain only the things capable of *interesting* them and "keeping their attention", which means things that fit their categories and mental grid; and they reject as insignificant or remain indifferent to symbolic expressions that ought to reach the population as a whole (Bourdieu, 1998:47).

Therefore, the concerns and interests of news-producers delimit what counts as news. Cohen (2005:xxxiii) argues similarly; he suggests there are issues about which we should panic 'and thereby overcome the barriers of denial, passivity and indifference that prevent a full acknowledgement of human cruelty and suffering'. As it is, the news media plays a key role in determining not so much what the public think but what issues the public think about (Innes, 2003:64). In doing so

they employ simplistic and familiar frameworks of understanding which negate the need for complex analysis:

Crime, deviance and the response to such acts are one of the most common forms of story told via the mass media. They are thus important to our culture inasmuch as they provide an institutionalised form of storytelling, wherein symbolic demarcations of the sacred from the profane, the pure from the impure, are provided (Innes, 2003:64).

Such demarcations are assisted through the use of stereotypes. Davis and Bourhill (2004:30), point to the 'latent mythologies' and stereotypes related to young people that are founded upon the binary oppositions of innocence/evil; nature/nurture; protection/freedom, these, they argue, are 'deeply rooted in the British tradition' and result in the media treating youth as 'objects of concern or as threats to adult order' (Davis and Bourhill, 2004:31). Moreover, because newspapers are attracted to atypical events that disrupt our expectations they are therefore perceived as 'threatening to a society based around the expectation of consensus, order and routine', they involve themselves in making 'problematic reality' comprehensible (Hall et al, 2002:56). And, as Young (1996:112) points out:

One of the key features of the ... discourse of the national press, is that it always responds to the call for interpretation but its response is always haunted by its *failure* to interpret.

Here, Young (1996) is referring to newspaper coverage of the murder of James Bulger in 1993. She and other authors have analysed media reaction to this tragic

event and found that though atypical, the national press developed it into an iconic discursive event of some magnitude. In the following section we will discuss previous research into newspaper representations of children and young people in general. I will pay particular attention to newspaper coverage of the Mods and Rockers: lawless youth, and of the murder of James Bulger: innocence.

### **Newspaper Representations of Youth:**

The use of binary oppositions in news reporting is a key mechanism by which journalists simplify and communicate complex events and issues. Nowhere is this more apparent than in news reports concerning young people. Davies and Bourhill (2004:31) argue that the main oppositions in relation to young people are innocence/evil, nature/nurture and freedom/protection. Such oppositions are highlighted throughout the literature reviewed here; the consensus position being that young people are represented either as pure, innocent, vulnerable objects of concern, or as innately evil and anarchic threats to adult order (Cricher, 2003, Davies & Bourhill, 2004, Muncie, 2004, Scraton, 2004). It is perhaps unsurprising then, that when newspapers reach the point of offering solutions to the problems they have described, analysed and interpreted in such simplistic and one-dimensional terms, to find their solutions to be of the same order, simplistic and one dimensional: young people are seen as in need of regulation or protection or both.

Consequently, in newspaper reporting young people are represented as a danger to themselves and to society at once. This is illustrated by Porteous and Colston's (1980, in Muncie, 2004:9) content analysis of British newspapers in which they concluded: 'according to our daily press, a typical adolescent is a sporting youngster, criminally inclined, likely to be murdered or injured in an accident'. However, they found that newspaper representations were not wholly negative (54% were neutral and 24% positive). Many positive stories were related to 'kids are brilliant stories in which children excel in some way' (Neustatter, 1998:8), or to 'celebrity' young people, such as sports stars, entertainers and the children of the rich and famous. Porteous and Colston argued that such young people 'commandeered the limelight in a stereotyped presentation of the good life' (in Muncie, 2004:10).

In the majority of cases however, young people only become newsworthy due to their criminal dangerousness or their naïve vulnerability (Davies and Bourhill, 2004, Muncie, 2004:10). Young People Now's 'Positive Images' campaign, launched in October 2004, was supported by research commissioned from Mori<sup>5</sup>. Mori analysed articles about children and young people in a sample of seventeen newspapers, involving a combination of tabloid, broadsheet and local, during the week 2-8 August 2004. This generated 603 articles. The main findings were:

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mori.com/polls/2004/young-people-now.shtml>

- Three in four articles (71%) concerning young people had a negative tone, while 14% were positive and 15% neutral
- A third of articles discussed young people in the context of violent crime or antisocial behaviour (32%).
- Nearly 70% of stories involving boys and violence described them as the perpetrator, while girls were described as the victim in 90% of cases.
- Only eight per cent of articles included any direct comment or quote from young people

Moreover, crime dominates in newspaper reporting of youth. Indeed, the high propensity of crime stories has led to a 'gross caricature of young people's lives' (Muncie, 2004:10). As Scraton (2004:171-2) has argued:

Journalists and editors have taken the sensationalist, dramatic images of troublesome children and lawless youth, regardless of their accuracy, and touched the raw nerve of established ideologies. So strong are the ideologies which prevail over crime, disorder and deviance, saturated with dominant notions of 'evil', 'viciousness' and 'savagery' that the constituency thirst for the grotesque and the horrific. On the one hand is the moral indignation of condemnation, harsh punishment and retribution, on the other is the amoral infatuation with the violent and brutal details of tragic cases.

## **Lawless Youth:**

Muncie (2004:7-8) argues that 'images of dangerousness are arguably the most familiar public appearance of youth encapsulated in the threat and danger of the mob or gang'. But whilst such images attract adult fears, the state of youth has become a metaphor for the state of society; the notion of 'dangerous youth is the cornerstone of a number of key concerns about a disordered present' (Muncie, 2004:9). Davies and Bourhill (2004:31-32) concur:

Crime, lawlessness and disorder have been portrayed as illustrative of a decline in traditional values with children and young people depicted as bereft of personal responsibility, not knowing right or wrong and ill disciplined due to the absence of effective punishment.

Davies and Bourhill (2004:33) assert that though the 'involvement of young children in serious crime is rare' the media seek out, exaggerate or invent examples and in so-doing challenge and undermine notions of essential innocence. The nature/nurture dichotomy is of particular importance not least because it leads to ontological questions over biological predisposition or environmental (i.e. family) determinism. But also because it frequently ignores the meanings and motivations of young people themselves whilst simultaneously disregarding the contradictory adult, cultural contexts in which they live:

What a terrible irony this represents given the apparently insatiable appetite that much of the adult, patriarchal world has for violence, brutality, war and destruction (Scruton, 2004:164).

Repeatedly, newspapers interpret specific youth crimes as signifying much more than the actual event; they come to be seen as evidence of societal decline and a breakdown of the family, traditional values and law and order (Cohen, 2004, Davies and Bourhill, 2004, Innes, 2003, Muncie, 2004, Pearson, 1983). In the search for causation predictable well-rehearsed concerns appear: 'single parents, lack of self-reliance and dependency on the state ... [and] inadequate discipline'; these are the 'persistent constructs underpinning the causes of crime' (Davies and Bourhill, 2004:36). Within this, deviant children can become demonised but as the narratives develop; and come to be seen as signifying something else, they are frequently perceived as victims of the 'subversion of institutions that are supposed to constrain' them (Davies and Bourhill, 2004:34). The next stage will involve predictable and formulaic calls for a return to traditional values: more discipline, more punishment and more retribution. In effect the press amplify youth crime through a process Cohen (2005) termed a signification spiral in *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, I will now discuss this research in more detail.

### **Moral Panics over Lawless Youth**

The term moral panic was first published in the work of Jock Young (1971) but was systematically developed by Stanley Cohen in 1972 (Cricher, 2003, Hunt, 1997, McRobbie and Thornton, 1995, Thompson 1999). In his analysis Cohen concentrated on the media's role in the creation of folk devils and moral panics from the behaviour of 'some' young people in the South of England in the mid-1960s. He identified an impact event: the behaviour of 'mods and rockers' at the seaside resort of Clacton on an Easter weekend in 1964. Though the types of behaviour were nothing new, the press coverage that followed represented the

young people as deviants; they became 'wild ones' who 'terrorized' ordinary members of the public. Cohen was particularly concerned with:

The way in which the situation was initially interpreted and presented by the mass media, because it is in this form that most people receive their pictures of both deviance and disasters ... The media presentation or inventory of the Mods and Rockers events is crucial in determining the later stages of the reaction (Cohen, 2005:18).

Within the inventory stage events were exaggerated and distorted by newspapers in terms of the numbers involved, the damage done, and by the use of melodramatic vocabulary, sensational headlines and generic plurals. The inventory also involved constant prediction: that events would recur/ worsen, and symbolization: words came to symbolize a status; objects, such as clothing, symbolized the word; then the objects symbolized the status. In this way, the clothing worn by Mods acquired wholly negative meanings:

The cumulative effects of the inventory can be summarized as follows: (i) the putative deviation had been assigned from which further stereotyping, myth making and labelling could proceed; (ii) the expectation was created that this form of deviation would certainly recur; (iii) a wholly negative symbolization in regard to the Mods and Rockers and objects associated with them had been created; (iv) all the elements in the situation had been made clear enough to allow for a full-scale demonology and hagiology to develop: the information had been made available for placing Mods and Rockers in the gallery of contemporary folk devils (Cohen, 2005:30-31).

The inventory stage was closely followed by a societal reaction phase where media discussion of events was replaced by discussion of the implications: a switch from reporting to interpretation. Three themes arose:

*Orientation:* Commentators were reacted to events in four ways: 1. those that saw the event as a disaster. 2. Those that saw the events as a prophecy of worse to come. 3. Those who were concerned with what might have happened or was yet to happen. 4. And those who understood the event as another example of falling moral standards: 'it's not only this' (thus bringing other actors into the discourse).

*Images:* Opinions about the nature of the deviants came through the 'spurious attribution' of nouns and personality traits to the young people:

Terms entered the mythology to provide a composite stigma attributable to persons performing certain acts, wearing certain clothes, or belonging to a certain social status, that of the adolescent. Such composites are of an all-purpose sort, with a hard core of stable attributes (irresponsibility, immaturity, arrogance, lack of respect for authority) (Cohen, 2005:40).

However, other opinions involved contradictory images of young people: on one hand there was 'recurrent ascription to the whole adolescent group of a number of stereotypical traits', on the other, Mods and Rockers represented a lunatic fringe and most young people were 'decent and conforming' (Cohen, 2005:43).

*Causation:* Four theories of causation were identified: 'A sign of the times' thesis, forwarded a social rather than psychological explanation and was rooted in the apparent social malaise of the times: religious decline, purposelessness of youth, 'the influence of do-gooders' and 'the coddling of the welfare state' (Cohen, 2005:46). An 'It's like a disease' thesis which employed a discourse of contagion; delinquency spread and infected others; the delinquents were to be cured (Cohen, 2005:46). A conspiracy thesis; where events were perceived to be organized/masterminded by leaders. And a 'boredom' thesis; this emerged as a dichotomised theme in which society was blamed for failing to provide amenities for young people whilst simultaneously youth were blamed for failing to benefit from available amenities (Cohen, 2005:48).

The discursive formulations made during the societal reaction phase fed into the operation of control: the prescriptions and actions put forward to remedy the 'problem' identified. Cohen analysed this phase under three headings:

*Sensitisation:* Cohen (2005:59) argued that newspaper reporting led to increased general awareness of deviancy which then led to other events (with varying degrees of similarity) being included and entailed 'the reinterpretation of neutral or ambiguous stimuli as potentially or actually deviant', it also involved an 'assignment of blame and the direction of control measures towards a specific agent thought to be responsible'. In effect any rule breaking after the initial event was interpreted as evidence of the Mod/Rocker phenomenon; bringing a variety of further deviations and actors into the story.

*The Societal Control Culture:* This entailed ‘diffusion’ from local police action to national co-ordination/ collaboration of police forces and the inclusion of other agents such as the judiciary, government, RAF, AA and RAC. Thus control escalated in both ‘scope and intensity’. It also entailed ‘innovation’ because the existent control methods were judged to be inadequate. The control culture innovated through ‘the suspension of certain principles governing individual liberty, justice and fair play’. The methods included banning clothing and haircuts; advocating the restriction of movement and association, curfews and the use of fire hoses, in addition to increased police powers: to remand in custody and detention, publication of names, unlawful assembly, vehicle confiscation (Cohen, 2005:68) - the similarity to the present use of ASBOs is startling. Cohen argued (2005:71) that the police, as control agents, played ‘a crucial role in the labelling process’; their response to potential events was initially via a ‘show of force’ with increased numbers on duty etc, however:

Forced by their own definitions, the police adopted practices involving a suspension of principles such as neutral enforcement of justice and respect for individual liberty. Such abuses of power included the unnecessary involvement of the public in the crowd control tactics. Holidaymakers, adults and youths alike, found themselves caught up in the overzealous application of these tactics (Cohen, 2005:73).

Young people whose appearance matched ‘symbolically’ attracted most attention and there were numerous incidents of wrongful arrest and unnecessary use of force.

The courts also innovated (Cohen, 2005:83). Punishments were harsher than normally expected for the crime, this included higher sentences (with subsequent 'quiet' weekends proof of their deterrent value); the refusal of bail as a matter of principle, and the 'punitive and arbitrary' use of remand, the publication of young people's names and, in one court, the requirement that parents attend the trial and:

Parents who were present at the preliminary hearings were often rudely addressed by the magistrate or clerk, not allowed to say what they wanted to, and their offers to stand bail were, of course, refused. It was hard for some parents to escape the conclusion that their attendance too was a form of 'extra-legal punishment' (Cohen, 2005:84).

Cohen (2005:92) showed how 'diffusion' continued to encompass others not normally considered as part of the control culture, within it:

Clearly hooliganism is not a 'crime without a victim' and the development of exclusive control measures depends, in part, on how the victims articulated the way they had been affected. As can be expected from the orientation themes, the initial reaction by the victims in the local community was to define what happened as disastrous (Cohen, 2005:92).

Local commercial interests brought about calls for action but to gain support their 'problems' had to be perceived as a national threat:

To create rules, a problem must not only be conceptualised in mass-appeal terms, it must also be defined in such a way that it is seen as the legitimate responsibility of the suprasystem. In other words, it is not enough to 'let local people deal with local events'; the event had to be magnified to national proportions and the responsibility for it shifted upwards. So after the initial Clacton event there were immediate calls for Home Office inquiries and 'the Government', 'do-gooders' or 'reformers' were made scapegoats (Cohen, 2005:94).

Cohen argued (2005:95) that initially 'vague generalized appeals' came from magistrates, newspaper editorials and MPs and this evolved into local campaigns for new legislation where the 'problem' became defined 'in such a way that legislative action was the only suitable solution' (2005:100). The 'problem' was presented as novel and therefore required novel controls.

*Exploitation:* Cohen (2005:116-117) identified 'commercial exploitation', the profit accrued by lawyers, police, bankers etc, as well as the profits gained from product marketing to the teenage consumer on the back of Mods and Rockers. He also identified 'ideological exploitation', in which the deviant was utilized for ideological ends without concern for the deviant's well-being, this covered both the ideological gains for those taking a moral stance in opposition to the deviance but also the ways in which those 'working' with young people were enabled to call for better funding. Exploitation of the deviance had the effect of simultaneously reflecting and amplifying the deviance.

Finally, Cohen (2005) set out the socio-economic context of the Mods and Rockers phenomenon, for him any moral panic required conducive social circumstances. In the 1960s this was the ambiguity and strain of post-war social change in which boundaries were being challenged. The Mods and Rockers caused confusion: their style, mobility and imagined affluence simply did not match with the stereotypical deviant, a status previously assigned to lower class urban men.

The main thrust of Cohen's argument was that media amplification resulted in the amplification of deviance (both actual and imagined); media interpretation resulted in an escalation of the control culture; and media representations of young people and victims enabled and legitimated this. For Cohen (2005) the moral panic could be theorized as a signification spiral.

Hall et al (2002) also analysed a 1970s moral panic over increased incidents of 'mugging' (a term that 'evoked negative connotations of young black males dangerously prone to gratuitous violence', Critcher, 2003:14). Hall et al (2002) paid greater attention to news-making processes than Cohen had. Whilst they highlighted the media's part in exaggerating the extent of the problem of mugging, they also stressed the importance of primary definers (Government spokesmen, the police and the like) and journalists' dependence upon these as sources of news. This meant that primary definers set the agenda that secondary definers (journalists) then acted upon. Hall et al (2002) also highlighted the ways in which, as we have seen, journalists translate official statements, scientific discourse, and complex events into 'public idiom' through a process of

identification and contextualization (Hall et al, 2002:54). They further highlighted that the media purport to represent, and are perceived by the government to be, the voice of the public and that the ways in which public opinion is presented influenced governmental responses. Moreover, where Cohen (2005) had pointed to the role played by newspapers in the signification spiral, Hall et al (2002) theorized the moral panic as an elite strategy to secure hegemony and dominance.

Ironically, despite the concept of moral panic being a tool with which to critically examine media processes, journalists and columnists in newspapers and elsewhere now employ it. Hunt (1997:630) traced usage of the term moral panic in newspapers; from 1989 to 1992 it was cited forty-eight times but in 1993, the year in which James Bulger was murdered, it was employed eighty-nine times. In 1993 most newspapers employed moral panic to advance caution as in the Times who defined it as ‘a contagious burst of popular outrage that risks losing sight of reality’, or in The Guardian where the murder ‘could prompt a moral panic in which emotion plays a more important role than rational thinking’ (Hunt, 1997:640).

Moreover, the media utilized the term moral panic to assert irrationality or to dismiss advances for caution (especially from left-wing/ liberal thinkers and academics) as in the following (quoted in Hunt, 1997 p641):

Moral panic is one of those deflating phrases used by sociologists and other allegedly impartial students of human behaviour to condescend to excitements among the general populace (Independent on Sunday, 21/02/1993).

Only the ivory-tower middle classes with a bad dose of Utopian myopia could delude themselves that juvenile crime isn't an immensely serious problem ... Reality suggests that juvenile offending is up, not down. Community anxiety is understandable. The term 'moral panic' is misplaced (The Guardian 5/03/1993)

The above newspaper quotes locate the 'panic' with the 'public': 'popular outrage', 'public debate', 'among the general populace' and in 'community anxiety'; by doing so the newspapers claim to reflect popular fears and concerns and disregard their role in the construction and dissemination of those concerns. In newspaper usage therefore moral panic denotes deep public concern, whether it be rational or irrational. Nevertheless, Allan (2003:ix) states that 'amongst researchers' moral panic is:

Taken to signify a host of complex –and contradictory – social processes shaping public perceptions of an exigent threat to the 'moral order of society'. Shared across most of these different inflections of the term, however, is the assumption that the media play a crucial role in determining the characteristics of a moral panic (Allan, 2003:ix).

Muncie (2004:7) points to a series of media 'moral panics' over the activities of groups of young people. This began in the 1950s with Teddy Boys being the first 'Folk Devils', moving to Mods in the 1960s, black youth in the 1970s, rioting white youth in the 1980s and joy riders and girl gangs in the 1990s. With each decade the media has treated these stories as something new; as 'conclusive proof that 'fings ain't wot they used to be' (Garratt, Roche and Tucker, 1997:1). As

Pearson (1983:156) showed in his historical analysis of youth, street crime and violence:

In the successive waves of anxiety about sudden upsurges in crime and violence, each pointing back to a previously untroubled era, we appear to glimpse a series of 'Golden Ages' nestling inside each other like a set of Russian dolls.

Rather than the behaviour of young people being seen as an 'index of the disintegration of the social order', as a sign that the 'British way of life' is coming apart at the seams (Hall et al, 2002), it could also be interpreted as business as usual, as nothing new, as *plus ça change*.

Indeed, both interpretations exist at once: the evidence of history combines to normalise youth and adolescence as a time of volatility, when young people can easily be led astray; it is this concept that is employed as an adjective and to justify social control. Yet simultaneously each event is treated as novel and more shocking when really it is anything but. Those reporting the news were more than likely to have been young in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, 80s or 90s. Are such adults experiencing collective memory loss? This might not be surprising in our mediated world where, as Bauman (1994:24) argued, keeping attention is difficult:

What shocked you yesterday is shocked out of existence today by a shock even more shocking; news comes to chase away the news of the hour before [...] all comes from nowhere and melts into nowhere again.

Alternatively, the situations described in previous decades may not have been as bad as the media made out, maybe they exaggerated events?

Muncie (2004:11-12) has summarized the key processes arising from studies into media representations of youth and crime; these are set out below:

- The media distorts the number of crimes against the person.
- 'Primary definers' such as politicians and agents of law and order frequently structure definitions of crime.
- Stereotypical imagery constructs a dichotomised understanding of events
- Atypical youth crimes are selected and re-presented as 'symptomatic of a youthful moral decadence' and contrasted with an over-typically law-abiding adult world.
- In order to prolong the newsworthiness of an event 'apparently similar (but unrelated) incidents' are reported, attention is thus diverted into the possibility of a 'crime wave' and potentially societal wide threats.
- Crime news becomes a commodity where 'News values' override notions of accuracy or relevance, this can lead to misinformation:

The popular misconceptions that crime is always rising, that most crime is violent and that the courts regularly hand out unduly lenient sentences are all fuelled by a steady and 'repetitive' stream of atypical and unrepresentative stories emanating from the media (Muncie, 2004:12).

## **Innocent Youth:**

Such et al (2005) note a tendency within the media (and academic research) to reinforce a 'notion of deviance', even when it is not present, this serves to 'define children *out* of society' (Such et al, 2005:303). Alternatively, they argue, the media deals in stereotypes: 'the child as 'victim', or as 'cute', as 'brave', as 'little devils'' (Such et al, 2005:303). Consequently, the media contributes to undermining the credibility of young people to act in adult worlds.

Such et al (2005) examined newspaper analysis of young people's protests against the war in Iraq. The protests were (superficially) greeted positively: at least young people had 'roused themselves from the apathy they are accused of' (Such et al, 2005:313). Simultaneously, there was adult discomfort that the young people had organized themselves (i.e. had they been manipulated by adults?) and had done so during school hours. On one hand there was 'pervasive concern ... that young people are both naïve and easily persuaded and controlled by manipulative adults', that is they are vulnerable to adult control; on the other hand the protests were viewed as truancy: outside of adult control. The truancy angle was also used to undermine the young people's commitment to the cause: seen as just an excuse to skip school. Such et al's (2005:321) analysis of press coverage revealed the 'limits that adults might like to set on political participation by young people based on assessments of the competence of young people'. Consequently, even when young people are not acting in deviant ways their actions are questioned and considered (potentially) deviant; their ability to form rational opinions is also questioned.

Moreover, Davies and Bourhill (2004) assert that young criminals are not alone in making good copy for newspapers, young victims, especially those who are victims of their parents, are also of special interest but such stories present particular problems for newspapers due to the ways in which newspapers have previously interpreted the condition of youth; a rhetoric which demands the 'reaffirmation of punishment as both deterrent and retribution' (Davies and Bourhill, 2004:36). Violence in the home creates 'a tension' for newspapers: 'how does physical abuse fit with demands for more, rather than less, punishment?' (Davies and Bourhill, 2004:36). Davies and Bourhill (2004:36) argue that this tension is resolved through the 'pathologization of 'failed' or 'deviant families'. Such familial dysfunction provides, once more, evidence of societal decline; individual families are focussed upon and thus discussion of the scale of violence against the young is avoided.

Davies and Bourhill, (2004:36-7) argue that 'the infliction of violence against children is not news unless it is excessive' and only spectacular or exceptional cases are reported, usually those occurring outside of the family. Indeed they assert that many cases of family murder are treated in a 'routine' manner. This contrasts greatly with coverage given to events involving 'strangers'.

Furthermore, Davies and Bourhill (2004:37) argue that much routine adult violence towards young people remains invisible in newspapers due to the focus on so-called 'deviant families'. The ways in which the abuse of children by adults is presented in newspapers has minimized the contradictions inherent within neo-liberal approaches to the care, protection, socialization and disciplining of the

young. In neo-liberal discourse responsibility for this is located within the family which is granted autonomy and freedom from the state. When things go wrong the family, as institution, is never questioned. Rather a 'medico-legal discourse' centred on a pathological model (i.e.: 'the bad, mad, sad individual or the bad, sick, infected and infectious community') is employed to treat errant families, for if such families can be 'identified as inherently pathological, they can be classified, targeted and disciplined accordingly' (Scruton, 2004:173).

It is in this context that moral panics about social workers can be constructed, as they are the accredited expert defenders and protectors of vulnerable young people, it is they who shoulder the blame when things go wrong. Winter and Connolly (2004) point to numerous child protection inquiries during the 1970s in which Social workers were accused of being self-interested; promoting their career interests over the interests of children, and of 'seeking to undermine the family as an institution' (Winter and Connolly, 2004:33). This latter accusation was promoted in the British press through headlines like 'Satan Busters are Devils in Disguise' (in Winter and Connolly, 2004 p34). Here parents were constructed as victims, social workers as abusers.

The point for Davies and Bourhill (2004) is that routine violence directed at children (such as smacking, or corporal punishment in public schools) is rarely questioned, rather it is actively encouraged as a means of discipline and punishment: witnessed by newspaper recommendations for 'a clip across the ear' and to 'bring back the cane'. But 'where is the line drawn between abuse and punishment?' (Davies and Bourhill , 2004:36).

The reference to the numerous child protection inquiries above links us to what Innes (2003:51) has identified as ‘signal crimes’ (though they could also be theorized as impact events or as discursive events). These become important for what they signify rather than their actuality, thus:

The mass media coverage has been particularly important for its role in articulating and coordinating a societal reaction to the individual cases that goes beyond the immediate concerns of the cases themselves. Each of these incidents has been accompanied by widespread popular concern that it signals something is wrong with British society and its criminal justice responses.

Moreover, the following section will review analyses of newspaper reporting following the tragic murder of James Bulger by two ten-year-old boys on 12th February 1993. This event was ‘shocking’; it provoked a sense of ‘horror’ (Young, 1996) and, according to Scraton (2004:167), ‘unleashed a level of adult vindictiveness unprecedented in recent times’. Both Scraton (2004) and Young (1996) point to ‘hysterical’ crowds outside of the courts and the public’s desire for vengeance in the form of a ‘baiting crowd’. Scraton (2004) argues that the adult nation’s demand for revenge was ‘endorsed with enthusiasm’ by the national press.

## **James Bulger**

Media coverage of the murder of James Bulger is particularly relevant because it explicitly cast children in oppositional terms: as victim/criminal, innocent/evil, young/old(er). Press coverage surrounding this event was phenomenal<sup>6</sup>, sensational and played out in these oppositional terms (Franklin and Petley, 2004, James & Jenks, 1996, Muncie, 2004, Young, 1996). And though the event conformed closely to 'news values', the reaction was unprecedented.

Franklin and Petley (2004:136-142) analysed newspaper coverage in the days following the guilty verdicts on Jon Venables and Robert Thompson (24<sup>th</sup> November 1993). They found the significant features of reporting to be:

### *1. Phenomenal coverage:*

James Bulger's death was the 'front page headline in every national newspaper' (with the exception of the Morning Star and The Financial times) (Franklin and Petley, 2004:136). On the three days following the verdict The Daily Mail carried thirty-seven stories and published a sixteen page special supplement entitled 'The Evil and The Innocent'. The Telegraph carried twenty-three articles and two editorials; The Guardian carried twenty-two articles; the Sun dedicated sixteen pages. Relaying the actual facts of the case was remarkably short-lived however, and reporting quickly moved on.

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the defending QCs questioned whether a fair trial was possible due to the extensive media coverage. One QC had 'collected a total of 243 articles', the other condemned the coverage as 'disgraceful and hysterical' and argued they were 'poisoning the stream of justice', the judge decided it would not seriously prejudice the trial because 'no fair trial could be held' (Franklin and Petley, 2004, p147-148).

## *2. A shift from Description to Analysis*

In a desire to answer the question: 'how could they do it?' related themes were explored, including the impact of 'video nasties' which was perhaps prompted by Justice Morland's 'speculative and contradictory remark': 'It's not for me to pass judgement on their upbringing but I suspect that exposure to violent video films may be an explanation' (Franklin and Petley, 2004:137). According to Franklin and Petley (2004:137), the examination of related themes was 'clearly part of the press' concern to allocate blame for the child's tragic death, despite all the press venom and abuse heaped upon them Venables and Thompson on their own were inadequate and insufficient scapegoats'. This 'shift' mirrors the shift from inventory (discussion of actual events) to societal reaction (interpretation and implication) discerned by Cohen (2005) in moral panics; from which the next significant feature results.

## *3. A Shift from the Particular to a Generalized Childhood:*

In the majority of newspapers the inherent evil attributed to Venables and Thompson, by the press, called into question the ways in which childhood had been previously understood; the notion of innocence was irreconcilable with evidence from the trial. Consequently, evil was projected onto childhood as a whole 'thus metamorphosing the social construction of childhood 'innocence' into its opposite' (Franklin and Petley, 2004:137).

#### *4. A Shift to Retribution and Punitive Responses:*

Due to press use of a discourse of evil, this shift first materialized in calls for long sentences to contain Venables' and Thompson's evilness. The original sentences were perceived as soft and sections of the press campaigned (successfully) to have them extended. Further, the boys were represented as living in luxury at the taxpayers' expense; for example the Times said Venables and Thompson were becoming

objects of solicitude – a social worker's shoulder, a council official's hankie. Now for an indefinite period, they will live in units where their emotional development –autonomy and self-esteem are preferred words – will be tenderly fostered at an annual cost of at least £90,000 each (The Times, 26/11/1993).

In this line of representation criminals were said to have too many rights and the Children's Act 1989 was constructed as a conspiracy of social workers, progressive judges, and the Law Commission (Franklin and Petley, 2004:141). This shift could be theorized as the operation of the control culture (Cohen, 2005).

#### *5. Individual Moral Culpability*

According to Franklin and Petley (2004:142) this reflected the political discourse of the time: Prime minister John Major's 'condemn a little more, understand a little less', or Home secretary Kenneth Clark's 'it is no good that some sections of society are permanently finding excuses for the behaviour of the section of the population who are essentially nasty pieces

of work'. Sections of the press were indifferent to any extenuating social circumstances –though there was evidence of its existence.

Franklin and Petley (2004) show that the shift from explanation to analysis focussed on a search to discover how two children could commit such a crime. It produced limited explanations. For some (Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph) the explanation could be found in the liberal permissiveness of the 1960s, an era characterized as 'dreadful', 'hedonistic' and to have produced individuals with duties only to themselves (Franklin and Petley, 2004:143-4). The patriarchal nuclear family was perceived to be the main casualty; the press characterized it as 'disintegrating', 'fractured', 'broken' and 'fatherless' due to the selfishness of parents. In the Telegraph (25/11/93) Robert Thompson's mother was utilized to prove the point and was represented as lacking personal responsibility. The causal link being that Ms Thompson failed to instil personal responsibility in Robert because she was herself, as a product of sixties liberalism, self-interested and lacked personal responsibility. The Sun (25/11/93) also emphasized this lack: she 'has blamed everyone but herself', here, however, she was not totally blamed, and nor could the boys 'just be dismissed as monsters'. In The Sun the blame lay partly with the parents but also in social institutions:

The responsibility lies with their parents, their teachers, social workers, the police and anyone else who had contact with these two misfits ... The signs were obvious, yet still no-one cared enough to try and rescue their young lives from a fast descent into hopelessness' (in Franklin and Petley, 2004:145).

Effectively, The Sun cast Venables and Thompson as victims of the institutions designed to protect and nurture them. Such a perspective was also articulated in the Guardian and Independent. The Guardian presented the crime as an 'avoidable tragedy' where 'the warning signs should have been heeded' (Franklin and Petley, 2004:145). In the Independent, Venables and Thompson were seen as 'Sad rather than Bad' and were again revealed as victims:

... nobody can read about the dismal, empty, broken lives and atrophied feelings of the two boys without concluding that they were let down by those responsible for their upbringing. They did not receive the love, guidance, discipline and education that they were owed by a civilized society. Their surroundings were shoddy, their role models inadequate. They were exposed to neglect and cruelty (25/11/93 in Franklin and Petley, 2004:146).

In a substantial proportion of newspapers then, the murder was taken to signify that something was wrong with society itself; it represented a decline in moral values and social responsibility, and a crisis in, or subversion of, the institutions designed to protect and nurture children. Indeed, Davies and Bourhill (2004:45) argue that Venables and Thompson were portrayed as symptomatic of a dislocated and collapsing society. Furthermore, the murder of James Bulger was understood as a warning of things to come if no action was taken against this social malaise (James and Jenks, 1996:325). Initially the murder became symbolic of a juvenile crime wave; this was amplified through the reporting of other, unrelated events (contextual crimes) that were conflated to construct a notion of general crises (Davies and Bourhill, 2004:49). The Express (24/2/93) described a 'Britain in

Fear', whilst the Telegraph (22/2/93) asserted that: 'A mental state of pessimistic fatalism has the country in its grip'.

The state was perceived to have 'gone 'soft' on criminals and offenders, neglecting discipline and punishment' (Davies and Bourhill, 2004:50). The Archbishop of Canterbury, reported in the Express, implied the murder had 'brought to the surface the growing worries of so many who fear that there is a moral malaise at the heart of our society' (23/11/04 in Davies and Bourhill, 2004:51). Scraton (2004) believes a 'loss of values' was located in weak and permissive professional intervention; with the media (and Government) pointing to the 'moral degradation of children aided and abetted by irresponsible parents and liberal professionals' (Scraton, 2004:168). Scraton (2004:167-8) argues that such media coverage not only influenced the eventual trial and sentencing but also promoted an authoritarian backlash directed against progressive and successful youth justice. Consequently, the murder of James Bulger became a 'catalyst for the consolidation of an authoritarian shift in youth justice' (Scraton, 2004:170).

Others concur: Muncie (2004:3) believes the case legitimated a series of 'tough' law and order responses. James and Jenks (1996:237) point to a process of 'contemporary crisis management': scapegoating; in which things such as video games, truancy, lack of discipline at home and in school and declining standards of morality came to be seen as 'antagonistic elements in the battle to recover the lost innocence of children'. In this context the Governmental response was to initiate more surveillance of the young (James and Jenks, 1996:327).

Alternatively, there were newspapers in which the event was ‘only explicable in terms of the boys as *evil*’, most notably The Daily Mirror, Daily Express and Daily Star (Franklin & Petley, 2004:146). As the Star illustrates:

... when we look at Robert Thompson and Jon Venables we are staring pure evil in the face. Wickedness has existed since the dawn of man. Do-gooders tell us there is no such thing. They are blind, dangerous fools (25/11/93 in Franklin & Petley, 2004:146).

The juxtaposition of innocence and evil is a theme picked up by other authors (Davies & Bourhill, 2004, James & Jenks, 1996, Muncie, 2004, Young, 1996). Davies and Bourhill (2004:47) argue that ‘the theme of pathological evil ... was pursued relentlessly’ throughout press reporting. Moreover, James and Jenks (1996:316) argue that ‘the murder was not just disturbing, but was, quite literally, unthinkable’ purely because it had disrupted the concept of childhood as a phase of innocence. However, despite the explicitness of the quote from the Star above, this juxtaposition was by no means simplistic.

Young (1996) highlights the crime’s visibility, much of which was recorded on CCTV; these images were repeatedly replayed in the search for Venables and Thompson, and used extensively during the trial. From these an abundance of photographic images were reproduced in the press. The crime was also made visible through eyewitness accounts; these were regularly reported during the trial. Following the guilty verdict the identities of Venables and Thompson were revealed and photographic images released. Young (1996:112) argues the horror was in this visibility; it produced a ‘fascination with the visibility of the crime, the

victim and the criminals'. For Young (1996:113) 'the 'meaning' of the event was sought in its details: in video recordings, in the eye-witness accounts, in the litany of injuries and in lives of Venables and Thompson'.

Rather than the theme of childhood innocence being upset by the murder however, Young (1996) argues that it was central to newspaper representations of it. This can be seen clearly in the contrasts made between James Bulger and Venables and Thompson. James Bulger was represented as the quintessential child: small, affectionate, trusting, dependent, vulnerable, high spirited; his trusting nature was constantly emphasized by references to the CCTV images of 'when he put his hand in the older boy's hand' and was led away. His lively nature was presented as childish high-spirits. Further, James Bulger was attractive, but 'more than this, he looks essentially child-like, an ideal child, or an *idea* of child' (Young, 1996:115). His innocence was further emphasized when compared to Venables and Thompson, their photos were employed to 'create a schism both between the appearance of the two boys and the condemnatory headlines, and between the two boys and James Bulger' (Young, 1996:116). Venables and Thompson were presented in the Guardian (4/11/93) as 'menacing' (tormenting old ladies), 'delinquent' (stealing paint), and 'illegitimate' (they should have been in school). In the Express they are described as 'freaks of nature' with 'hearts of evil'. However, on the day of the abduction the boys were not 'read' as such, testimony from eye-witnesses suggested the three boys resembled a normal family grouping. On later viewing the news the eye-witnesses' assumptions were not confirmed, thus they recoded what they had seen

in line with the new version of events presented to them: what appeared as normal was thus recoded as abnormal. Furthermore, as Young (1996:115) asserts:

The innocence embodied in James Bulger is given more weight when it is counterposed to the evil held to be personified by Robert Thompson and Jon Venables. They are portrayed as aberrations of childhood, approximations of what a child might be, or fraudulent impostors. Venables and Thompson *appear* to be children but they are not: they are more like evil adults or monsters in disguise.

James and Jenks (1996) also attend to this representation of Venables and Thompson in their research of reporting in quality newspapers. James and Jenks (1996) argued that murders committed by children confuse our perceptual categories and that this confusion was played out in the press; the case was a problem of classification. The way in which childhood is understood as innocence carries the implication that adulthood is situated as corrupting knowledge. Therefore, the murder of James Bulger by Venables and Thompson blurred the distinction between adult and child. One way the press dealt with this was through evicting Venables and Thompson out of the category of childhood (James and Jenks, 1996). This was done by titles such as 'evil freaks' (Sunday Times 28/11/93) with 'adult brains' (Sunday Times 5/12/93), or as 'the spawn of Satan' (Guardian, 27/11/93) amongst others. Such titles contributed to two visions of otherness, that of the inherently evil child and a composite adult child, neither of which could be classified within our construction of childhood innocence. The effect was to place Venables and Thompson in an anomalous category.

James and Jenks (1996) refer to Douglas' identification of anomalies which she saw as integral to social order; the differences 'firm up the boundaries which give form and substance to the conceptual categories from which they are excluded' (James and Jenks, 1996:323). Consequently the exclusion of Venables and Thompson from the category of child restored and affirmed the essence of childhood:

Thus the stigma of anomaly works to explain how certain children are capable of actions which other, 'normal' children are not: the system of classification remains intact by resisting the 'defilement' of the abhorrent case (James and Jenks, 1996:324).

James and Jenks (1996) further argue that the search for explanations in Venables' and Thompson's familial environments was also an attempt to rescue the concept of childhood innocence. As Rose (1999:124) has argued, 'to adjudicate upon a child accused of a crime now requires scrutiny and evaluation of family life as a condition of the possibility and legitimacy of judgement'. The British press did indeed scrutinize and evaluate Venables' and Thompson's families and found them wanting.

As highlighted earlier, some newspapers were reluctant to consider any extenuating evidence; Venables and Thompson were totally morally culpable. In those that examined the families, an implicit subtext of class dislike was apparent (Franklin and Petley, 2004:144). The Telegraph's (25/11/93) representation of John Thompson's mother illustrates: she was described as 'overweight, with red streaks in her shoulder length hair ... a single mother of seven': she 'drew hard on

a hand-rolled cigarette, blew smoke above her and said: “yeah, my son is a robber ...”. Franklin and Petley (2004:144) assert that some papers gave Mrs Thompson a ‘fair amount of uncontested space in which she could speak for herself’, but as Young (1996:121) notes, Mrs Thompson’s attempts to resist the position she had been allocated were futile; as she speaks her ‘position is confirmed’.

Young (1996) views the newspaper representations of the relationships between the three sons and their mothers as significant, she understands them as an attempt to rescue our concept of the maternal relationship. In the press’ interrogation of the relationships a schism emerges between Mrs Bulger and Mrs Venables and Thompson. Moreover, the representation of Denise Bulger was characterized by normality. On the day of the abduction she was performing the everyday tasks associated with motherhood: she could be ‘represented as victim because she conformed to the maternal convention: being with her child’ (Young, 1996:118). The press implied that James Bulger could have been anybody’s child, whilst continually emphasizing the concerns of other parents, who were said to anxious that their child could be a victim. In effect the public’s ‘response to the event is constructed for them as an identification with Denise Bulger as the maternal archetype’ (Young, 1996:118). This maternal archetype was confirmed through reporting of Denise Bulger’s pregnancy. Young argues:

The identification patterns are obvious: it is the experience of Denise Bulger and her son that the individual is to share in, while the situation of the Venables and the Thompsons is to constitute the prohibited and the repellent. Identification is always thus a doubled process: the ‘good’ are identified *with*; the ‘evil’ are identified *against* (Young, 1996:118-9).

In contrast, the mothers of Venables and Thompson 'appear as irrecoverably alien' and consequently the crisis of the maternal relationship is located in them. Young (1996) illustrates this through her analysis of two articles by Gitta Sereny (Independent on Sunday 6/2/94 and 13/2/94). One effect of these articles was to give credibility to the notion that Venables and Thompson had suffered 'some familial abuse or trauma, or bad general upbringing' (Young, 1996:122).

In Sereny's analysis Mrs Venables is represented as domineering and guilty of excessive, selfish, 'impure and thus non-maternal' love; her living arrangements, though superficially harmless, are represented as severely damaging for Jon. Sereny's evaluation of the Thompsons operated 'along a different axis of blame', one of absence (Young, 1996:123). Sereny confesses to an impression of Mrs Thompson before they met; she had already been constructed as a 'slut', 'shrew', 'slag' and an uncaring mother, due to her absences from parts of the trial. As Young (1996) comments: Denise Bulger was granted a reprieve from unnecessary suffering but such suffering was intended for the Venables and Thompsons. Mrs Thompson's absence is constructed as an evasion of suffering, an abandonment of her child and thus an abdication of maternal responsibility. Sereny provided a litany of evidence as proof of the dysfunctionality of the Thompson family and constructed them as pernicious and harmful.

In these ways the mothers were constructed differently: Mrs Thompson became an allegory of absence and indifference; Mrs Venables became an allegory of suffocation and excessive limitless presence, and Mrs Bulger became an allegory of sacrifice, solitary care and familial devotion. As Young (1996:125) argues:

‘what is at stake in the event is less ‘real’ mothers (like Anne Thompson, Sue Venables and Denise Bulger) than the need to ensure that the values of the maternal continue to be imagined and performed’.

The above has reviewed the literature on newspaper representations of the murder of James Bulger. The contributions of Franklin and Petley (2004) and Muncie (2004) bear similarities to moral panic analysis, indeed the news coverage reported here undoubtedly contained elements of moral panic: an impact event (the murder of James Bulger) sparked a mediated societal reaction in which the nature of the event, its ‘threat’, was exaggerated and distorted (murder by children is extremely rare; there had been twenty-seven cases in the previous 250 years, Franklin and Petley, 2004:135), taken to symbolize something much bigger (moral malaise at the heart of society) and a warning of what might happen in the future. Once sensitised to the problem the media reported other, unrelated ‘contextual crimes’ as further evidence of the threat. The nature of the threat was thus amplified to the extent that it threatened society as a whole. The folk devils of the event, Venables and Thompson (and other young people who posed a threat), were stereotyped as evil personified. ‘Right-thinking’ people (such as politicians, bishops, police officers) manned the moral barricades. Existent law and order responses were fully exploited amongst calls for stiffer and harsher sentencing in order to contain, deter, and subdue the threat.

Muncie (2004:3) highlights three consequences of the Bulger case:

1. It constructed children as potentially evil
2. It mobilized adult fears over youth
3. It legitimated a series of 'tough' law and order responses.

Cohen (2005:xi) believes newspaper reporting of the Bulger case corresponds to a moral panic; he compared it to the murder of Stephen Lawrence which, he argued, could not be constructed into a moral panic because it lacked three essential elements; which the Bulger case did not:

First, a suitable enemy: a soft target, easily denounced, with little power and preferably without even access to the battlefield of cultural politics ... Second, a suitable victim: someone with whom you can identify, someone who could have been and one day could be anybody [...] Third, a consensus that the beliefs or action being denounced were not insulated entities ('it's not only this') but integral parts of the society or else could (or would) be unless 'something was done' (Cohen, 2005:xi).

Alternatively, James and Jenks (1996) and Young (1996) undertook a more discursive approach in their analyses. James' and Jenks' (1996) position is that far from undermining our traditional understandings of childhood, press reporting reaffirmed them. For James and Jenks (1996:325), the events of 1993 confirmed that:

1. The child is not evil
2. The child is not adult
3. The child is a symbol of society's optimism, a search for a hopeful future or a recollection of good times past.

Innes (2003:63-64) has asserted that crime stories are the most commonly told by the mass media and, like James and Jenks, believes they are of great cultural importance and provide: 'symbolic demarcations of the sacred from the profane, the pure from the impure'. Young (1996) argued similarly and showed that notions of evil children and deviant mothers provide a mechanism by which we are called upon to identify with, and thus perform 'normality'. It was clear from all authors, irrespective of the position taken, that oppositional categories are central in journalistic attempts to communicate the unthinkable.

## **Conclusion:**

This review has shown that newspapers play a constitutive and constituent role in the construction of social problems and solutions to them. Journalistic training, adherence to 'news' values, reliance on official sources of information and competition for readers combined have led to homogeneity and conformity in news production (Bourdieu, 1998, Critcher, 2003, Davis and Bourhill, 2004).

Further, the use of 'inferential structures' to name, define and translate atypical and complex events into public idiom adds to this homogeneity; the atypical and complex are translated into 'morality tales' which convey the fundamental desirability of social order (Innes, 2003). Very often such tales simply 'mobilize and reproduce images' that reflect 'the prejudices, beliefs and anxieties that hold sway' (Scruton, 2004:170). As Critcher argued:

No story is the inevitable product of the event it reports; no event dictates its narrative form. News occurs at the conjunction of events and texts, and while events create the story, the story also creates the events (Critcher, 2004:141).

That is to say, events that prompt news coverage are 'discursive events'. As highlighted earlier, in crime reporting journalists rely heavily on information from the police. The police themselves are involved in constructing narrative accounts of 'who did what to whom' (Innes, 2003:64). When the courts legitimate the police narrative it becomes accepted as the official version of the event. When this is reported in the press, not only does it define and classify the event, it also

provides the ‘material for the construction of a ‘collective memory’’ (Innes, 2003:64). For Innes then:

As time passes, those who share the memories may not recall the precise details of the incident. Rather they hold in common a somewhat ‘fuzzy’ remembrance of what the police determine to have happened and the dominant interpretation placed upon the events – their memory becomes more impressionistic (Innes, 2003:65).

Therefore, though we cannot ‘know’ that ‘readers’ uncritically accept newspaper interpretations of events, it is fair to suggest that ‘readers’ must engage with these versions. As such, newspapers do determine the focus of debate and thus delimit what can be thought and said. Those sharing the interpretation will experience realization (their assumptions will be confirmed); those resisting it must respond to and recode the interpretation.

## **Chapter Three: Definitions of Youth**

In the previous chapter I considered the literature on newspaper representations of young people, this showed that they are frequently conceived of in oppositional terms. The binary oppositions of innocence/evil, nature/nurture and freedom/protection were key inferential structures in representation of the young. This resulted in young people being represented as innocent, vulnerable and in need of protection or innately evil, anarchic, irrational and in need of discipline and control. Such representations are obvious simplifications. Furthermore the chapter considered literature dealing with young people and this included those considered children and those considered youth; there was little distinction between the two. As this research is about newspaper representations of 'youth' I feel it important to consider how youth have been defined. This chapter will examine the academic literature on youth in an attempt to clarify whom it is we are dealing with when we employ the category of youth and to discover which inferential structures are being called upon in this context.

Moreover, 'youth' is a common sense concept, when we use the term we assume that others will understand who (or what) we are talking about. However, as with many common sense concepts, pinning down what we actually 'mean' can prove quite difficult. Further, when we employ a concept we frequently, and inadvertently, pull on meanings that we did not intend at all. According to Gramsci, common sense:

contains Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history on a local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of the human race united the world over (Gramsci, 2003:324).

It is for this reason that Hall and others (i.e. Derrida) have argued that:

Despite his or her best efforts the individual can never finally fix meaning ... Words are 'multi-accentual'. They always carry echoes of other meanings which they trigger off, despite one's best efforts to close meaning down' (Hall, 1992:288).

As such, to speak of 'youth' often implicates certain 'types' of youth and not others – not least because, it is the 'problems' associated with certain young people from a vague age range that is the basis upon which the concept developed (Griffin, 1993).

When a sentence starts with 'the youth of today' we do not expect it to end with 'are industrious, polite and upstanding citizens'. Rather, it is usually the beginning of a story about difference, what 'youth' are not. A substantial body of the literature and research on youth (especially that identified as 'mainstream' by Griffin, 1993) evades the task of definition and tends to treat youth as some '[re]discovered species' in a 'universal age stage' (Griffin, 1993:1). In so-doing, youth research and policy frequently embodies clashes of theory, ontology and epistemology (biological, constructivist, structuralist). Such theories 'crystallise around a series of discourses that are both of modernity and informed by earlier traditions of thought' (James et al, 2001:9). They connect and contradict within

academic representations and result in some young people being seen as ‘deviant, deficient or resistant’ (Griffin, 1993:1).

Within the literature, implicit or explicit, there are a variety of ways by which youth is conceptualised:

- As a life course phase coming between, or bridging, childhood and adulthood;
- As citizenship and rights, with a gradual shift from protection rights to ‘participation and entitlement rights’;
- As an official phase determined by administrative/ legal statuses; variously associated with age based statuses such as the ages of criminal responsibility, compulsory education, sexual consent, benefit entitlements and voting;
- As an adolescent phase, a term used to describe the ‘biological, psychological, emotional and sexual maturation phases associated with the onset of puberty and the teenage years’;
- As a stage of transition, in which young people move from schooling and family dependence towards employment and economic and personal independence
- As socially constructed, where social institutions, such as the family, schools, labour markets and so on, are seen to determine the boundaries of the life course

(Coles, 2004:90-91).

However, none of the above definitions is internally coherent, each is invaded and inhabited by the other definitions. Moreover, far from being universal, that is applicable to all people at all times, in all situations, each of the above concepts of youth is historically and culturally determined. Even the most common sense definition, the stage between childhood and adulthood, is dependent on defining what we mean by those categories. Attempts to do this are equally fraught with difficulty, but such definitions are historically and culturally situated and are determined by the pseudo-scientific theories and social institutions from various times and places; all carry their history with them.

I will now consider each of the above conceptualisations of youth.

### **Youth as a Life Course Phase:**

Superficially this definition presents youth as a temporal and biological phase; youth is something we will naturally grow into (from childhood) and out of (into adulthood). As such youth could be understood as a natural (liminal) stage, situated somewhere between adulthood and childhood. But although it appears axiomatic that 'youth' is an age related phase the specific age boundaries are not at all clear.

The categories of child/ adult are generally understood to be mutually exclusive. Both categories gain meaning only from their relationship to each other. The child is what the adult is not and vice versa. Indeed, at its most basic to speak of

young people is to speak of those who are not old. Our culturally shared understandings of fully achieved adulthood emphasise unity and wholeness and the absence of unmet needs (the self-present; self-knowing; self-mastering subject). By definition the child is given all those characteristics and qualities: fragmentation and neediness, which must be disowned by the adult and is characterised by 'lack'. As such 'youth is largely defined in terms of what it is lacking; by what it is *not* rather than by what it is' (Muncie, 2004:3). 'Youth as a life course phase' implies a 'natural' and inevitable development towards wholeness and in which those things the child 'lacks' are (gradually) achieved.

The above discussion raises some questions however, such as: at what age is one adult? What constitutes the ages of childhood? And, very importantly, who decides? Consideration of the question of 'who decides' reveals that rather than being a 'natural' development, youth as a life course phase is inherently social; based upon classifications and surveillance; and in which power is central. The issue of power further complicates this: the condition of youth 'is not uniform, but it is seldom invested with significant power' (Griffin, 1993:3). As Scraton (2004:163) argues:

Childhood is mapped by rituals imposed from above. From the moment of birth, through family and community induction, religious and cultural initiation and on to the seemingly unquestioned gradation of formal schooling, the baby-toddler-child is celebrated and processed through the ritualising of his or her progress.

Such ritualistic (and social) processes are imposed from above by adult society; it is adults (whether they be family or professionals) who determine the stages and

then judge the achievement of these. Common sense notions of age 'appropriateness' are called upon when judging progression through the life course and young people are regularly compared to an idealized, abstract other. This includes routine assessments of 'age appropriate' physical growth, academic performance and behaviour (Scruton, 2004:163).

For Roche et al (2004:xv) becoming adult involves the experience and recognition of competence; they assert that this was once signified by economic independence, but (as we shall see) administrative changes have effectively postponed adulthood. As such, the recognition of adulthood in contemporary society has been replaced by numerous codes and markers, such as: worker, parent, student, musician, sexual partner, being popular or feared, any of which can be taken to denote adult status (Roche et al, 2004:xv). But such a range of 'markers' leads to uncertainty and ambiguity (Coleman et al, 2004:228). As Thomson et al (2002) point out, many of the markers 'traditionally associated with adulthood (e.g. sexual activity, drinking [alcohol], drug taking, mobility and consumption) are now seen more as symbols of youth', and as Cohen and Ainley (2000:81) argue, adults now participate in activities traditionally associated with the young, consequently 'images of youth and adulthood have become blurred and confused'.

Thomson et al's (2002) research found that young people associated adulthood with parenthood and an independent home and they tended towards two models of adulthood, one was individualised and stressed feelings of maturity and autonomy, the other was more socialised and focussed on responsibility and care

for others. Marshal and Stenner (2004:184-5) argue that, due to the decline in religious legitimation and in 'traditional' morality, we are at a 'historical point where 'adult' agreement on legitimate relationship ideals and end states is lacking and distinctly problematic'.

Furthermore, Jones and Wallace (1992:102) state:

[A]dulthood as a concept seems to be such a mixture of physical attribute, age, and economic, social or legal definition, as to be meaningless. Becoming an adult, in terms of reaching the legal age of majority ... is decreasing in its significance, since it no longer brings the rights to welfare provision once associated with adult status'.

The youth as a life course phase definition presents youth as a universal and inevitable age status (as something that happens to us all and which we grow and develop out of); in so-doing it implies that youth is a phase of biological development and utilizes essentialist ontology. However, the above discussion questions this presumed universality and inevitability; it suggests that the meaning of youth is relationally dependent upon concepts of adulthood and has very little relationship to biological development, indeed physical maturity (i.e. having adult bodies) is replaced here by a notion of performing adulthood. Consequently, the life course phase of youth is historically and contextually contingent upon adult society.

Nevertheless, the granting of specific rights to children and young people has conferred upon them the status of personhood (as opposed to being non-persons)

and this is reflected in the contemporary, 'liberal' use of the language used to name and speak about children and where they are granted the status of young people. As a result youth can also be seen as a phase in which citizenship rights are gradually bestowed.

### **Youth as a Shift from Protection to Citizenship Rights:**

The above definition illustrated that to be granted the status of adulthood has little to do with age. As Jones and Wallace (1992:4) argue notions of youth and adulthood are:

[R]elated to life-course events and relationships, and are relatively loosely associated with age. Youth is a process of definition and redefinition, a negotiation enacted between young people and their families, their peers and the institutions of the wider society [...] as social scientists we cannot say at what age young people become adults; nor would we wish to – our concern is with trying to define the ways in which different groups of young people become accepted as 'adult' in different social contexts.

James et al (2001:5) argue that since the 1970s childhood has come 'to the forefront of personal, political and academic agendas' due to the 'structural readjustment', 're-evaluation and repositioning of personhood' in attempts to encompass notions of identity and difference; to 'search for a moral centre' and the 'age-old desire to invest in futures now rendered increasingly urgent'. Within this children have come to be seen as agents shaped by and shaping their social

world, rather than as defective adults awaiting socialisation into adulthood. As a result of these changes ‘a discursive space has been established within which children are now seen as individuals, whose autonomy should be safeguarded and fostered’ and not only within the family (James et al, 2001:6). Indeed, the UN charter on children’s rights is a ‘matrix of ideas concerning survival, protection, development and participation’ (James et al, 2001:6). This charter proclaims that children have the right to:

Express an opinion and have it taken seriously (article 12)

Freedom of expression (article 13)

Access appropriate information (article 19)

Protection from harm<sup>1</sup> (article 19)

Within this adults have a duty to consider the ‘best interests’ of children in all actions (article 3). However, as Scraton (2004:182-3) shows ‘there is no formula for establishing ‘best interests’ in any given circumstances’ and ‘who determines, defines and administers ‘best interests’ is not so easily identified’. The Charter situates adult duties with parents; it directs states to support and respect parents’ rights and responsibilities to decide their children’s best interests ‘in line with their evolving capacities’ (Scraton, 2004:182). Consequently, the satisfaction of children’s rights is contingent upon adult judgements of them.

Nasman (1994 quoted in James et al, 2001:6) views this as a process of individualisation; in which ‘children are identified, registered, evaluated and

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<sup>1</sup> i.e.: ‘All forms of physical and mental violence, abuse and neglect’ (Scraton, 2004:182).

treated as individuals in some contexts as adult citizens but in others not'. Scraton (2004:182) highlights this paradox in policy discussions; he argues that often, 'the same sources appear to propose that childhood represents a period of diminished adult responsibility governing certain actions while being a period of equal responsibility governing others'. So whilst young people's actions can be limited due to their lack of adulthood (restrictions on their consumption for example), they are simultaneously positioned as fully responsible adults in other contexts (such as criminal law).

Winter and Connolly (2004) point to an apparent paradox within the Children Act 1989, in which the stress on children's rights seemed to contradict the then Conservative Government's promotion of the patriarchal nuclear family (within which children are expected to be obedient and submissive). Winter and Connolly (2004) argue that the Act can only be understood in relation to the discursive attacks on social workers during the 1980s and that analysed historically and contextually the Act sits comfortably with the broader Thatcherite project.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the 1980s saw numerous inquiries into the roles and actions of social workers in protecting children at risk<sup>2</sup>. Within these social workers were constructed first as incompetent, and later as unaccountable. Within media coverage a 'discourse of children's rights was invoked in relation to the description of siblings being separated and held in isolation while in the care of social services' (Winter and Connolly, 2004:33). The discursive effect was to

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<sup>2</sup> These include inquiries into the deaths of Jasmine Beckford, Tyra Henry and Kimberly Carlisle; and into events surrounding child abuse in Cleveland, Nottingham, Rochdale and the Orkney Islands)

equate children's rights with the 'right to question and resist social intervention' (Winter and Connolly, 2004:34). Consequently, the Children Act 1989 combines a commitment to supporting the family with a 'need to limit and restrain social worker intervention' (Winter and Connolly, 2004:35). It is therefore concerned with promoting children's rights 'in relation to the state rather than their parents' (Winter and Connolly, 2004:38). Where the Act gives detailed guidelines to child related agencies and professionals as to their responsibilities to the child, it is much less specific about parents' responsibilities:

If the state felt it necessary to set out in law what parents' roles and responsibilities were in the care of their children then this would be tantamount to admitting that parenting is not something that comes naturally' (Winter and Connolly, 2004:39).

Further, James et al (2001:6-7) point to the rhetoric contained within the Children Act 1989, in which it is said that children have a right to be heard but the 'right to be heard is now conditioned, not by chronological age, but by judgements about a child's developmental capacity [i.e. rationality] to understand their situation and to form a meaningful opinion'. Consequently, access, participation and the attribution of rights to a child are again determined by his/her ability to perform in a way acceptable to adults. Though the Act affords sixteen and seventeen year olds increased rights (thus pulling on a notion of natural development) the rights of younger children can always be overruled. It is not unthinkable that there are cases where a child fully appreciates his/her situation but where the child's attempts to communicate their situation to parents or middle class professionals prove difficult. In cases where 'performance' is judged to be immature or

inappropriate rights can be withheld or removed through the exercise of adult power:

Those who work with young people witness, almost on a daily basis, a myriad of criticisms concerning the lifestyles, attitudes and ambitions of the young. Those criticisms come in different guises: criticisms about school achievements, public behaviour, willingness to work, or acceptance of social responsibility. The sources of criticism are also varied: the media, government, religious organisations, parents and so on. Indeed, criticisms of the young are not new, for through time they have been variously urged, persuaded and coerced into 'playing the game' (Tucker, 2004:81)

Scruton (2004:180) highlights the tendency for such judgements to be primarily 'moral' and frequently related to protecting the assumed 'innocence' of young people. Indeed the adult world's desire to protect the innocence of the young further undermines notions of 'natural development'. For example, Scruton (2004:180) argues that the withholding of 'inappropriate' sexual information from young people 'leads to a false prolonging of childhood in which physical and emotional development are allowed to run ahead of appropriate knowledge and understanding'. Here then, the body is dichotomised in terms of physical and rational development. The physical body is assumed to develop naturally whereas rationality is assumed to develop socially; through adults and based upon the 'best interests' of young people.

Furthermore, Scruton (2004:183) highlights a 'significant complacency' in the UK to actively promote the articles in the UN Charter on children's rights due to a 'mistaken assumption' that it's demands have already been met and that the

Charter is designed to be directed at less civilized societies. But, as Scraton (2004:178-9) argues, 'the suffering of children at the hands and words of adults is not bounded by class, culture, gender, state or religion'. And even though the experiences of children in the developing world are presented to us in ways that situate their experiences as domestic issues; and expressions of 'ethnic pathology' this does not free us from responsibility. It is the so-called first world that benefits from the exploitation of child labour (amongst other things) in the developing world and though we may appear worlds apart:

Closely associated to economic dominance through dependency is a form of cultural imperialism which implicitly assumes that the children of the First World are protected, cared for, and provided for, nurtured, loved and educated, free from poverty and abuse, exploitation, illness and premature death. It is a cruel lie. For, whatever the material benefits, quality of life and opportunities self-evident within advanced capitalist societies, structural inequalities, ritualised abuse and the systematic denial of citizen's rights to all under the age of 18 are deeply etched into Britain's social and political landscape (Scraton, 2004:179).

In the life course phase definition youth (and children) were defined by their otherness from adults. Here, in the youth as a shift from protection to citizenship definition, young people are understood by their similarity to adults; that is by their humanity. At the core of this definition is an appeal to adult protectionism; there is a demand for adults to protect the young, this suggests that historically we have not been very successful at this. Demands for change are 'often justified by an appeal to rights', however, 'a right is a historical creature: it is defended as part of the struggle to extend democratic control' (Rowbotham, 1989:86). It implies

that claims are morally just, however, 'it does not necessarily present a means of transforming' an unjust society (Rowbotham, 1989:87).

Once again, in the youth as a shift from protection to citizenship rights definition, as in the youth as life course definition, it is adults who determine the granting of citizenship and this can continually be denied if it is seen to be in the young person's best interests. Here however, the development of rationality is privileged over the development of physicality.

Nevertheless, when specific rights become enshrined in law they are frequently attached to actual ages. Youth can then be defined as an official category, the stages of youth being determined by actual age. One would imagine that this would result in a less arbitrary bestowal of rights and in which the notion of biological development becomes central. We will now examine this definition

### **Youth as an Official Administrative/ Legal Phase:**

In administrative/ legal terms, the rational development of children is assumed to be in line with their physical development. This is illustrated by the gradual bestowal of age specific legal rights and responsibilities until young people are finally subject to the legal rights and responsibilities of full adult citizenship:

These vary from, for instance, the age of criminal responsibility (the age of 10 in England and Wales), the end of compulsory education (the age of 16 across the UK), the age at which young people can vote and marry without parental consent (the age of 18 in England and Wales) to the age at which a person can claim benefits at a full adult rate (the age of 25 across the UK) (Coles, 2004:91).

One can add the ages at which buying tobacco and gambling becomes legal (16 years), or consent to heterosexual intercourse<sup>3</sup> and to homosexual sex becomes legal<sup>4</sup> (16 years in England and Wales), or when it is legal to drive a tractor (14 years) or a moped (16 years) or a car (17 years), or the age at which one is entitled to a partial 'transitional' minimum wage (18 years) or full minimum wage (21 years). One can highlight the arbitrariness: that young people in Scotland can marry without parental consent at 16 years but not until 18 in England and Wales and one cannot consent to sex in Northern Ireland until 17 years. The age of criminal responsibility is ten years in England and Wales and eight in Scotland. These anomalies exist within the UK, if we bring the ages from other European countries or the US the situation is further complicated<sup>5</sup>. For instance, in most European countries the age of criminal responsibility is set at twelve years or above; it is eighteen in Belgium and Luxembourg (Muncie, 2004:251).

The ages at which rights are granted are subject to change, for instance, in 1821 the age of consent was 12 years for young women and 14 for young men (Stainton

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<sup>3</sup> Heterosexual age of consent is confused by the age at which young people can access contraception without parental consent. Further, though it is an offence to have sex with an under 16 year old 'It is a defence if the man is under 24, had not been previously charged with such an offence and had reasonable cause to believe that the girl was aged 16 or over'. It is also an offence if a person in a position of responsibility over someone under 18 years has sex with him or her.

<sup>4</sup> Homosexual consent was first reduced from 21 to 18 in 1994, then to 16 in 2000, but not without resistance.

<sup>5</sup> Wallace and Kovatcheva (1998) illustrate how economic and familial arrangements influence the construction of youth in a variety of ways across Europe.

Rogers, 2004a:1). The school leaving age was raised from 12 to 14 in 1921, then to 15 in 1944 (with effect from 1947), to 16 years in 1973 and is now to be effectively raised to 18 years. In 1780 voting was restricted to just 3% of the adult male population, in 1884, this was extended to male house owners, 'universal suffrage' came in 1918 (but women under 30 years had to wait until 1928); the voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 years in 1969<sup>6</sup>. Young people were once entitled to full benefits at age 16, in 1986 benefits were reduced, and then in 1988 entitlement to means tested benefits were withdrawn. This list is endless<sup>7</sup>. What is clear however is that the youth age range has gradually been extended.

Some of the above age thresholds are remnants of past times. Each delay in the end of compulsory schooling can be linked to periods of high unemployment, as can the changes to welfare entitlement, which can be seen as a subtle, though not legally enforced, extension of compulsory schooling and dependence on family. For instance, Jones and Wallace (1992:53) point to government responses to financial crises in the inter war period:

One government response was to cut benefits. The first people to lose benefits were young workers in 1925, with adults following later. In 1931 the eligibility criteria were tightened up and claimants were required to have worked 30 weeks in the previous two years to qualify. Furthermore, young people up to the age of 18 were not to be given 'dole' unconditionally, but instead their benefits were to be tied to participation in training schemes and 'juvenile instruction centres'. Then, as

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.pro.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/struggle\\_democracy/getting\\_vote.htm](http://www.pro.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/struggle_democracy/getting_vote.htm)

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/so/youthchron/> for more.

now, it was felt that the young unemployed should be treated differently from adults.

More recently, 'the school leaving age will effectively be raised to 18 under plans being developed by Downing Street' as Tony Blair announced "No dropping out at 16, every young person either staying on in the sixth form or on a modern apprenticeship or job-related training leading to a good career" (Ahmed, 2004:8). Who will be doing the less desirable work is unclear. Furthermore, in terms of educational financial support, the age at which the DfES decides a young person is 'independent' has also been extended from twenty-one years to twenty-five years.

Other changes in the administrative/ legal phase can be viewed as resulting from resistance and protest, such as in universal suffrage and age of consent in homosexual relationships. Whatever the reasons, in practical terms, such changes have consequences for young people themselves and can lead to 'status ambiguity' because 'the individual's rights or roles or responsibilities are not clearly defined' (Coleman et al, 2004:228).

Such changes have also impacted upon the focus of youth research, for example in 1985 the ESRC funded a major programme of research on young people entitled 'The 16-19 Initiative', in 1997 they funded another programme, 'Youth Citizenship and Social Change', this time the focus was on ' the way young people aged 16-25+ make the transition to adult life'<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tsa.uk.com/YCSC/index.html>

Moreover, it is clear that, from the nineteenth-century onwards, the duration of youth has gradually been extended; the attainment of full adult citizenship has been postponed. The youth as an administrative/legal phase definition, though constructed upon age, is again revealed as a moveable feast; it is once more contingent upon adult society and, furthermore, it is vulnerable to the economic pressures of capitalist society.

The above discussions illustrate some of the difficulties involved in defining 'youth' and it may now be becoming clear why so few researchers attempt to do so. As Wallace and Kovatcheva (1998:28) argue youth studies are 'notoriously imprecise' about the age of youth 'and it seems that they can be carried out on any group between the ages of 13 and 40'. Nevertheless, failure to define youth has methodological implications, especially in relation to epistemology and ontology. Griffin (1993:18) argues that 'since the 1880s, dominant ideologies about youth and adolescence have been characterised by a series of tensions and realignments between biological determinism and social constructionism'. One of the main reasons for this is the semantic and symbolic power of the concept 'adolescence'. As Jones and Wallace (1992:3) argue, 'the term youth ... has changed and narrowed in meaning' and over the past one hundred years it has increasingly become associated with the term adolescence.

## **Youth as a Adolescent Phase:**

Corteen and Scraton (2004:83) state that though adolescence has become 'established as the intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood' it is 'closely associated with the biological/physiological developments around puberty'.

The discovery of adolescence is credited to the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall, who established the first Psychology department in the USA. He believed that those spending time with children ought to reflect upon their development and from this the idea of research and the Child Study Movement developed. Individuals observed and recorded their own children's development then shared their observations. As secretary of the Child Study Movement, Hall monitored the information gathered and developed his theory of adolescence from it. It is not difficult to imagine the backgrounds of the participants however and his work came to reflect 'a particular combination of discourses around race, sexuality, gender, class, nation and age which were very much rooted in a specific historical moment'. Griffin (1993:11-12) identifies this as:

The emerging cult of heterosexual masculinity; with the determined avoidance of all things feminine and with the construction of homosexuality as a judicio-legal category which was synonymous with sexual deviance, evil and pathological sickness.

Hall saw adolescence as a period of intense change of deterministic proportions. Adolescence was theorised as 'a period of 'storm and stress'' and characterised by

‘alternating and opposing emotions’. This led Hall to advocate ‘a contradictory mixture of freedom and control’ over young people. He believed ‘normal’ sexuality began during adolescence but the model represents ‘sexual awareness solely as heterosexual awareness’ (Corteen & Scraton, 2004:82). The theory of adolescence sees the masculine and feminine as complementary opposites; whilst it grants male sexuality ‘an instinctive capacity to be vagrant, women’s sexuality is rooted in the instinct of motherhood and the biological imperative of reproduction’ (Corteen and Scraton, 2004:84). Here the biological imperative to reproduce the species situates homosexuality as deviance; the biological potential of reproduction is seen as a law of ‘nature’, which then determines emotions and social roles. However, Jackson (1982 quoted in Corteen & Scraton, 2004:84) noted that such biological potential ‘does not dictate how we express’ our sexuality. As Corteen and Scraton (2004:82) assert:

Clearly, sexuality is rooted in physicality manifested in the mechanics of arousal. But it is defined, contained, regulated and sanctioned within social, cultural and political contexts and their moral imperatives. Sexuality is neither monolithic nor universal but is socially constructed.

Moreover, theories of adolescence present sexuality as a ‘natural’, ‘biological’ and inevitable youthful development, but this is an almost animalistic phase that must be controlled and sublimated. Hall saw sublimation as essential to the establishment of self-control, this was especially the case with masturbation, which he saw as a ‘potentially dangerous vice’, to be prevented through ‘open and frank discussion’: ‘that sex renounce itself’ (Foucault, 1998:84). Hall believed sublimation to be easier for young women due to their destiny as mothers; in this

sense their physical health and regular menstruation were judged to be more important (Griffin, 1993:16).

Furthermore, Hall's theory and his prescribed regulation of delinquency illustrated his approach to social class; this focussed on 'adolescent faults and vices', and he presented these as inherited adjustments to an earlier 'savage past' that were inappropriate to modern times (Griffin, 1993:16). Hall's theory of adolescence has been critiqued and tested, for instance Evans Pritchard (1951) and Mead (1943, both quoted in Jones and Wallace, 1992:8) applied the 'storm and stress' model to pre-industrial societies and found that

It was only in industrial societies, where there was neither appropriate training for adulthood nor a place in the social world, that young people faced an adjustment problem and could find themselves temporarily in a marginal world.

Nevertheless, the concept of adolescence continues to provide a powerful and pervading definition of youth. In its conception and development it was strictly (pseudo-) scientific. Griffin (1993:15) illustrates how Hall's theory of adolescence shifted the study of youth into the biological domain thus allowing medicine and psychology to take over the treatment of youth. Hall also made links with social reformers during the 1890s, this popularised psychology and gave a gloss of academic respectability to the activities of philanthropists attempting to rescue children and youth.

Moreover, the term adolescence exists, it carries meanings, and even attempts to redefine adolescence cannot rid it of these traces. There are those that seek to

embed adolescence in its social context, for example Coleman and Hendry (1999:225) state that:

We cannot understand adolescence without taking into account the social changes which have impacted on Western society. The alterations in the labour market, the shifts in family functioning, the political and attitudinal changes that we have experienced during the 1980s and 1990s have had a profound influence on those growing up in these times. In addition, we need to recognise that the adolescent transition has also altered, since it has become a much longer process. In some respects those of 9 or 10 years of age are experiencing the beginnings of adolescence, while young adults of 19, 20 and 21 remain economically dependent, and thus take longer to leave adolescence behind.

The above quote is an excellent example of the ‘clash of theories: biological, constructivist, structuralist’ highlighted by Griffin (1993:1). The authors begin by relating impacts that result from changes in a specific geographical location, i.e.: Western society, to an understanding of ‘adolescence’, which from its conception and early usage was a totalising and universalising concept; utilised to ‘define normality’<sup>9</sup> but was developed according to a particular type of young person - such as the ‘onanistic child’ identified by Foucault (1998:121).

The authors then refer to the events of the past two decades as profoundly influencing the current social context for youth. Whilst these undoubtedly result in the experiences of some young people being very different from their 1970s

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<sup>9</sup> Critiques have highlighted the universalising tendency and accompanying pathologising affects of the concept adolescence due to its inability to explain the experiences of ‘others’, i.e.: young people of different races, classes and genders and, very importantly, young people from non-western cultures (Bhavnani, 1991 p29-30, Griffin, 1993, p15, Robinson, 2004, pp153-160, Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998, p27).

counterparts, for other young people, i.e.: those following the school to university transition, the experience is pretty similar and it may only be on graduation that the impacts of such changes are felt – if they are felt at all. This text is implicitly referring to those young people who do not go to university<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, why stop at two decades, why not look at decades going back much further? If we did so we might discover that for a certain class of young people (upper-middle-class white, males) the transition experience has not changed radically for over a hundred years.

The 1970s experience was not the universal ‘norm’ for youth transition, it was ‘a’ culturally and historically specific ‘norm’; and, let us not forget, it was one which was inherently unequal and divisive along the lines of race, class, gender and sexuality.

Lastly, Coleman and Hendry (1999:225) assert that adolescence can last from age 9 to age 21. The premise that ‘those of 9 or 10 years of age are experiencing the beginnings of adolescence’ must be referring to the (now earlier) onset of puberty, a physiological, biological development stage<sup>11</sup>. Alternatively, the economic dependence of 19, 20 and 21 year olds is an entirely social, structural phenomenon, (unless there is an implication that the process of physical development now takes longer).

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<sup>10</sup> This is a common occurrence in youth research where the general term ‘youth’ is applied to specific groups.

<sup>11</sup> Though not entirely biologically determined given that poor diet impacts on the age of the onset of puberty, and that access to a healthy diet is structurally constrained.

In Coleman and Hendry's (1999) definition of adolescence there is a contradictory amalgamation of discourses and theories, despite their attempts to redefine the concept and to relocate it in the social sphere - the term 'adolescence' will always carry traces of its previous meanings. In addition, though they are attempting to move away from pseudo-scientific definitions of youth and class, other contemporary writers are attempting to reassert this:

There is overwhelming evidence from many domains that children 'inherit' from their parents; such inheritance includes their genes, the family environment, and childhood experiences during the life-course. This association is unequivocally established for genetic inheritance and the linkage is indisputably causal. It is fundamentally implausible and empirically untrue to maintain that genetic endowments play no part in shaping outcomes through the life-course. Yet many social scientists persist in either denying or ignoring this and seem never to engage with the possibility that human behaviour is shaped in any way by genetic endowments, instead regarding human beings as being Hobbesian tabula rasa at birth, who are then shaped by individual experiences or structural constraints (Hobcraft, 2002:71)<sup>12</sup>.

Lawler (2000:2) points to the nature/nurture dualism apparent in discussions of child rearing and highlights three positions taken in relation to this: totally genetic, totally social or a combination position. Due to Hobcraft's references to 'genes', 'family environment' and 'childhood experiences' this excerpt appears to conceptualise 'inheritance' as a combination of nature and nurture. Hobcraft clearly criticizes those taking the 'totally social' position and stresses the importance of genetics but appears to slip from genetic to cultural inheritance.

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<sup>12</sup> At one point Hobcraft (2002, p72) laments the absence of twins reared apart for research purposes.

Nevertheless, what is meant by 'family environment' is unclear; we cannot know whether Hobcraft is referring to the family in social/structural context (family habitus) or to (genetic) familial behavioural traits, but in view of the argument I think it is the latter which is more likely and if so the implication is that children 'simply mimic' parents (Lawler, 2000:2). As Lawler (2000:2) argued, to think of genetics as 'unalterable, natural' and socialization as 'alterable, artificial' endows genes with primacy over the social world whilst obscuring 'the ways in which the very conceptualisation of 'nature' is socially imagined'.

Wallace and Kovatcheva (1998:29) argue that the work of Coleman and Hendry is an 'attempt to construct an 'essential' model of youth justified by the 'need' for biological reproduction and supposedly natural and necessary social roles' and in the process of which a 'normative heterosexual and universal model is used'. As already stated, the concept of adolescence provides a powerful and pervading definition of youth, and because youth is seen as biologically determined, natural and inevitable it makes the category seem immutable and universal (Griffin, 1993:9). This is despite the fact that 'the field of child and adolescent research is largely based on white, middle class children and adolescents, and its findings are assumed (or defined as) normative and generic to all children and adolescents' (Robinson, 2004:153). Whereas the field of youth research is largely based on the study of certain types of youth who are then compared to an assumed, historical and experienced 'norm'.

Indeed the markers which herald the end of adolescence and achievement of adulthood, such as heterosexual marriage, the nuclear family and employment are,

as already argued, becoming blurred and revealed as social constructs; constructs which youth increasingly reject (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998:29).

Adolescence as a time of 'storm and stress' invades theories about youth in all social institutions from Government and the medical and educational professions to families, individuals and young people themselves: theories 'are not just some kind of professional property but have become part of ordinary understanding: they are, for example, the kind of material the tabloids can confidently assume readers will recognise' (Stainton Rogers, 2004b:178). Adolescence is expected in young people, so much so that if a young person protests at a particular injustice their protestations can be dismissed with: 'it's her age' (a statement as frustrating and silencing as 'it's the time of the month'). Adolescence has become 'common sense' but the 'normative models being implicitly used represent those from dominant social and ethnic groups' (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998 p30).

In general, the four definitions of youth discussed thus far centre on the individual, youth is part of and belongs to young people: youth is (presumed to be) in the body. Youth, like childhood, is a temporary condition and one that all adult humans have experienced. As such, youth is deemed a universal category. Ontologically, physical biology (i.e.: age and development) are given primacy; universal assumptions about the body, mental capacity, behaviour and status at different ages derive from this ontology and models of development are formed which normalise or pathologise young people and their personal agency. This process is highly gendered. Where young people do not develop in accordance with the ideal model they are problematised, and the problem is seen to exist

within them<sup>13</sup> or within their dysfunctional families. They are seen as deficient, delinquent or as having been deprived of some essential component in their development (e.g. adequate socialisation).

Sociologically however, as we have seen, the above definitions of youth, far from being natural, are determined to great extent by the adult world and through what can only be described as a power relationship. This leads us to consider definitions of youth in which social structures are implicated. We will begin by discussing youth as a transition phase.

### **Youth as a Transition Phase:**

Unlike in the previous definitions, the social is central in the definition of youth as a transition phase. This definition explicitly implicates interaction with social institutions and structures, for example school and work, which is focussed upon most. Consequently the transition definition also and inevitably pulls on notions of youth as an age stage, as a legal administrative category and as a life phase but 'youth' does not act within the individual, it acts upon them.

In the youth as transition definition the end of compulsory schooling at sixteen<sup>14</sup> usually determines the start of youth, but, as with the previous definitions, the onset of adulthood is a moveable feast simply because structural changes effect

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<sup>13</sup> Griffin, 1993, identifies this as a 'victim-blaming thesis' which is apparent in youth research from a variety of disciplines.

<sup>14</sup> But not for much longer.

the duration of youth. Transitions research has a long tradition but its popularity and perceived usefulness comes and goes. At its most positivist and empiricist it is extremely quantitative. Ontologically, the individual is seen as determined by the society, by structure; generalised laws predict how individuals with certain characteristics will generally act in certain situations.

Much transitions research, therefore, analyses the relationships between specific variables such as class, race, gender, qualifications, economic status, employment outcomes and so on. Such analyses find that employment outcomes or educational attainment for instance, are structurally determined. Why this should be the case and whether it is a good thing or not, or inevitable or not, however, is largely determined by the standpoint of the researchers; these can be influenced by the dominant theoretical perspectives of the time as well as by the definitions discussed previously.

Evans and Furlong (1997) showed how metaphors evolved which reflected the dominance of particular perspectives. For instance, the structural-functionalist notion of 'filling society's niches' dominated in the 1960s when there were three main stratified transitions between school and work: extended, involving participation in higher education; short-term, in which young people left school in order to enter jobs that provided some in-work training; or careerless occupations including semi skilled and unskilled work with little or no training. As unemployment increased transitions became more complex and more (and more) young people experienced extended periods of education, training or unemployment post 16; the accompanying metaphors that emerged included

‘bridges’, ‘routes’ and ‘pathways to work’. With unemployment and ‘fractured’ transitions amongst young people continuing to rise during the 1980s, policy oriented structuralist research began to dominate and the notion of ‘trajectories’ took over. The metaphorical implication was that young people were passively being propelled towards labour market destinations that were determined by structural forces, and these came to be explained in terms of race, class, gender, qualifications and labour market conditions (Evans and Furlong, 1997).

Despite the social and economic transformations apparent in the late twentieth-century, transitions research still relies to great extent on notions of transition ‘norms’ which differ little from those highlighted by Evans and Furlong (1997) in the 1960s – though the numbers in each have altered substantially. These, in ‘ideal’ form, entail the school to extended education and university transition; school to training (in FE, employment or Modern Apprenticeship) to full time employment transition and school to (usually low skill, low pay and insecure) employment transition. It is clear that these ‘norms’ are hierarchally structured – and that predominantly, young people from different social backgrounds are destined to experience them differently.

It is from within this structuralist perspective, and the data it generates, that ‘more likely’ statements and ‘risk’ factors are founded and gain their credibility. For instance, Kiernan (2002:85) states that teenage mothers come disproportionately from ‘more disadvantaged homes and have the least propitious childhood and adolescent experiences’, they are ‘more likely’ in later life to be in low-income households, in social housing, be benefit dependent, to have experienced

homelessness and to be in poorer physical and mental health. In relation to school exclusion, Sparkes and Glennerster (2002:196) assert that those in care are 10% more likely to be excluded, and Afro Caribbean and black pupils 6 times more likely. The point is that though these young people are 'more likely' to be, they are not necessarily going to be. And again, the interpretations of why this might be the case are varied, for some they are deemed to be the 'fault' of an unequal society, for others the 'faults' exist within the individual.

Another 'more likely' statement, though much less frequently voiced, is that white, middle class young people from affluent families, whose parents have higher educational qualifications, are more likely to follow the school to university transition. Again, they are 'more likely' to, but they are not necessarily going to. There is very little attention paid to those from such backgrounds who are expected to succeed and do not. However, where young people from 'more disadvantaged homes [who] have the least propitious childhood and adolescent experiences' do succeed, they are of special scientific interest due to their 'resilience'.

Griffin (1993:201) shows how the notion of 'At risk' allows researchers and practitioners to identify and target interventions at those who are 'more likely' to be 'problematic' rather than identifying those who actually are; Kelly (2003:172) concurs:

[P]rocesses of identification and intervention imagine institutionally structured relations of class, gender, ethnicity, ability and geography as complex, but quantifiable, factors that place certain youth at risk. Once identified, measured, and quantified within probabilistic rationalities, modes of intervention can be designed and implemented to enable regulatory projects that promise to 'minimize the harm' of these factors.

But, and this is at the heart of the problem with this model, the interpretation of the 'problem' determines the theoretical basis upon which the mode of intervention is developed, the 'theory of change'. Due to the abstracted, quantitative survey methods employed and the distance between the researchers and the researched, limited space is available to examine concrete; embedded experiences and individual epistemological interpretations: there is little room for 'verstehen' here:

The tendency ... to adopt a structural perspective on transitions has been counter-productive, primarily because of its failure to prioritise the actual views, experiences, interests and perspectives of young people as they see them, in favour of bland discussions, most commonly of trends in employment and education patterns ... [T]he most damaging problem with the 'transitions debate' is that it has tended to take young people out of the equation ... treat[ing] young people as troubled victims of economic and social restructuring without recourse to the active ways in which young people negotiate such circumstances in the course of their everyday lives (Miles, 2000, in MacDonald et al, 2001:10).

Instead, explanations become polarised between structure and agency, young people are seen as mere victims of the system or else the data generated is seen to

provide evidence of the pathological inadequacies of certain groups. As Griffin argues (1993:25):

Youth research which operates from the radical and mainstream perspectives has told different stories of transition and threat about (certain groups of) young people. The gaze of the researcher is generally voyeuristic, invested with a magisterial authority which can decide who is deviant, deficient, perverted and or resistant. Mainstream analyses in particular are replete with origin stories about specific 'social problems' which implicate individual young people, their 'deficient' family forms or cultural backgrounds.

For instance, Cohen and Ainley (2000:81), argue that within transitions research:

Social exclusion from successful transition is seen in terms of a so-called 'underclass' and taken as a 'dysfunction' to be overcome by individual effort combined with ameliorative reform, rather than being seen as integral to and generated by the system of social categories the research paradigm accepts as given.

So, though it initially appears that the 'youth as transition' definition employs a structuralist ontology, again, however, within many examples this is not always the case. Cohen and Ainley (2000:81) see the transitions research paradigm as overly economic, based upon a 'model of psychosocial development' and where waged labour is central:

The youth as transition approach not only implies a linear teleological model of psychosocial development, it is premised upon the availability of waged labour as the 'ultimate goal'. The consequent emphasis on production has led to a limited research paradigm focussed on 'transition' as a rite of passage between developmental stages of psychological maturity and immaturity, complemented by a sociological transition narrowly restricted to (vocational) maturity and (nuclear) family formation (Cohen and Ainley, 2000:80).

In this interpretation then, gaining full time employment, irrespective of the quality of that employment, and being part of a heterosexual nuclear family are still the marks of achieved and independent adulthood.

Cohen and Ainley, (2000:80) assert that despite contemporary 'processes of class displacement and recomposition' the transition definition remains dedicated to 'conventionally understood notions of class'. 'Conventional' notions of class are based and conceptualised upon 'types' of employment. These 'types' are graded and ranked via a range of occupational scales. Conventionally, children and young people are 'classed' according to their parents' occupation (assumed to be the father as 'main bread winner'). Today however, it is difficult to identify a 'traditional working class' (or main bread winner) using such occupational scales<sup>15</sup>. Despite, as Crompton (1993:50-51) argues, occupation still being a powerful indicator of material rewards, status and life chances, occupational titles cannot adequately describe the dynamics and dimensions of inequality, class relations or social mobility. Such occupational scales are unable to 'classify' no-earner households, which in some urban locations outnumber households with one

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<sup>15</sup> This was the case with the Routes cohort; Parents were revealed as a 'service class' if they were anything at all (Dolton et al 2002).



earner<sup>16</sup>. And the information is relatively meaningless without accompanying 'status' information such as age, gender, race, economic inactivity, employment position (rather than occupation title), income, union membership, industrial sector, employer status and so on. We all know, for instance, that being a 'checkout operator', or even a 'checkout supervisor' involves similar tasks across employment sites and that 'supervisor' is ranked higher than 'operator' in each of the sites. But we also know that doing this job for Netto is very different from doing it for Marks and Spencer in terms of initial access, income and identity: symbolic capital. What we less frequently recognize however is that both locations demand high levels of specific cultural capital and that it is equally difficult for workers in either site to trade places.

Furthermore, the above positions employment, rather than family transition or housing transition, as the central indicator of success despite the interplay between these factors in young people's lives (Coles, 1995; Jones and Wallace, 1992). As MacDonald et al (2001:3.4) illustrate: 'a very simple example would be that becoming homeless might result in becoming unemployed, or vice versa'. In effect, the concentration on employment means that those young people who will never be in paid employment due to family responsibilities or disability, for instance, will never be considered truly adult and as such will never be granted full citizenship. As Jones and Wallace (1992:145-148) argue, citizenship is never totally and finally granted, it is always temporary and variable and at different stages in individual lives it can be withdrawn. British citizenship is not a right, it

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<sup>16</sup> Newcastle City Council's 1996 Inter-Censal Survey of Residents revealed the concentration and polarisation of children living in no-earner households, in five of the twenty-six wards over half of those under 16 years lived in such households (range 2:74%).

is 'not embodied in any constitution'; therefore it is always possible to withdraw it especially from those without a collective voice (Jones and Wallace, 1992:146).

The above factors, i.e.: reliance on outmoded definitions of class, disregard for family and social context, together with the lack of 'verstehen', lead many in the field of youth research to question the relevance of transitions research for understanding the contemporary condition of youth, Bynner et al (1997:7) put it this way:

Many of our key assumptions about youth developed from knowledge about young people's experiences in the three decades following the Second World War, which are no longer necessarily appropriate to an understanding of today's youth who negotiate their lives within a set of institutional arrangements which have changed significantly.

More forcefully, Jeffs and Smith (1998:59, in Macdonald et al, 2001) put it another way:

[T]he field of study has produced little of substance and certainly nothing fresh or original for nearly two decades. It has become more inward-looking. As a sub-discipline it is unlikely to disappear (although perhaps it should) as too many have invested too much in it ... [but] it is likely to become increasingly irrelevant. Exhausted, reduced to picking over the minutiae of young people's lives and reworking its own tired models it will stagger on.

In Cohen and Ainley's (2000:81) critique, they do not object to class analysis, or analyses of race and gender, seeing these as providing 'a skeletal picture' of

persisting social divisions. But they are critical of the lack in transitions research of 'any culturally textured account of social structural change', and the lack of understanding as to how young people negotiate these changes and what they mean to them.

MacDonald et al (2001:2.1) point to a bifurcation in youth studies in the early 1980s and argue 'that youth sociology has developed into two distinct perspectives and that this separation hampers a more holistic study of youth are ideas that have now become axiomatic in youth studies'. Transitions research is frequently perceived as separate and opposed to youth cultural studies which grew in significance during the 1970s only to be toppled by the resurgence of transitions research in the 1980s. Youth cultural studies have their routes in the work of the Centre for Contemporary studies at the University of Birmingham. At its inception social class was at the heart of analysis and 'the importance of economic, structural and cultural relations' were emphasised (Griffin, 1993:30). But, initially, this predominantly translated into an analysis of white working class young men, a position that was strongly critiqued by black and feminist researchers who argued that the experiences of all young people must be considered and that the way they are 'inscribed within discursive practices constituted around 'race', class and gender' examined (Brah, quoted in Griffin, 1993:54).

As these developments progressed issues of race and gender came to dominate together with in depth, close up 'ethnographic studies of youth sub-cultural style and resistance' (MacDonald et al, 2001:2.2). Social class became displaced: 'the

social contexts of family, school, work and community life that gave these practices their life, historical depth and meaning, were pushed further into the background' (Cohen and Ainley, 2000:85). By this time, however, the collapse of the youth labour market was well underway and this led many to question the usefulness of such research, for example Clarke (1982, in MacDonald et al, 2001:2.3):

[T]he value of decoding the stylistic appearances of particular tribes during a period in which young adults are the prime victims of a state policy of manufactured unemployment ... the time has come to turn our eyes away from the stylistic art of a few.

And consequently<sup>17</sup>:

In the 1980s, then, the study of youth transitions became the main preoccupation of youth sociology and the questionnaire surveying of cohorts of school leavers, rather than ethnographic observation of sub-cultural groups, became the dominant methodology' (MacDonald et al, 2001:2.5)

Nevertheless, the above discussion of the transitions paradigm has highlighted general trends and these trends have been further generalised for ease of description, in reality: 'the separation of 'structural' from 'cultural' analysis has never been absolute either at the level of individual projects or in the field of youth studies as a whole' (MacDonald, 2001:2.9). As Macdonald et al (2001, 2.14) argue:

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<sup>17</sup> Griffin points to other factors which I will discuss later.

Contrary to these critics, we would wish to reassert the value of the transitions perspective. A key part of our argument will be that the model of transitions that they construct, and then attack, is one that we do not recognise as now holding the sort of sway in the field that it is ascribed to it. These critics tend to present a narrow and largely outdated picture of the nature of transition studies and underplay the theoretical potential of contemporary studies of youth transition.

In this respect there are a number of contemporary transitions studies<sup>18</sup> which whilst they track, retrospectively and longitudinally, young people's transitions, at the heart of the research are attempts to gain an understanding of the ways in which individual biographies are shaped and contested by young people with regard to both structure and agency. Within such research young people cease to be structural dupes and come to be seen as either active agents or as socially constructed.

### **Youth as Socially Constructed:**

The definition of youth as socially constructed has a different ontological basis again. Rather than youth being a condition 'of' young people: internal to them, it is concerned with the conditions in which young people develop. Here youth, as a life stage, is externally constructed. Youth is not a universal, abstract category; rather it is embedded in the historical and material conditions of its existence, and it must be understood in this way in order to understand how it has been shaped, reshaped and de-structured (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998:3). The concepts of

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<sup>18</sup> See for example <http://www.tsa.uk.com/YCSC/research.html> and Studies by Ball et al (2000), MacDonald et al (2005) and Raffo and Reeves (2000)

class, gender and race are central considerations to the formation of identity in this definition, the identity is not pre-existing, dormant or essential, rather it is constructed through social relations and practices and these are structurally determined by the interaction of class, gender and race.

For Hollands (1990:4) the main ways in which youth has been defined, as outlined above, obscures social divisions and 'mask[s] the many ways in which youthfulness is a profoundly social, historical and hence highly variable phenomena'. He (1990:5) argues that notions of what it is to be adult both encourage and obscure specific identities that are inherently social and economic. Further, Hollands (1990:5) asserts that:

While there is a social grouping one can label youth, this phenomenon is not based upon any universal phase but rather it is the result of the social construction of a youthful stage held in place by a series of very specific practices and institutional structures.

Stainton Rogers (2004b) identified the intensification of 'ways of knowing' as a central element in the construction of the category youth and of our conceptualisations of it. These ways of knowing contribute to the construction of reality. So, though 'youth' have always existed, earlier conceptualisations of them 'had not been shaped by the tools that today help to construct [youth] as a social issue' (Stainton Rogers, 2004b:178). Such 'tools' include 'political arithmetic', that is statistics, and these have 'been concerned with uncovering causes as a route to social engineering' (Stainton Rogers, 2004b:180). But, as Stainton Rogers (2004b:180) pointed out, unlike the natural world 'social life is

neither lawful nor brought about by simple causes'. This is not to say, of course, that bodies do not possess 'natural', 'biological' functions, rather it is that the many markers taken to denote youth are themselves socially constructed such as compulsory schooling and the age one can leave, access to financial support and housing, leisure activities, fashion and so on.

Furthermore, because youth is inevitably a transitional category there is inherent instability in any data collected, we are constantly projecting data about one cohort of youth on to future cohorts as though we can predict what they will be, as though 'social science can enable us to build up an objective picture of what young people are 'really' like, or 'really' experience or 'really' need' (Stainton Rogers, 2004b:181). In effect, the social scientific facts about youth are always facts about yesterday's youth, facts which draw attention to some things and obscure others. Despite this they contribute to the construction of what we perceive youth to be, but as Griffin (1993:25) asserts youth research does not always tell us what it means to be young, but it tells us how youth are represented. Moreover, the production of such data is not an innocent practice, data are a commodity that is bought and sold and upon which individual careers progress or fail<sup>19</sup>. Statistics are utilised to forward interpretations and claims about the condition of youth, more statistics are put forward to counter them, these are 'purported 'facts' and so-called 'scientific theories' which are better seen as disguised politics and ethics' (Stainton Rogers, 2004b:183). For a social constructionist like Stainton Rogers (2004b:183) then:

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<sup>19</sup> As Stainton Rogers (2004, p182) warns 'let the buyer beware'.

There is no once and for all social scientific way of defining young people. There is no age at which one objectively stops being a child or starts being completely 'adult'. What we have (and all we have) are local and contingent markers, set up in current law, guidance and practice, that simply have to be made to work until the next set of changes. In other words, because they have been put there and, in many cases, either exclude younger and older persons or operate in a different way for those other than 'young people', we need specific responses for young people. And, of course, we also need responses that vary according to the complex set of laws and rules our society has within the category 'young people'.

For Wallace and Kovatcheva (1998:6) the construction of the category 'youth' is part of the modernist 'tendency to create essentialist categories', categories which are 'based upon 'natural' and necessary distinguishing features, which are rooted in biology, psychology, sex, and from which a whole range of other characteristics follow'. They (1998:11) argue that despite the diversity in individual maturation 'modernity has imposed more uniform categories of life stage and attached these to chronological age'. Age (together with other categorisations such as sex, race and class) became a central component within the zeal for classification and date of birth has become essential to locating individuals within society, it is one rational form of classification. Citing Musgrove (1964, in 1998:11) Wallace and Kovatcheva assert that 'adolescence appeared at about the same time as the internal combustion engine'. This phase of history saw important changes in social organisation such as the arrival of waged labour, universal education and franchise. Each of these factors had the effect of defining youth as a specific social category, as being 'between education and work, between unsocialised childhood and fully socialised adulthood' (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998:11). However, as Wallace and Kovatcheva (1998) illustrate

throughout their work, such changes impacted differently on the construction of youth across various societies in Europe. Pre-existing social arrangements in different locations resulted in differing adaptations to modernism and industrialisation. As such, far from being a universal category, youth is whatever a given society constructs it as:

Age relations are a social construct because the significance which this has in any society depends upon the social, economic and political order in that society. Any individual experience of growing up or growing old is therefore shaped by these beliefs and assumptions, and by the rights and duties which a society or state expects of a person (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998:9).

Rather than youth being a biological phase unaffected by social influences, in the youth as socially constructed definition it is revealed as inherently social. Youth as a category is dependent upon the ways it is understood (known about) in society in any given time and place.

## **Conclusion:**

The written and spoken word 'Youth' is a sign. For Saussure a sign consisted of two elements: signifier and signified, the signifier is the form (word, image, sound etc), the signified is the concept the signifier triggers of in our heads, the signifier 'Youth' triggers of our concept(s) of 'Youth' but this is an arbitrary relationship. The above discussion shows that the signified (the concept of) youth is far from

fixed. Furthermore, the signifiers always say more than we want them to, they trigger off various signifieds; consequently:

Our statements are underpinned by propositions and premises of which we are not aware, but which are, so to speak, carried along in the bloodstream of our language' (Hall, 1992:288).

When we use the word youth we are inevitably pulling on all of the definitions outlined above. Moreover, this review has highlighted the main ways in which the category of youth has been defined. The first four definitions of youth centred on the individual, youth was perceived to be in the body and to be unaffected by social impacts. Youth, like childhood, was perceived as a temporary condition and one that all adult humans have experienced. As such, youth was deemed a universal category. Ontologically, physical biology (i.e.: age and development) was given primacy and universal assumptions about the body, mental capacity, behaviour and status at different ages were derived. However our discussion illustrated that these definitions were more dependent upon notions of adulthood and normality than biology; the concept signified not adult:

- In the youth as a life course phase definition youth was understood as a universal and inevitable age status, and thus that youth is a phase of biological development was implied. The discussion showed however, that the meaning of youth was relationally dependent upon a concept of adulthood and had little to do with individual biology.
- In the youth as a shift from protection to citizenship definition, young people were understood by their potential humanity and rationality; this demanded

adult protection and guidance. But in effect this definition situated adults in a power relation over youth; it was adults who decided whether citizenship rights would be extended to young people and this decision was dependent upon adult judgements of young people's maturity to determine their 'best interests'.

- The Youth as an official administrative/ legal phase definition, though ostensibly constructed upon age, was also revealed as contingent upon adult society. Here the duration of youth became a moveable feast and the boundaries of the category were revealed to be vulnerable to the economic pressures of capitalist society.
- In the youth as an adolescent phase definition youth was seen as biologically determined, natural and inevitable. This is a powerful and pervading definition that makes the category of youth seem immutable and universal. The discussion however, showed that the concept of adolescence is based upon studies of particular young people in particular social contexts and is therefore far from universal. This definition supplies us with normative principles which are then employed in the identification of abnormality. Here the attainment of full time employment and being part of a heterosexual nuclear family marked the end of youth.

Alternatively the youth as transition phase implied interaction with social institutions and structures; these were seen to impact upon/effect young people. However, the reliance on quantitative analysis raised questions over its application to 'real' young people. Any theorizations of findings are dependent upon the perspective of the analyst; it is the analyst that decides which are the

important causal variables. As a result young people could be represented as either products of the system; without agency, or data was utilized to represent the pathological inadequacies of certain groups. Thus explanations became polarised between structure and agency. Such research leads to modes of intervention being designed, ostensibly to aid transition, but in reality they lead to certain young people from particular family backgrounds being identified and regulated. Further this is a particularly economic definition of youth due to a prioritisation of employment as a marker of adulthood.

The youth as socially constructed definition implied a different ontological basis from the other definitions. Here youth was not an inherent condition 'of' young people and individual identities were not understood as pre-existing, dormant or essential. Moreover, the category of youth was understood as constructed through social relations and practices. The intensification of 'ways of knowing' about youth was viewed as a central element to the construction of the category and of our conceptualisations of it.

How 'Youth' is understood, the meanings attached to it as a category, is contingent upon the ways in which 'Youth' have been conceived through knowledge and in history; that is through discourse. Discourses are involved in defining and producing objects of knowledge, governing what can be said about them and influencing ways to regulate practices. Discourses construct categories of people and 'Youth' is a category brought into being through discourse. I will attend to the concept of discourse further in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Four: Discourse, Analysis and Newspaper**

### **Representations of Youth**

The preceding chapter discussed common definitions of youth and highlighted the multiple meanings attached to the category. It concluded that 'youth' cannot be understood as an inherent condition 'of' young people. On the contrary, 'youth' is a category constructed through social relations and practices. The intensification of 'ways of knowing' about youth was highlighted as a central element in this construction. Consequently, our understandings are contingent upon the ways youth have been conceived of through knowledge and in history; that is through discourse.

In this chapter I will discuss the concept of discourse and in so-doing introduce a theoretical framework by which my analysis of newspaper representations will proceed. Attention to discourse will expand upon the theories of Michel Foucault and pay attention to others who have engaged and employed his work. Having outlined my understanding of 'discourse' I will attend to discourse analysis. Here I will expand upon a terminology for discourse analysis forwarded by Siegfried Jäger (2005). I will then summarize the key discourses identified by Griffin (1993) in her discourse analysis of the academic literature on youth in the 1980s.

The remainder of this chapter will introduce data from my sample of newspaper reports (1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005). I will provide an overview of the types of 'stories' that attracted newspaper attention and were, consequently, constructed as

‘News’ in the first half of 2005. I will attempt to highlight dominant themes and relate these to previous analyses of newspaper reporting of youth.

### **Discourse:**

The concept of discourse as used here comes from the work of Foucault. It is linguistic and non-linguistic; it is about language and practice. Discourses are involved in defining and producing objects of knowledge, governing what can be said about them and influencing ways to regulate their practices. Moreover, the notion of discourse is central to the definition of youth as socially constructed.

For Foucault, meaning is constructed within and by discourses; therefore he was concerned with the origins of meaning rather than whether things existed, were real or true. It is not that ‘things’ do not exist outside of meaning, the point is that they only have meaning, and we can only understand them, through discourse; ‘it is the discourse and not the object that produces the knowledge on it’ (Hall, 2003b:45). So for Laclau and Mouffe (1990 in Hall, 2003b:71) what we perceive as ‘natural facts’ are ‘discursive facts’:

And they are so for the simple reason that the idea of nature is not something that is already there, to be read from the appearances of things, but is itself the result of a slow and complex historical social construction. To call something a natural object is a way of conceiving it that depends upon a classificatory system ... This does not put into question the fact that this entity which we call a stone exists, in the sense of it being present here and now, independently of my will;

nevertheless the fact of its being a stone depends on a way of classifying objects that is historical and contingent.

In this sense, when we define 'Youth' as a social construction we are not saying that young people do not exist in and of themselves 'independently of my will', nor are we saying that if the concept disappeared so too would young people. What we are saying is how 'Youth' is understood, the meanings attached to it, is contingent upon the ways in which 'Youth' have been conceived through knowledge and in history. Moreover, 'Youth' is a category brought into being through discourse.

Foucault was concerned with the use of knowledge to regulate others; how knowledge and power operate within institutional apparatuses and the technologies employed. Such apparatus consist of 'strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge' (Foucault, 1980:194-196). Foucault saw power and knowledge as inseparable but disagreed with Marxism's reduction of power to class interests and its identification of distorted knowledge as though there were a correct knowledge. For Foucault there was no truth waiting to be discovered and he rejected the question 'in whose interest?' Foucault introduced a new way of looking at power, rather than seeing it as operating brutally, directly, oppressively he theorized power as operating productively/ coercively.

The relationship between power and knowledge is important. Knowledge is not essentially a form of power, power is only implicated if knowledge is applied; the extension of knowledge entails the extension of power. For Foucault therefore the

application and effectiveness of knowledge is more important than truth or falsity. When knowledge and power exist together they can determine truth through practice: 'all knowledge, once applied in the real world, has real effects, and in that sense at least, becomes true' because what we know determines how we regulate, control and punish (Hall, 2003b:49). Power combined with knowledge leads to a regime of truth:

Thus it may or may not be true that single parenting inevitably leads to [youth] delinquency and crime. But if everybody believes it to be so, and punishes single mothers accordingly, this will have real consequences for both parents and children and will become 'true' in terms of its real effects, even if in some absolute sense it has never been conclusively proven (Hall, 2003b:50).

Foucault conceived of power as circulatory, not uni-directional, not centralized, but permeating all levels of society. Modern power is characterised by relations between individuals, it is the way 'in which some act on others', but the operation of power is reliant upon all players being free to act, submission to power is not 'the manifestation of consensus' (Foucault, 2002b:340). Foucault (2002b:341) argued that modern power is both productive and repressive, that is, there are benefits to submission – and punishments for resistance:

[T]he exercise of power is not a violence that sometimes hides, or an implicitly renewed consent. It operates in the field of possibilities in which the behaviour of active subjects is able to inscribe itself. It is a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains and forbids

absolutely, but it is always a way of acting upon one or more subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions.

Disciplinary mechanisms are produced by institutions and operate at the level of everyday practices through regulation and surveillance. The notion of surveillance is central; we are all subject to its gaze, the gaze may not always be upon us, we cannot tell, therefore we internalise the gaze, acting appropriately just in case. However, for Foucault, institutions are not inherently oppressive; they do not assert a 'top-down' power over subjects. Power is simultaneously repressive and productive.

Foucault shifted our attention to the everyday practices of power: the 'micro-physics'. These are applied to the body and 'different discursive formations and apparatuses divide, classify and inscribe the body differently in their respective regimes of power and 'truth'' (Hall, 2003b:50). This however is not a pre-existent natural body, rather it is a body produced within discourse and onto which meaning is inscribed.

However, some discourses are more powerful than others, for example scientific discourse. Some discourses can exclude other possible utterances; the structure of the discourse determines what can/cannot be said and this can be institutionally reinforced (Jäger, 2005:34). Consequently, power can also be 'exercised over discourses, for example, in the form of easy access to the media, unlimited access to resources, and so on' (Jäger, 2005:34). Nevertheless, discourses are 'super-individual'; they evolve through history and carry more meaning than those of which we, as individuals, are aware (Jäger, 2005:37). Individuals cannot

construct, determine or finalize a discourse because they cannot be at every moment and location in their making. Individuals do however practice discourse and discourses, as agents of knowledge, do exercise power:

Discourses exercise power as they transport knowledge on which the collective and individual consciousness feeds. This emerging knowledge is the basis of individual and collective action and the formative action that shapes reality (Jäger, 2005:38).

Discourses produce knowledge of subjects, subjects may speak but what they say is delimited by the historically specific episteme or regime of truth. Discourses produce the subject who cannot exist outside of the discourse, they must be subjected by it and submit to the rules, conventions and dispositions of power/knowledge.

When discourses coalesce: speak about the same object in similar ways and share a common strategy, they become a discursive formation. Discursive formations (or entanglements of discourses) are, again, constructive and prescriptive; they are systems of statements that construct objects which can then be spoken/ written about; they have rules that determine what can be said about these objects and how:

'Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy' (Foucault, 1998:101-2).

Consequently then, to understand discourses on youth is to attempt to understand a complex network of disparate forces (institutions, academic disciplines and individual commentators) with disparate motivations (control, elimination, empowerment, reformation, salvation), looking for causal explanations about disparate problems in disparate times and locations but which all connect around the subject of youth. The coalescence of the various discourses produced generates a powerful force. Therefore we need to understand the 'strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge' (Foucault, 1980:p196). Discourse analysis attempts to do this.

### **Discourse Analysis:**

Jäger (2005:35) describes the coalescence of various discourses thus:

The various discourses are intertwined and entangled with one another like vines or strands; moreover they are not static but in constant motion forming a 'discursive milling mass' which at the same time results in the 'constant rampant growth of discourses'. It is this mass that discourse analysis endeavours to untangle.

To disentangle this 'discursive milling mass' is a complex task. Jäger (2005:46-51) proposed a terminology to assist in analysis which I will now discuss.

## **Discourse Strands**

Jäger (2005:46-51) employs the term 'Discourse strand', to denote 'thematically uniform discourse processes'; these have synchronic and diachronic elements (Jäger, 2005:47). That is discourse strands have a history, they have evolved, and the 'possible utterances' associated with the strands have also evolved, yet at a given moment in time what is sayable is limited/finite and determined by that strand. Perhaps these could equally be thought of as dominant discourses such as economic, medical, philosophical, political and religious discourses; these can be considered discourse strands. The term discourse strand metaphorically suggests a fabric of intertwined/entangled strands that are anchored in various historical and institutional locations (imagine for instance a child's knitting bobbin). Yet none exist in isolation and each has something to say about a variety of (social) themes, consequently discourse strands are comprised from multiple 'discourse fragments'.

## **Discourse Fragments**

Texts often address a number of themes at once; 'discourse fragments' are the parts of any text which deal with a certain theme - texts are understood here as 'fabrics of knowledge that can be used as reference'; they can be written, oral, social, artistic and so on, (Lidchi, 2003:166). The theme of 'youth' is a discourse fragment and its presence across a number of texts combines to constitute a youth discourse strand. However, because there are inevitably numerous themes addressed simultaneously by a text, the discourse strand of youth can become 'entangled' with other discourse strands:

... a discursive entanglement (of strands) exists when a text clearly addresses various themes, but also when a main theme is addressed in which, however, references to other themes are made (Jäger, 2005:47).

This occurs in most texts; not least those concerning youth. There are few (if any) discourse strands that have not had something to say about youth in one way or another. Take for example an imaginary newspaper report on a crime committed by a young person: such a report is likely to contain basic references to age, gender, race, and community or social class; ontological statements are also likely; depending upon the crime reference may be made to victims (and their gender, race, and community or social class) or to property and economic costs, statements are likely from institutional representatives such as the police, politicians or clergy; furthermore pronouncements on the present and/or future state of society are probable.

### **Discourse Planes**

Newspaper reports contain texts, but newspapers constitute a 'discourse plane'. These are 'the societal locations from which speaking happens', such as science (academic), politics, media, business, and everyday life. Discourse planes do not exist in isolation either, they all produce texts in one form or another and these 'impact on one another, relate to one another, use each other and so on' (Jäger, 2005:49). That is they constantly reference each other. Newspapers rely heavily upon other discourse planes in order to speak.

## **Discursive Events**

Jäger (2005:46-51) refers to 'discursive events' as 'politically emphasised' events that influence the direction a particular discourse strand takes. Newspapers report numerous events but only some become 'discursive events' in that they provoke 'speech' from various societal locations and frequently lead to changes in the treatment and regulation of groups of individuals. As we have seen, the murder of James Bulger in 1993 was a particularly momentous discursive event, as Young (1996:111) states 'everybody talked about it'. Moreover, the murder of James Bulger was a discursive event that interrupted/disrupted our discourse on youth.

## **Discourse Position**

In analysis one also has to consider the notion of 'discourse position', this is the particular location from which individuals, groups and institutions interpret, assess and participate in discourse (Jäger, 2005:49). One's 'discourse position' results from the ways in which we have experienced: been involved, subjected and 'knitted into' various discourses. Discourse positions can 'belong to the general knowledge of a population in a rough form' (Jäger, 2005:50). The same applies to institutions such as the media. Moreover, within dominant discourse, discourse positions lean towards homogeneity:

Within the paramount discourse there can of course be various positions which, however, can agree in principle about not putting in doubt the ruling economic system. Discourse positions which deviate can frequently be allocated to more or less stringent opposing discourse. This does not rule out the fact that opposing discursive and fundamentally oppositional discourse elements can be subversively introduced into the hegemonial discourse (Jäger, 2005:50).

The way that discourse strands intertwine in a given society leads to a 'societal discourse' though never entirely homogeneous it dominates nonetheless. Further, a 'societal discourse' is unlikely to be unique; it will be entangled with other global discourses. Once heterogeneous, global discourses are simultaneously becoming more homogenous and polarized (i.e. the west versus the east) (Jäger, 2005:50).

### **Dispositive**

The dispositive can be understood as the institutions in which discourses are realized and where non-discursive practices are performed, schools, prisons or clinics are good examples. Jäger, (2005:41) argues that for Foucault the discursive and non-discursive were 'linked' through the dispositive. Foucault (1978 quoted in Jäger, 2005:39-40) proposed that dispositives have a strategic function; that they are a response to an 'urgency' at a given point in history. Jäger, (2005:41) sums up Foucault's position:

... an urgency emerges and an existing dispositive becomes precarious; for this reason a need to act results and the social and hegemonial forces which are confronted with it assemble the elements which they can obtain in order to encounter this urgency, that is speech, people, knives, cannons, institutions, and so on in order to mend the ... urgency which has arisen.

Jäger (2005:41) highlights the interrelation: the above elements (i.e.: speech, people, etc.) are connected/bonded by a common strategic purpose and realized through non-discursive practices: 'the non-discursive is not opposite to the discursive as if one were dealing with two different planes because there is

nothing societal that is determined outside the discursive' (Laclau, 1981, cited in Jäger, 2005:43).

For Jäger (2005:56-61) the dispositive is comprised of discursive practices (by which knowledge is transported), non-discursive practices (the actions prescribed by knowledge but that also perpetuate and disseminate knowledge) and the manifestations/materializations in which the above are represented. For example, prior to the mid-nineteenth-century discursive knowledge dictated harsh punishment to discipline wayward children, loss of freedom and hard labour were the non-discursive practices applied; and the prison was the dispositive of the knowledge and practices. In the late nineteenth-century the ascendancy of alternative discourses dictated that prisons and harsh punishment were not suitable to discipline the young. Rather it was thought the young could be educated out of their ways; new disciplinary mechanisms and practices developed, and new institutions, such as reform schools and industrial schools, became the dispositives. As such Youth Justice is a dispositive: 'the concrete context in which three knowledge aspects work in connection' (Jäger, 2005:60).

Moreover, Griffin (1993) conducted a synchronic critical analysis of 'the discourses through which 'youth' and 'adolescence' were constructed' in academic research during the 1980s (1993:4). I will now discuss this research and will highlight some of discourses Griffin revealed.

## **Christine Griffin: Representations of youth:**

Griffin (1993) highlighted the hegemonic nature of youth research: the ways power relations are mystified, and how many discourses present in the academic literature reviewed served to 'construct, marginalize, silence and reproduce certain concepts and arguments within particular structural relations of domination' (1993:7). Griffin's (1993) focus was not limited to sociology; but she distinguished between what she termed mainstream and radical perspectives; the mainstream is characterized by a:

Search for putative causes of specific constructed social problems, the tendency to use the victim-blaming thesis<sup>1</sup> and to represent certain groups or individual young people as 'deviant', 'deficient', or otherwise inadequate. Mainstream analyses also tend to psychologize inequalities, obscuring structural relations of domination behind a focus on individual 'deficient' working-class young people and/or young people of colour, their families or cultural backgrounds (Griffin, 1993:199).

Alternatively, radical perspectives refuse the search for causation (which is obviously the social system) and concentrate instead on the perceived 'social problems' as 'individual or cultural practices ... of resistance, defence and/or survival' (1993:199).

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<sup>1</sup> The victim-blaming thesis 'operates to apportion blame for conditions of exploitation and oppression to those who occupy subordinated positions, whether this is attributed to the supposedly 'inadequate' characteristics of individuals, 'deviant' family forms or 'deprived' cultures' (Griffin, 1993, p34).

Griffin's (1993) focus was on the 'sets of rhetorical connections through which certain arguments about (certain groups of) young people are produced, and through which (certain groups of) young people are presented as deviant, deficient, perverted or resistant' (1993:8). Consequently, the research reviewed did not tell us how it felt to be young in the 1980s but how youth were represented (1993:25).

Griffin (1993) identified a variety of key<sup>2</sup> discourse strands, the majority of which originated within mainstream research. These were seen to operate in isolation or with other discourses in mutual reinforcement/ entanglement (whether or not they cohered). I will now summarize these discourses.

### **The Education and Training Discourse**

This discourse constructs specific young people as deficient; generally those who are working-class and/or black. This deficiency can be value or ability oriented (i.e.: unwilling or unable to appreciate the benefits of education), and can be at the individual, family or cultural level. Wherever the deficiency is located, remedial programmes are prescribed. The discourse strand of education and training has woven its way through both the centuries and discourses on youth. It is frequently apparent in research on a variety of social 'problems' and the prescribed solutions, so unemployment is explained in terms of an individual's 'employability' (or lack of it), rather than structural job shortages. Training programmes (dispositives) are devised and implemented to compensate for this lack of employability. Drug misuse, binge drinking, smoking, obesity and teenage pregnancy are explained in

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<sup>2</sup> Griffin identifies others that are not expanded upon here.

terms of ignorance, that is individuals are ignorant to the consequences of their actions and require enlightenment to 'get the message through'. Criminals are ignorant of the harm they do to others and so must learn this. Moreover, the discourse of education and training is apparent in many government schemes and, as the origins of deficiency are not always located at the level of the individual but at their deficient families and cultural backgrounds, education is often directed here via parenting classes and community programmes etc. Sure Start is a recent dispositive.

### **The Clinical Discourse**

Here specific young people are constructed as 'abnormally' psychologically troubled 'usually in terms of diagnostic criteria laid down in standardized professional systems' (Griffin, 1993:200). The 'abnormal' is important since some 'trouble' is seen as inevitable in adolescence (see discourse of development below). This discourse may allude to specific learning difficulties and/or behavioural problems (e.g. ADHD, ego-impaired), however,

This 'psychological disturbance' is generally attributed to 'poor socialization', since 'troubled youth' are not necessarily blamed for their 'delinquency': they are frequently represented as passively subject to conditions of 'deprivation'. A 'cure' is seen to be theoretically possible, mainly via various therapeutic interventions (Griffin, 1993:114).

In the clinical discourse, individual and collective responses to 'conditions not of their own making' (however understandable) are psychologized and likened to

diseases which are manifested in various disorders to be treated with therapeutic interventions:

The 'problems' to be 'treated' under this psychological, clinical and psychiatric regime include 'homosexuality', 'promiscuity' (i.e. an excess of heterosexuality directed at 'inappropriate' targets), 'teenage pregnancy', the effects of divorce on children, 'acting-out behaviours' and/or aggressive 'conduct disorders' of various kinds. 'Treatment' is equally likely to be instigated, especially for young women, working-class and young people of colour, if they are deemed to be 'at risk' by welfare agencies and mental health professionals. Once the boundary lines have been drawn around 'normality', 'maturity' and 'deviance', young people who are seen as deviant or at risk of becoming deviant can be identified and 'treated'. The blame for youthful deviance is frequently laid at the door of their families (especially mothers), and techniques and theories of family therapy have played a central role in this enterprise (Griffin, 1993:178).

### **The Consumption and Leisure Discourse**

In this discourse certain young people are viewed as particularly malleable to the pressures of consumption with a host of bad influences identified such as producers of youth goods, advertising, a variety of media (film, music, computer games, internet) and the behaviour of certain celebrities. Constructed as vulnerable and defiant, knowing and fickle at once, certain young people are seen to make abnormal/ inappropriate lifestyle choices which result in deviant/ diseased practices/ misuse of leisure time such as substance misuse, binge drinking and, in the extreme, criminality and promiscuous sexuality.

This discourse prescribes the control of such youth in the form of leisure facilities (Sunday schools and youth clubs can be seen as a dispositive), supervised leisure pursuits (sport being highly recommended for young men to channel their 'natural', aggressive energies), through to curfews. The educational discourse is brought in via health education campaigns (drug, alcohol and STIs being most obvious). In extreme cases the clinical discourse will come into play, here therapy/ counselling is advocated.

### **The Criminality Discourse**

This discourse constructs certain young people as prone to delinquency and deviance but it is gender, race and class specific. Working-class and black young men are seen as particularly prone to deviance which is then constructed in criminalized ways. The criminality discourse prescribes judicial punishment/correction. However, there is a 'particularly close discursive constellation' (entanglement) between this discourse and the clinical and education discourses and they are 'frequently used in concert, drawing on each other in a pattern of mutual reinforcement' (Griffin, 1993:201).

Once a young person's actions have been criminalized other discourses may be employed to explain and prescribe. For example, under recent legislation truancy has been increasingly criminalized; this so-called criminality may be explained in terms of inadequate parental discipline, therefore the solutions lie in either punishing parents (effectively criminalizing them) via fines and/or imprisonment (criminality discourse); educating parents through parenting classes (discourse of education and training), or treating the parents and offspring via family therapy

(clinical discourse). Of course the example of truancy can be contained solely within the clinical discourse via labels such as 'school refuser' or 'school phobic'.

Moreover, other discourses construct the causes of criminality along the lines of biological determinism or 'abnormal' consumption/use of leisure time. Either way the treatment: control, punishment, therapy, education, is determined by the discourse employed to construct and speak about the object.

### **The Discourse of Dependence**

Here certain young people are constructed as incorrectly dependent, as opposed to correctly dependent on family. In this discourse welfare is not seen as a system of egalitarian distribution nor a safety net, rather welfare dependency is seen as threat to social order: dependency not poverty is the cause of the underclass. This discourse echoes the 'familiar set of complaints centred on the demoralizing effects of indiscriminate charity and fears of a growing mass of pauperised scroungers' highlighted by Pearson (1983:128).

The discourse of dependence appeared in mainstream analyses on 'young people, sexuality and family life'; especially in research on young women who were seen to be at risk of becoming welfare dependent due to the supposed incentive to single parenthood provided by the welfare system (Griffin 1993:189). Financial independence through the withdrawal or reduction of benefits to young people, means testing, and welfare to work schemes such as YTS or New Deal is prescribed here. Pulling on the discourse of consumption and leisure vouchers and/or loans replace cash payments in order to ensure responsible consumption.

The irony here of course is that young people have become more dependent, and for longer, on family. Where this is not an option young people are particularly vulnerable. Further, the use of vouchers precludes responsible consumption: shopping around for the best deals.

### **Discourse of Disaffection**

This discourse pervades research on youth from schooling, employment, and criminality to leisure. However, disaffection 'marks a particular danger, since it signifies a youthful disillusion with the key institutions and practices of adult society, notably the education system, waged work and family life' (Griffin, 1993:201).

Such disillusionment, especially when coupled with unemployment or truancy, is seen to result in young people having too much unstructured and unsupervised free time and too little respect for societal institutions. In mainstream accounts this inevitably means that disaffected young people are at risk of criminality. Again it is working-class and black young men who are identified and constructed as in need of structure and supervision/surveillance, this is seen clearly in the unrelenting calls for national service (Griffin, 1993:86-7).

Disaffection is heavily criminalized as a result of this leap to delinquency, with punishment/rehabilitation/correction being prescribed as a cure to be administered by social, probation and police workers. Further, disaffection is a key concept in research and policy aimed at youth; it is identified as a dangerous pathological condition and utilized to explain a host of behaviours. In mainstream research

attempts to understand the 'disaffection' are directed at the 'disaffected' rather than the institutions from which they are disaffected, critical researchers are more likely to see disaffection as an appropriate response to societal structures that are not in their interests: disaffection is re-theorised as resistance.

### **Discourse of Development**

Here certain young people are seen as 'problematic' in that they deviate from adolescent 'normality'. Normality is presented as natural development towards adulthood: monogamous heterosexuality. The concept of adolescence is central to this discourse and its strength lies in its recourse to biological determinism. Rose (1999:146-154) highlighted the 'gaze of the psychologist' in developmental discourse; children were not compared to each other but to an abstract, rationalized and historically specific (raced and classed) ideal. Such processes of classification were not merely technical aids to assessment, for in the power knowledge nexus such ideas rapidly circulated and became authoritative.

Thus this discourse views youth 'problems' as disruptions to normal development. Teenage pregnancy and unemployment amongst young men, for instance, 'undermine social, ideological and economic pressures which ease young people into 'normal' (hetero) sexuality and family life', any alternatives to heterosexual monogamy are constructed as deviant; such disruptions generate 'moral concern and even distaste' (Griffin, 1993:91-2). So whilst the discourse of development defines normality by identifying the normal path to adulthood it simultaneously 'defines any deviance from these norms as a 'problem' which must be explained,

constructing 'deviants' as individuals to be dealt with, punished or helped' (Griffin, 1993:171).

The clinical and disaffection discourse must always contain this discourse in that some level of psychological trouble and rebelliousness is seen as normal in adolescence. The degree of rebelliousness and troubledness must be carefully demarcated with disaffection being seen as that which is 'a threat to social order'.

### **The Sexual Deviance Discourse**

This discourse is heavily gendered; in general it constructs (certain) young women as actively deviant or passively victimized, this was seen most clearly in research on prostitution where young women were represented as either precocious criminal or innocent passive victim 'depending on their class, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds' (Griffin, 1993:124). Indeed, as we have seen 'sexuality is one of the primary sites around which female deviance is constructed, and the search for causes of such 'deviance' frequently leads to family life' (Griffin, 1993:141). Where heterosexual promiscuity is naturalized/ normalized in young men the opposite is true for heterosexual and lesbian young women as well as homosexual young men (i.e. in the literature promiscuity is normal for boys unless they are gay, then they're treated similarly to girls).

Teenage pregnancy: 'what the mainstream literature refers to as 'unplanned teenage pregnancy', is a main concern, especially amongst working-class and young women of minority ethnicity because, Griffin argues, it represents a 'crisis of control over promiscuous youth' (1993, 142). Young women are focussed

upon not simply because they have babies, but also because the transition to marriage is 'crucial to the patriarchal control of female sexuality and fertility'.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a proliferation of texts on teenage pregnancy; though superficially benevolent such texts located the 'problem' in 'young women's 'deficient' cultural backgrounds or 'inadequate' knowledge'. Fathers were noticeably absent from this literature:

With the spotlight fixed on young women who are usually poor, working class, Black and single. They are frequently portrayed as inadequate, deviant, ignorant, deprived and/or promiscuous, as are their families of origin. Such young women are berated as the children of 'inadequate' parents, and as likely to make 'inadequate' parents themselves in a familiar set of stories of deprivation and deficiency (Griffin, 1993:164).

The prescriptions emanating from this discourse are greatly influenced by other discourses but will generally involve protection, control, education or rehabilitation (usually with reference to the clinical and education discourses). In mainstream explanations for teenage pregnancy the causes are: i Ignorance of contraception, ii Promiscuity, iii 'Cynical manipulation of the welfare system' (Griffin, 1993:191). Such explanations determine the prescriptions.

In the development discourse teenage pregnancy is constructed as a 'a consequence of uncontrolled adolescent [hetero]sexuality' and therefore more control/surveillance is required (Griffin, 1993:172). However, adolescence is distinctly sexualised due to its focus on hormonal and physiological change.

Further, as an age stage, adolescence has become highly medicalized and part of

the clinical discourse where the 'problem' of sexual deviance is located in individual psychologies that must be treated via therapy, counselling and, due to the causal explanation of inadequate parenting, family therapy. Though family therapy diverts attention away from individuals it has 'frequently involved the substitution of victim-blaming for mother-blaming' (Griffin, 1993:179). Moreover, the identification of dysfunctional families has 'pathologized working-class and black family forms' (Griffin, 1993:179).

In order to treat the dysfunction some notion of a healthy family must be constructed and advanced; as dysfunctional families are pathological families specialists are required to educate and guide them towards the ideal. A key element of the education discourse is the supposed ignorance of and inappropriate attitudes to contraception, sexuality and parenthood in young women, especially those who are working-class and/or black. Here sex education is prescribed. Alternatively, the dependency discourse advocates the withdrawal of welfare support, welfare to work schemes (such as new deal for lone parents) or mother and baby hostels. This discourse has been far more influential in the US than in the UK.

Griffin (1993) identified a variety of discourse strands entangled within discourses of youth; and though the majority of discourses emanated from the mainstream perspective alternative discourses were also present. In terms of teenage pregnancy for instance, feminist accounts varied; ranging from those that saw pregnancy as a consequence of sexual inequality, to those identifying young women as victims, through to those that pointed to a coincidental 'crisis in

patriarchal or sex/gender systems', and those who saw sexual activity as 'assertive acts of resistance'. Indeed, the discourse of resistance was very popular in radical accounts, it challenged the victim-blaming apparent in mainstream analyses and viewed the 'problems' associated with marginal youth as 'normal' reactions in an unjust society.

All of the above discourses were heavily gendered, classed and raced in their application to specific young people: working-class and black young men being identified as particularly at risk by all of the mainstream discourses except the discourse of sexual deviance where young women became the focus. However, and despite the reliance on biological determinism, explanations rarely remain within individuals immune from societal influences, rather young people's habitus<sup>3</sup> is constantly referenced, advanced as an explanation and then pathologised by the majority of discourses which mutually reinforced each other.

Further, the dichotomised vision of youth that is presented within mainstream research is striking. Young people are generally designated to one opposition or another (good/bad, law-abiding/delinquent, vulnerable/knowning, victim/perpetrator); they are rarely potentially both. This clearly illustrates the tradition we have inherited 'with cultural weight' (Young, 1996:139). The contemporary employment of these discourses identified by Griffin (1993) will

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<sup>3</sup> 'Habitus' as used here comes from Bourdieu: 'The habitus – embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presences of the whole past of which it is the product' (Bourdieu, 1994:100). We live our lives, class, race, sexuality and gender through habitus. It is a disposition, a feel for the game, a second sense which inclines people to act or react in certain ways, it generates differing patterns of thought and behaviour. It is not a conscious thing, nor is it determining. Habitus is inculcated, structured, durable, generative and transposable.

become very apparent as we go on to discuss media representations of young people.

Moreover, in the above section I have discussed Foucault's concept of discourse and Jäger's (2005) terminology for discourse analysis. I then went on to summarize Griffin's (1993) review of academic literature in the 1980s. We have seen that:

- Discourses are involved in defining and producing objects of knowledge, governing what can be said about them and influencing ways to regulate their practices. Discourses are descriptive and prescriptive.
- Meaning is constructed within and by discourse and therefore we can only understand meaning by submitting to the rules of the discourse.
- The extension and application of knowledge involves an extension of power, and the co-existence of power and knowledge can produce 'truth'.
- Power is simultaneously productive and repressive: 'it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains and forbids absolutely' (Foucault (2000b:341)).
- Classification produces 'bodies'; it discursively produces types of individual. Individuals may speak but their words will be delimited by the discourse.
- Disciplinary mechanisms regulate the behaviour of individuals through language and surveillance.

Further, I have elaborated upon Jäger's (2005) and Griffin's (1993) approach to discourse analysis. I will now utilize the above to introduce an initial analysis of newspaper articles about young people from the first half of 2005.

### **Initial Analysis:**

This research was data led rather than issue based; it did not start out to analyse a particular aspect of youth (such as representations of youth crime). It was hoped that significant themes would arise from the data. Further, in order to gain a range of perspectives three newspapers were chosen for analysis: The Guardian, The Daily Mail, and The Daily Mirror. In Jäger's (2005) terms, newspapers represent a discourse plane, they are powerful institutions from which speaking happens. Further, each newspaper holds a specific discourse position.

As we saw in the introduction, The Guardian was selected as a 'upmarket' broadsheet known for its liberal stance and for its popularity amongst middle-class professionals employed in 'social welfare' occupations; The Daily Mirror was selected as the only 'popular' left-wing tabloid with a predominantly working-class target readership; The Daily Mail was selected as representative of a mid-market, right wing tabloid whose readership is generally perceived to be middle-class.

Moreover, in order to reveal the dominant discourse fragments in newspaper reporting of youth Lexisnexis was used to search for articles containing the

keywords: youth, adolescen\*, teenage\*<sup>4</sup>, young people and young adult. This resulted in 9385 hits of which 1885 were downloaded for analysis (See chapter one).

Initial analysis involved reading these articles and coding them according to the main discourse fragments (themes). As stated in the introduction this left me with the overwhelming impression that young people go to school and in their spare time they are in trouble or causing trouble, but why was I left with this impression? Hopefully what follows will help to answer this question.

I must stress however that what follows is not a content analysis; this was not possible. Due to the extended time frame of this research (six months) the LexisNexis search returned too many articles (9385) for meaningful analysis to be undertaken. This demanded I be selective, and because I wanted to examine how youth in general were represented a number of types of article were omitted: those reporting celebrity or sporting young people, those from the travel pages, entertainment listings, reviews, and letters and those that used the term youth as an adjective. Consequently my dataset of 1885 articles is selective; it is representative of newspaper reporting of youth in general but it does not contain all of the articles referencing young people in the above newspapers in the first half of 2005.

Coding articles according to themes proved to be more difficult than expected. They were illustrative of the ‘discursive milling mass’ described above and

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<sup>4</sup> i.e.: adolescence/adolescent, teenage/teenager/teenaged.

frequently addressed a number of discourse fragments at once (Jäger, 2005). For example articles that reported an incident or crime involving youth were frequently accompanied by multiple references to other crimes. These were predominantly those crimes Reiner et al (2003) termed 'contextual': that is unrelated but indicative of a trend (thus feeding the impression that individual deviant acts are part of a general trend, or crime youth wave). However, such journalistic practices were evident in non-crime related articles also and there was frequent inter-textual referencing. This illustrates what Cohen (2005:39) identified as an 'it's not only this' thesis.

Through a process of free association, statements conveyed that the problem is not just the Mods and Rockers but a whole pattern in which pregnant schoolgirls, CND marches, beatniks, long hair, contraceptives in slot machines, purple hearts and smashing up telephone kiosks were all inextricably intertwined.

In Cohen's example the discourse fragment of disorder could have been contained within a law and order discourse strand but through the process of inter-textual referencing and 'free association' it became entangled with the discourse strands of sexuality, politics and morality.

Furthermore, while some articles attended to youth directly, in others they were merely referenced. For example, a newspaper article about the general election might have included discussion on 'party' policies and the effects of such policies on particular groups in society. Such attention to outcomes resulted in young people being identified directly (e.g. through education policy) or indirectly (e.g. through welfare benefits targeted at families). Consequently, in many articles the

discourse fragment on youth accounted for no more than a sentence or two in the articulation of another broader theme (such as the party politics example above).

In order to handle such complexity each article was coded according to a main theme and up to two other themes covered, though it may have covered more. Therefore my coding restricted each article to three themes. Consequently then, any statistics that follow are representative of the main themes covered by articles in this dataset but do not relate to the number of times a theme was referenced in the above newspapers in the first half of 2005.

**Dominant Discourse Fragments**

The following table summarizes the main discourse fragments by which young people were discussed in this dataset. They are indicative of what counted as news in relation to young people in the first half of 2005. The table shows that articles referring to young people did so mainly in the context of criminality/anti-social behaviour: 43%<sup>5</sup>, education: 13%, or health: 8%. This goes some way to explaining why I was left with the overwhelming impression that young people go to school and in their spare time they are in trouble or causing trouble.

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<sup>5</sup> The proportion was 11% higher than found by Mori (2004), but this might be a result of my omission of stories about ‘celebrity youth’ (Neustatter, Porteous and Colston in Muncie, 2004).

Themes	Articles	%
<b>Crime/ Anti-social behaviour</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Health</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>8</b>
Accidental death	79	4
Pregnancy	63	3
Futures	54	3
Parenting	48	3
(Un)employment	43	2
Consumers	43	2
Housing	38	2
Body image	33	2
Suicide	29	2
Voting/ politics	25	1

In newspaper reporting of education young people were noticeable by their absence. Very few articles included attention to specific young people; in the few that did so young people tended to be discussed in terms of 'special needs'. Education articles leaned towards policy discussions; in which the concept of youth was given an abstract quality similar to that found in Human Resource Management and where individuals become categorical units (i.e. stage two pupils) within the machine. Young people's voices were absent.

In terms of the health related stories the main media concerns were the effects on health of young people's diet (29 articles), illegal drugs (24), alcohol (18) and sexual behaviour (18). The other 56% of health related stories involved general health matters such as meningitis and mumps, or articles about individual battles against illness.

Only seventy-two articles could be identified as 'positive' about young people. As mentioned earlier reports of sporting and celebrity young people were omitted from the sample and this probably reduced the number of positive stories (such as those identified by Porteous and Colston 1980, and Neustatter, 1998 as 'kids are brilliant' stories).

Before attending to the predominant theme of criminality/anti-social behaviour I wish to attend briefly to differences in reporting, firstly in relation to the selected newspapers and then to age and gender.

### **Variations in Themes by Newspaper**

Proportionally The Guardian reported fewer crime stories (23% of articles), far more education stories (28%) and produced more critical stories and articles presenting young people in a positive way (both 8%) than the tabloid newspapers. The Daily Mirror emerged as the most negative reporter of young people with 52% of its articles on youth being crime related (over twice the proportion in the Guardian and 12% more than in The Mail). Only 6% of articles were concerned with education and only 1% of its articles were critical or positive. Having said this The Daily Mail came a close second in negative reporting but did manage

over three times as many positive stories than The Daily Mirror. The following table illustrates.

Theme	Guardian n.515		Mail n.767		Mirror n.602	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
Crime	115	23	306	40	312	52
Education	145	28	75	10	33	6
Critical	40	8	7	1	5	1
Positive	41	8	24	3	7	1

It is perhaps unsurprising however, that The Guardian reports on Education far more than the others due to its Tuesday education supplement and it is very likely that many positive and critical articles came from this or the society supplement. Social policy discussions are common in The Guardian due to its discourse position; this, in general, maintains that ‘social problems’ can be rectified through professional interventions. The Guardian education supplement runs articles on ‘good practice’ that include descriptions of positive outcomes.

In the case of The Daily Mirror the greater proportion of crime reports was largely due to its ‘Reclaim our Streets’ campaign in which anti-social behaviour (ASB) was highlighted. In many ways when The Guardian and The Mail report on ASB it is somewhat anthropological: an attempt to explain the strangeness of other worlds. In The Daily Mirror there is a sense of it dealing with its readers’ everyday life concerns, their reports speak to an entirely different ‘us’.

## **Age and Gender**

Reporting was very imprecise about both the age and gender of the young people discussed. In terms of an aged definition, many articles discussed young people in non-age specific ways, such as, children, teenagers, or youths; 530 articles were non-specific about age. For example, initial reports of a crime may have identified a 'group of teenagers' or 'a group of youths, some as young as nine', taken literally the first points to young people aged thirteen to nineteen, the second implies a much larger age range, from age nine to the end of youth (whenever that might be). As such, the newspapers attributed the term youth to children, teenagers and young adults up to thirty years old.

This perhaps reflects the difficulty of attempting to set the age limits of youth discussed in chapter three. More interestingly, however, the nature of the report determined to great extent whether the term youth was applied at all, with 'youth' predominant in negative stories (i.e.: crime, immorality etc) and children, teenager, young women/men more likely in stories unrelated to crime.

In newspaper reporting then, the term 'youth' was associated with 'problem' behaviours (the only exception was sport reporting where youth meant young). In terms of age specific articles 527 were about the age group 11-15; 677 ages 16-21 and 75 aged over 22. The remaining 76 articles were about adults who were connected to young people in some way, such articles included adult perpetrators of crime against youth, adult victims of youth crime, or specific individuals 'who stood up to them'.

Over half (967) of the articles were non-gender specific, there were 442 articles about young women and 475 about young men. In many instances non-gender specific articles were about both males and females, reporting on education is a good example. It would be a mistake however to assume that all non-gender specific articles were about both. Crime reporting is again a good example; if there was evidence to suggest girls/young women had been present this was explicitly stated and the groups were categorized as 'teenagers':

THREE teenagers ... two boys aged 17 and a 16-year-old girl  
(jan26mail3)

A group of 19 teenagers has been arrested after a man died of his injuries ... Two girls and two boys, aged 14 and 15, were arrested yesterday on suspicion of murder and are being questioned by detectives. The 15 others, all aged between 14 and 18 and including five girls, have been released on police bail after being arrested on suspicion of violent disorder and assault (apr30guard2).

This suggests that articles describing a 'gang of youths' almost always referred to boys/young men (though I did not count these as gender specific articles). Consequently, the term youth was predominantly applied to young men and thus, in newspaper reporting, the term 'youth' was utilized to signify problematic young men.

### **Themes by Age:**

Criminal activities dominated in reports related to those aged eleven to fifteen years (29%) and sixteen to twenty-one years (54%) but were less dominant in reports about those aged over twenty-one years (13%). Education was also a main theme for the under twenty-twos: 29% for eleven to fifteen years and 11% for sixteen to twenty-one years but accounted for only 5% (perhaps unsurprisingly) in reports on over twenty-ones. In reporting on those aged over twenty-one the greatest proportion of reports were related to housing (21%); this involved reportage of those unable to get on the housing ladder or those 'kidults' who remained in the parental home (too long). Articles related to graduate employment and unemployment accounted for 16%. And 12% of articles on the over twenty-ones reported them as victims of crime.

### **Themes by Gender Young women**

When articles solely about young men and women were analysed separately different discourses come to the fore. In articles about individual young women the discourse fragment of crime still accounts for the greatest proportion (44.2%), however, within these crime reports young women emerge as the victims far more often than the perpetrators of crime with 67%<sup>6</sup> of crime articles reporting them as either murder (33%) or rape (22%), victims, this was a lower proportion than that reported by Mori (2004).

The sexual behaviour of young women themselves was of great concern however, with 14% of articles solely about young women related to pregnancy and 8% to

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<sup>6</sup> The remaining 10% reported them as 'other' victims of, for example, theft, assault, 'happy slapping'

their sexual behaviour. There was also a high incidence of reports about parenting (11%) associated with young women, such articles tended to be about either teenage mothers or the young women's mothers. The following table illustrates the themes in relation to young women:

Themes	Young women	
	n.442	%
Crime	186	44
Murder victim	62	15
Pregnancy	57	14
Parenting	46	11
Rape victim	40	10
Sexual behaviour	35	8
Body image	29	7
Health	28	7

I intend to analyse this data on young women in more depth in chapter seven. At this point it is worth highlighting that the content of articles on young women frequently employed the discourses of sexual deviance, education, dependency and consumption and leisure identified by Griffin (1993); by which young women were represented as particularly promiscuous, ignorant/irrational, manipulative, or as vulnerable to certain threats/bad influences.

Moreover, young women were represented in newspaper reporting in relation to a series of problems; these circulated, by and large, around their problematic sexuality and/or their irresponsible consumption. Within this young women were

constructed as at once dangerous (to themselves at least) and vulnerable. Once constructed in this dichotomised way the solutions that followed were similarly constructed along the lines of control and protection.

**Themes by Gender Young Men**

Crime related stories dominated in newspaper reporting on young men and accounted for almost three-quarters of articles (74%). The next significant theme was accidental death, which accounted for 10%. Other discourse fragments were present but in low numbers, such as education, health and suicide (there were fourteen suicide reports). The following table details criminal reports:

<b>Crime</b>	<b>Young men n.353</b>	<b>%</b>
Murderer	153	43
Anti-social behaviour	45	13
Murder victim	28	8
Other victim	22	6
Gun related	16	5
Rape	15	4

Due to the general predominance of crime reports it seems illogical to attend to this theme solely in relation to young men. I will now proceed therefore to give an overview of reporting on crime and antisocial behaviour.

## **Crime and Antisocial Behaviour:**

Crime stories accounted for the greatest proportion of articles related to young people in this research; this might explain why previous analyses of newspaper representations have concentrated upon crime reporting. In this section I will provide an overview of 620 crime related articles (183 articles were not included due to their brevity, i.e. brief reports and short fragments of text).

These reports revealed young people to be both the perpetrators and victims of a variety of crimes, both causing trouble and in trouble. Due to the consistent referencing of 'contextual crimes' numerous crimes and/or victims were evident in a significant proportion of articles; this resulted in the number of references being substantially greater than the number of articles. Nevertheless, over three-quarters of all crime reports were related to either murder or anti-social behaviour, the following table illustrates:

<b>Crime Articles</b>	<b>n. 620</b>	<b>%</b>
Murderer	171	28
Anti social behaviour	167	27
Murder victim	144	23
Other <sup>7</sup>	104	16
Assault	84	14
Rape victim	40	6
Car crime	27	4
Victim of crime	26	4
Manslaughter	23	4
Theft	20	3
Rapist	15	2
Gun related	14	2
Violent disorder	13	2
Drug related	8	1

Before proceeding to discuss Anti-social behaviour and murder I wish to highlight that most of the victims identified in the above table were young women. Young women were reported as rape victims in forty articles (though this number increases if those who were murdered were included). Nineteen reports were of rape trials and eleven were police pleas for witnesses. Most were brief and

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<sup>7</sup> This category 'other' is made up of a variety of reports, and included attention to crimes that did not figure highly, for example arson (3 reports). Some were related to adult perpetrators of crime where youth were referenced. However, many of these involved general discussions about youth crime, such as those related to the release of 'crime figures', or related to political posturing and opportunism in the lead up to the general election – e.g. speeches by then conservative leader Michael Howard featured highly here and in which he promised to support decent, hard-working people from 'Yob' culture.

descriptive; very few interpretative, though the effects for the young women were spelled out in one trial report and in two retrospective narrative accounts from rape victims (May28guard4, June27mail3).

The Daily Mail tended towards more detailed accounts; this was especially the case where the rapist could be constructed in one dimensional terms (i.e. as a sexual predator or pervert Mar25mail5) or the rape could be taken to symbolize something else, such as faults in the criminal justice system which allowed criminals to go free: 'Thug raped a girl of 14 after being let out of jail early' (Feb24mail2) and the twelve year old 'failed by the justice system' (June03mail2); such articles contained opinion statements from law and order campaigners calling for stiffer sentencing.

Rape also symbolized the dangers of new technology, the Internet or mobile phones for example. There were a number of reports on internet predators for instance. In one report on the rape of an eleven year-old recorded on a mobile phone, the rape was described as part of 'the scourge of happy slapping'; the attack was understood as 'the latest in a series of appallingly violent incidents' (June18mail1). The report references another 'happy slap' attack (contextual crime), and then concludes by quoting a Chief Superintendent's view on feral children for whom 'The criminal justice system holds no fear'. In this way, an event of rape was transposed into a problem of unruly youth in general and, by extension, used to symbolize a lack of respect for authority and institutions of law and order in society. It was understood through a discourse of disorder rather than of masculinity.

In The Daily Mirror most reports were brief and of the ‘police appeal’ type. When opinions were given rapists were constructed as ‘sex fiends’ and ‘psychos’ thus pulling upon a discourse of psychological pathology. The Guardian reported very few rape stories, though it included one article by guest columnist Vera Baird QC headlined ‘Rampant violence against women demands a new approach’ (Mar02guard2). Here rape was discussed as a social problem. Generally however, rape was represented as the actions of pathological individuals and nothing to do with attitudes towards women, structural inequality, or problem masculinity; no moral panic was constructed around this systematic abuse of young women; one article was not enough.

### **Anti-social Behaviour**

Burney (2005:98) argues that ‘the media have been particularly keen to repeat stories about’ the anti-social behaviours of the young’ and this would appear to be the case here where one-quarter of crime articles were related to anti-social behaviour (ASB). Indeed, incidents of ASB are easily translated into morality tales by which the fundamental desirability of social order is conveyed.

Under the label of ASB, however, a host of behaviours were described; indeed the concept of ASB conflates a range of behaviours. Whilst some behaviours were clearly examples of ‘irritating youthful behaviour’ others were equally clearly criminal acts; as Squires and Stephen (2005:3) note the ‘majority of acts now classified as ASB [were] already crimes anyway’. Anti-social behaviour ‘is deliberately defined in a particularly open-ended and flexible manner as a range of actions and behaviours’ and such a definition is celebrated for being flexible to

local concerns (Squires and Stephen, 2005:115). But it is in this context that ASB becomes Anti-Adult behaviour. In press coverage ASB was contrasted to an implied 'sociable' behaviour displayed in decent communities, the following examples illustrate:

**ASBOOM; MORE YOBS TO BE NAMED AND SHAMED**

HOME Secretary Charles Clarke today pledges a publicity blitz to name and shame yobs who hold decent communities to ransom (mar02mirror2).

**Court bans teenager from wearing hoodie**

A teenager has been banned from wearing a hooded top or cap in public for five years after terrorising residents in a Manchester estate (may27guard4).

**Reign of terror by the Asbo Twins**

Between them they have been accused of assault, smoking cannabis, abuse, and terrifying neighbours (june02mail3).

A minority of Guardian articles were critical of Anti-social Behaviour Orders. In one (apr05guard1) Matt Foot, a guest columnist, argued that 'anyone who dares to criticise antisocial behaviour orders is immediately accused of being out of touch with those being terrorised on housing estates'. His argument was later confirmed in another Guardian article:

### **Asbo chief rounds on liberal critics**

[The] director of the Home Office antisocial behaviour unit, argues that critics including "youth workers, social workers and the liberal intelligentsia" should accept there is strong public support for the sanctions in addressing "a culture of intimidation". Ms Casey called on such groups to consider the views of victims of antisocial behaviour.

"Sometimes I wish people like Asbo Concern and some of the people who write letters to the Guardian could just see it from the point of view of the people in the communities."

[...] Those who attack Asbos "are not necessarily living in the real world", she said. "(Asbo) is a byword for the country wanting something done about a guy who is 50 and looks 70 who gets gobbed on and has stuff thrown at him by a group of teenagers when he leaves the house for a night shift." (June10guard1)

An 'us' and 'them' opposition is being constructed here. We find a 'primary definer' offering an 'opinion statement' in which those 'experts' working with or concerned for disadvantaged young people are roundly condemned for being 'liberal do-gooders' who live in other worlds. Further, the 'public' is invoked; they represent the 'country' (presumably the real world). The effect of this is to suggest that those accused of ASB and those holding opinions that differ from the government's are not members of the public; they do not share in the victimization, therefore they cannot be members of this 'imagined community' (Young, 1996).

In newspaper reporting the perpetrators of ASB are quickly revealed as: 'Yobs', 'the most enduring of suitable enemies' (Cohen, 2005:viii). Analysis of this data highlighted a gradual increase in the proportion of articles applying the term 'Yob' to young people. From January to April the term 'Yob' was employed relatively evenly (4% in January, 14% in February, 10% in March and 10% in April). In May and June use of the term increased threefold (30% in May and 28% in June). This could have been representative of a 'signification spiral' and an 'amplification of deviance' (Cohen, 2005). However, there was nothing new about outrage over 'Yobs'; indeed societal reaction to the notion of the 'Yob' began long before this research.

Moreover, anti-social behaviour emerged from my data as a dominant theme in newspaper reporting on youth. Within this ASB was utilized to describe a range of 'anti-adult' behaviours perpetrated by specific individuals: 'Yobs'. Further, there was increased attention to 'Yobs' during the six months examined. It is my intention to analyse discursive representations of the 'Yob' in chapter six. In so-doing I hope to make explicit the discourses that circulated in this context, that is: what sorts of knowledge was applied and to whom. We will now discuss press reporting of murders involving young people.

## **Murder – Perpetrators and Victims**

The greatest proportion of crime articles were related to murder reports, 171 articles reported murders; 143 articles reported murder victims, however there was considerable crossover between the two; in the majority of articles on murderers the victims were also young. Approximately forty murders were reported in this sample<sup>8</sup> and twenty-eight of these involved young murder victims.

A minority of murders grabbed the newspapers' attention; the majority warranted only one or two articles and simply faded away. For instance, the murders of fourteen young women were reported, but not all were granted the same coverage (this ranged from one to fifty-seven reports). Some stories reported the murder event as 'breaking news', some reported the court trials of murders prior to this time frame; others reported both. All of the murders were tragic, however, not all of them connected to the 'news values' outlined in chapter two.

As Davies and Bourhill (2004) asserted, young victims make good copy for newspapers, especially those who are victims of their parents. None of the victims in this sample were reported as victims of their families although two reports (apr17mirror2<sup>9</sup>, apr27mirror1<sup>10</sup>) hinted that family members might be involved, neither were reported again. This would support Davies' and Bourhill's (2004) assertion that many cases of family murder are treated in a routine and brief

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<sup>8</sup> The number may be slightly higher, the figure arrived at is based upon making connections between initial, brief incident reports and later developed reports, i.e. connecting 'a youth is wanted in connection with' to 'a 17 year old was charged with'.

<sup>9</sup> Police did not believe it was a "stranger-style" attack and "There were no obvious signs of a break-in which would suggest perhaps that her attacker or attackers were known to her."

<sup>10</sup> Police were looking for a 'partner' in connection with the attack.

manner. Most victims in this data were victims of strangers, though some of the female victims were murdered by others known to them (e.g. boyfriends).

Five murders commandeered the headlines, that of Jodi Jones (her name appeared in 57 trial reports), Mary-Ann Leneghan (14 initial reports), Jeshma Raithatha (13 initial reports), Amy Williams (12 in total) and Karen Dewar (12 in total). The only male victim to gain similar attention was Kieran Rodney-Davis (9 trial reports).

The reports on the murders of Mary-Ann and Jeshma were similar to those described by Innes (2003); they were part of the police hunt for the killers and involved police and family appeals:

'Plea by uncles as fifth man is held in hunt for girl's killer' (may11guard2);

'Murderer Must Have Tricked My Daughter Into His Car' (may29mirror3).

Reports also 'tested out' particular theories and possible leads:

Did Mary Ann Meet Killer On Internet? (may11mirror1).

Chatroom inquiry by murder police (may28guard3).

Did A-level girl meet her killer in a chatroom? (may28mail4).

## **And updated police progress:**

New arrests by Mary-Ann police take total to seven  
(may12guard2).

Two Teens Held In Mary Ann Murder; Arrests After Cops Search  
Brothel (may12mirror1).

Homes of migrants searched in hunt for Jeshma's killer  
(may30mail4).

Student 'died in random attack' (June01guard1),

Arrest Is Made In Latvia After Tip-Off From British  
Detectives (june03mirror6).

An important aim in murder reports was to establish the victim as victim. In early reports, Mary-Anne was described by her father as a 'clever girl who fell into the wrong crowd'; a friend said she was 'sweet and outgoing ... She loved all her friends and everything she did she enjoyed' (may09mirror1); her school described her as 'a popular and friendly student' (may10guard6); a police officer described Mary-Anne and her friend as 'nice girls' (may10mirror1); an uncle described her as 'a normal bright 16-year-old ... She had lots of friends in all parts of the town and was always spending time with them. She did not deserve what happened to her' (may11guard2). Similar personality traits were attributed to young male victims. An early report in The Daily Mail details Jeshma:

[The] head of Claremont High, described Jeshma as a 'delightful, sensitive, caring and creative young woman and an important member of our community'. 'Jeshma will be sadly missed by all of her friends and teachers,' he said. 'As one of a very small group of students studying advanced level music Jeshma quickly established herself as a talented and committed member of the sixth form.' He went on: 'Jeshma had often expressed her desire to follow a career in the performing arts and at one time she even spoke of being a music therapist so that she could use her musical talents to help others. 'Jeshma would have been starting her final A-level examinations this week. I know she was looking forward to taking up a place at a London university to study a degree in the arts.' A schoolfriend added: 'She was always there when I needed her. She was really friendly and warmhearted. Everyone got on with her. It's incredible.'

(may26mail6).

Victims have to be constructed as 'good', 'innocent' victims of a type that readers can empathise with. Victims must be made into 'suitable' victims: 'someone who could have been and one day could be anybody' (Cohen, 2005:xi). Most readers, in this instance, are far older than the victims described, therefore a main aim of journalistic practice is to encourage empathy. This is achieved by constructing 'Angelic' victims; as Valentine (1996) has shown, most parents understand their own offspring to be innocent angels and other people's children to be dangerous, out-of-control devils. It is not my intention to imply that Mary-Anne and Jeshma were not as described above; my point is that even if they were not as described they still did not deserve to die.

Real effects result from representing victims as unilaterally 'good' and/or 'innocent'. Firstly, those murder victims who cannot be constructed in this way will inevitably be understood as somehow having deserved to be murdered, if they are reported at all. Other stereotypical constructions of youth impact here also, for instance reports on the murder of Amy Williams struggled to portray her in the ways described above, mainly because Amy, aged 14 years, was pregnant and the search for her clothing dominated early reports: 'a pink tracksuit, white T-shirt and white Kappa trainers, were missing' (jan01mirror2). In tabloid reporting Amy conformed to the stereotypical 'chavette'<sup>11</sup>: a pregnant teenager in sports clothing. Though this is irrelevant to the fact of her murder it affected reporting nevertheless, once a perpetrator was charged the story disappeared until May when all three newspapers reported a verdict (may07guard1, may07mail3, may07mirror3); no further references were made to this disturbing murder.

The second effect of reporting victims in terms of absolute 'goodness' and/or 'innocence' is that the murderer can only be understood in one-dimensional villainous terms: the murderer becomes the binary opposite of the victim; he is everything she is not. Such reporting constructs a dichotomised vision of youth.

Moreover, the trial of Luke Mitchell for the brutal murder of Jodi Jones dominated news reporting in January 2005. Luke Mitchell was referenced in 87 reports in total. Though Jodi was mentioned in many of the articles in this sample, few attempted to represent her personality. It was only after the guilty verdict that details of Jodi and her lifestyle emerged:

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<sup>11</sup> In The Collins English dictionary a Chav is a young working class person who dresses in casual sports clothing - the term is elaborated upon to include: 'chavette', a female 'chav' and the adjectives 'chavish' and 'chavtastic': designed for or suitable for 'chavs'.

It has emerged that by the age of 14 Jodi was in a sexual relationship, had mutilated herself, and was a regular cannabis user. The youngest of three children, she was brought up by her mother, now 38. Her father Jimmy had committed suicide when he was 39. It was at 13 that Jodi, now at St David's Roman Catholic High School began to experiment with the Goth look. She was also resorting to self harm. One of her diary entries reads: 'Take the knife. All your pain can be taken by one slit. Be free, be happy, just like me.' (jan22mail3).

**With such knowledge it would be difficult to construct Jodi in ways similar to Jeshma and Mary-Anne. Contrast the above version however, with that in The Daily Mirror:**

JODI Jones was a "lovely, friendly" girl with a cheeky and rebellious nature. Like most teens she was never far from the telly and movies. She loved TV's Friends and her favourite films were The Matrix and Queen of the Damned. Jodi was bright, she liked painting and poetry - but her real passion was listening to grunge music. The last images of her captured on home video show the smiling teenager mucking about and joking with friends at her home in Easthouses, Midlothian. And they are images of a young woman with her whole life ahead of her. According to those who knew her best, it was a life full of potential.

**A contradictory vision of Jodi results, that it is contradictory is not inevitable; it is entirely conceivable that Jodi could be both visions at once. This is illustrative of**

the ways in which youth have been constituted, through history and in discourse. As chapter two showed young people are attributed one characteristic: good or evil, never both. However, structural linguistics has shown that goodness cannot mean something without a concept of badness; the concepts are mutually dependent. Bauman (1994, p389) has argued that good and evil inhabit the same identity; both are possibilities. For most, the good will predominate because the conditions of their life are good: in adverse, bad conditions the other, always present but invisible face may appear. This will be discussed further in the next chapter. In The Daily Mirror article the issues raised by The Daily Mail article are left un-discussed and were simply explained away as ‘adolescent flirtations’ thus pulling upon a discourse of ‘normal’ adolescent disruption.

### **Press Reporting of the Luke Mitchell Murder trial:**

The murder trial of Luke Mitchell for the brutal murder of Jodi Jones was perfect material for newspapers as it was easily described in villainous terms and translated into a story of evil. The significant reporting features of this murder were similar to those outlined by Franklin and Petley (2004) in their analysis of the murder of James Bulger. There was indeed phenomenal coverage surrounding Mitchell’s trial and conviction, there was also a shift from description to analysis, however, unlike in the Venables and Thompson trial, the nature of childhood itself was not interrogated. This was possibly due to Mitchell being tried as a sixteen-year-old and not the fourteen-year-old who committed the crime. Moreover, there were no calls for harsh and deterrent sentencing – though The Scottish Daily Mail

could 'reveal he will be pampered during his time at Polmont Young Offenders' Institution' (jan27mail4).

Furthermore, through press coverage of the trial Mitchell was revealed as morally culpable, as a cold and calculating killer, yet in the newspaper analyses that followed there was an apparent desire to explain Mitchell's actions 'socially'. Consequently, reports attended to Mitchell's family, interests and lifestyle. There were three stages of signification: the facts of the trial, the newspaper interpretation and societal implications.

### **Reporting the Facts of The Trial**

During the trial the newspapers directly reported the presentation of evidence in court; through this a picture of the accused and his crime were constructed. At this stage reporters were restrained; they simply relayed the facts as presented, there were no opinions offered or analyses ventured. Journalists appeared to revel in reproducing accounts of the murder and Jodi's injuries however, thus feeding the 'amoral infatuation' identified by Scraton (2004, see for example jan07mail3). It was established in court that:

1. Mitchell was a heavy cannabis user and smoked '600 joints a week' (jan06mirror2);
2. The injuries inflicted upon Jodi were extreme;
3. The injuries were similar to those in 'America's notorious Black Dahlia case'<sup>12</sup> (jan07mail3);

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<sup>12</sup> Where an aspiring Hollywood actress Elizabeth Short was appallingly mutilated in 1947.

4. Rock star Marilyn Manson had painted pictures of the corpse in the Black Dahlia case (jan07mail3);
5. Mitchell owned a Marilyn Manson CD and DVD (jan07mail3);
6. Mitchell had a 'dark arts tattoo' (jan18mirror2)
7. Mitchell's mother was a liar and accomplice (jan14mail6).

Ontological statements as to the 'nature' of Mitchell (and his mother), were given by barristers in their 'summing up'; again these were reported directly. The prosecution stated:

Jodi's boyfriend 'is her cold and calculating killer' ... Mr Turnbull said it would have taken a particular kind of person to murder Jodi, then ' with calm, deliberate care' mutilate her body and finally be cold and calculating enough to remove all physical evidence of his presence from the scene. That kind of person, he said, was someone like Luke Mitchell ...

Moving on to Mitchell's dealings with the police, Mr Turnbull said there was 'not a tear, not a quiver in his voice, not an indication of upset' in the aftermath of the discovery of Jodi's body. He said the jury might have expected most 15-year-olds to be 'cowed' when arrested by detectives investigating such a serious crime. Instead, he said, Mitchell had answered their questions with 'total arrogance, anger and contempt' and had 'lied through his teeth' (jan19mail4).

LUKE Mitchell was branded a "cold, calculating killer" by the prosecution in the Jodi Jones murder trial yesterday. Advocate depute Alan Turnbull also told a jury in the High Court in Edinburgh that Mitchell, 16, "lied through his teeth" and thought he was "untouchable" (jan19mirror5).

The prosecution portrayed Mitchell as a particular type of pathological individual: angry, arrogant, cold, calculating, calm, careful, deliberate and a liar. Such personality attributes are at odds with our commonsense understanding of childhood, indeed Mitchell was shown not to behave as children would, he did not quiver or cry; he was not frightened. Therefore Mitchell could not be understood as a child and as such Mitchell was attributed adult traits and thereby status. The prosecution did however stop short of attributing 'evil' to Mitchell. The prosecution also revealed Mitchell's mother as abnormal, irresponsible, also a liar and not to be trusted.

Corrine Mitchell, he told the jury, had long since ceased to be a responsible mother. The normal parent/child relationship had so altered that Luke Mitchell was able to get anything he wanted. An indication of his mother's behaviour could be seen in her willingness to lie about her son's age so he could get a tattoo. 'It tells you the kind of person you are dealing with, what she is prepared to do,' said Mr Turnbull. 'It tells us you just can't trust her.' (jan19mail4).

In this way Mitchell's mother was also put on trial and, like Ms Venables and Ms Thompson, she was situated as abnormal; an allegory of maternal indulgence and the antithesis of the maternal archetype (see Young, 1996:124).

In the defence's summation an alternative vision of Mitchell was offered:

[Mr Findlay] said of the murder: 'It was a cruel and barbaric act and if you believe in the concept of evil in the world then it was truly an act of unspeakable evil. He said the crucial thing he learned from Mitchell is that he speaks and acts like a teenager: 'You cannot judge what he says or what he does by adult standards.' Mr Findlay said Mitchell's 'strop'py' behaviour with the police must be put into the context of what the youngster had been through. 'He's afraid, he is alone, he's in a concrete box in the police station and, months and months down the road, he is charged with murder. And yet the Crown criticises him, in effect, for not sitting there politely like a good little boy.' He said the jury must bear in mind the peculiar circumstances of trying a 16-year-old for murder. He said: 'He can get married but he can't vote, he can die in battle for his country but he can't buy a drink. He can be convicted by a jury for murder but he cannot serve on one and yet you are the jury of his peers.' (jan20mail4)

The defence attempted to reject the adult status attributed to Mitchell, instead they constructed an in-between phase of neither child nor adult but teenager, one who is no-man's land, vulnerable and afraid. This construction of 'teenager' is contrasted to the 'evil' act for which Mitchell is being tried. Thus an ambiguous

liminal status was contrasted to the un-ambiguous position attributed to Mitchell by the prosecution.

Moreover, the court constructed narrative accounts of the murder. The police actively construct narrative accounts of 'who did what to whom' (Innes, 2003:64); such narratives are the basis of the trial. Indeed, courts demand narrativity; they are another institutional context for storytelling:

Stories are always told within particular historical, institutional and interactional contexts that shape their telling, its meanings and effects. They are told with particular interests, motives and purposes in mind. Furthermore, stories are constrained by rules of performance and norms of content (Ewick and Sibley, 1995:217).

Throughout the trial the newspapers simply reported court proceedings. The court is a 'context of elicitation'; it stipulates the 'content rules' of an appropriate and successful narrative. Legal proceedings tend to favour rule-oriented litigants who are presented according to legal principles such as right/wrong, property ownership/theft and so on (Ewick and Sibley, 1995). The case for the prosecution constructed a narrative account of Mitchell along rule-oriented lines. The defence offered a more relational-oriented account in which the 'motivations, emotions, and particularistic expectations' were foregrounded (Ewick and Sibley, 1995: 207). In so-doing the defence attempted to give Mitchell's version of events coherence; the prosecution sought to undermine this by highlighting inaccuracies in Mitchell's story.

Furthermore, how a story is told is greatly influenced by context and, in the case of court trials, stories are greatly influenced by the Judge; s/he is able to delimit the detail of the testimony. On 21<sup>st</sup> January 2005, Mitchell was found guilty of murder by a majority verdict:

- 'Truly evil' youth convicted of murdering Jodi, 14 (jan22guard3).
- Jodi's killer facing life in jail (jan22mail7)
- Jodi Jones: the verdict: a truly wicked murder; Even judge is horrified by Luke (jan22mirror6)

All three newspapers reported the words of trial judge, Lord Nimmo Smith. His words constructed Mitchell as evil personified:

"You have been convicted of a truly evil murder - one of the most appalling crimes that any of us can remember - and you will rightly be regarded as wicked" (jan22guard3).

Lord Nimmo Smith, who presided over the nine-week trial in Edinburgh, told Mitchell that he would face "detention without limit of time". He said: "It lies beyond any skill of mine to look into the black depths of your mind. I can only look at what you have done. "You have been convicted of a truly evil murder - one of the most appalling crimes that any of us can remember - and you will rightly be regarded as wicked (jan22mirror6).

Thus the legal profession established the main elements of the murder to which the newspapers would respond. The murder was already a cruel, barbaric and evil act; committed by an angry, arrogant, cold, calculating, calm, careful, deliberate (young) man. Any possible routes of explanation had also similarly been established by the legal profession, Mitchell's actions already understood to be affected by the negative effects of cannabis use and irresponsible and over-indulgent mothering, as well as the bad influence of Goth celebrity Marilyn Manson. Moreover, such explanations had been previously established in other trials; the legal profession had inherited the stereotypes and discourses it utilized. To have not done so would have made the narrative unintelligible. It was to these elements that newspaper reports would rapidly attend.

### **Interpreting the Trial**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January there was a sudden and dramatic shift from description to analyses following the guilty verdict. This was similar to that identified by Franklin and Petley (2004) in the reporting of James Bulger's murder. But reports over the next two days were simply to extend the debate along the lines already established in court and this resulted in three axes of inquiry: the effects of family breakdown, the effects of Goth culture, and the effects of cannabis use. These were not always treated as independent variables; rather they came together and were taken to illustrate the outcome of multiple effects upon a vulnerable youth.

Moreover, journalists took on the function of storytelling and developed the narratives above. But as Critcher (2003:141) argued 'no story is the inevitable product of the event it reports; no event dictates its narrative form', that is, the

story is not self-evident, it is not already constructed with ‘central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see ‘the end’ in every beginning’ (White 1987 in Ewick and Sibley, 1995:204). It is here that the narratives from court were developed and made meaningful according to the inferential structures (collective narratives) employed in journalistic practice.

Furthermore, newspaper reporting acted to fill in the ‘plot details’ that had remained unspecified in court; it supplied the connections whereby the individual story was conventionalised and homogenized. Ewick and Sibley (1995:211) argued that ‘even the most personal of narratives rely on and invoke collective narratives— symbols, linguistic formulations, structures, and vocabularies of motive’, if they did not then the narrative would be unintelligible. Consequently we are ‘shackled’ by the cultural availability of stories and such stories frequently ‘articulate and reproduce existing [discourses] and hegemonic relations of power’ (Ewick and Sibley, 1995:212).

The Daily Mail tended towards a narrative of familial dysfunction; in one, Grace McLean proceeds to construct a biographical narrative account of Mitchell’s childhood. Moreover significant events are highlighted and, through a process of emplotment<sup>13</sup>, these offered an explanatory narrative with a beginning, ‘middles’ (or further beginnings) and an end; it gave a coherence that enabled us to perceive the end in every beginning (Ewick and Sibley, 1995). Mitchell’s middle-class childhood was reported to have begun normally, but significantly during the ‘crucial years between childhood and adolescence’ his parents separated and:

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<sup>13</sup> Narrative theorists define emplotment as the synthesis of disparate, often unrelated events in ways that give coherence to the plot of a narrative; it is through emplotment that such events appear, inevitably, to lead to later ones (see Lawler, 2002:245-6).

... by the time he was 14, Mitchell was claiming to smoke hundreds of cannabis joints a week, was obsessed with knives, and immersed himself in a Goth subculture which celebrated Satanism (Jan22mail4).

Thus a causal link was established (emplotted) between 'family breakdown' and a delinquent future. It was implied that Mitchell's 'broken family' did not discipline his (adolescent) 'burgeoning sexuality' which consequently developed into a 'predatory appetite'. We were informed that expert others (i.e. teachers) 'advised psychiatric help', that such advice was ignored by his mother was implicit in the text:

Indulged by a mother ... who believed he could do no wrong, Mitchell only saw his electrician father at weekends ... she said: 'He was just a kid who loved animals, and cadets, and horse riding. He was good at almost everything he turned his hand to. I may have spoiled him a bit but no more than any other parents with their children'.

Here Mrs Mitchell is quoted but her words are hollow in the context of the fable being constructed; Mitchell is the antithesis of talented kids who love animals. Her attempt to normalize parental indulgence is left floating, uncommented upon, leaving it for the reader to judge and reflect upon the possible pitfalls of overindulging the young. Very importantly, the article highlights the limited influence of Mitchell's father; the consequences are explicitly stated:

When Mitchell was ten his father moved out, leaving the boy free rein to do what he wanted. A family friend said: 'There was no discipline in the household, no guidelines and Luke was basically able to do whatever he wanted.'  
(jan22mail4).

McLean and Brocklebank (jan22mail9) offer a much tighter and more explicit argument in another article in the Scottish edition of the same day. Headlined 'The making of a violent monster'; here an incestuous slant<sup>14</sup> is given to the absence of a father:

Although the youngest of the family, the boy soon found himself in a powerful position. Both his mother and his departed father were racked with guilt over the divorce and began to spoil him. As Shane reached adulthood and spent more time away from home, Mitchell assumed the role of man of the house. A family friend, whose son was close to Mitchell, paints a disturbing picture. He said: 'Once he got over the shock of the split, Luke realised he could use it to his advantage. His mother gave him anything he wanted materially and spent every spare minute she could with him. Philip knew he could never spend that amount of time with his son so made up for it by continually buying him things.' The friend added: 'Luke and his mother grew closer and he could do no wrong in her eyes. The way she treated him went beyond adoration. He had literally become the man of the

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<sup>14</sup> This incestuousness is also picked up in *The Daily Mirror* where friends were reported to have said 'It was almost creepy how she acted around Luke. They often held hands. She constantly played with his hair, touched his arms and shoulders - it was almost like they were boyfriend and girlfriend rather than mother and son' (jan22mirror1).

family. Corinne relied on him emotionally-Luke knew that and milked it. There was no discipline, no guidelines and Luke was basically able to do whatever he wanted. There was nothing to help him tell right from wrong.'

A discourse of child development was utilized in the construction of these biographical narratives; the answer to the abhorrent young adult is to be found in his childhood. This can also be understood as a 'public narrative' by which the individual is attached to larger cultural and institutional formations (Sommers and Gibson, 1994:62). Utilizing a discourse of development to explain Mitchell's development from innocent child to 'violent monster' is a particularly compelling narrative, as Lawler (2002:252) argued 'it is scarcely possible to formulate a coherent story without using, in some ways, narratives of development'.

Further a discourse of familial dysfunction is utilized to establish Mitchell's parents as weak, irresponsible, and open to manipulation, the emotion of guilt is spuriously attributed to Mitchell's parents in semi-explanation. Mitchell is represented as lacking the care and discipline of 'normal' family life and as having grown-up too soon. Mitchell is granted the status of 'man of the house'; thus normal parent-child power relations are upended, Mrs Mitchell is presented as perversely dependent on her son –rather than her husband and, as we shall later see, The Daily Mail attributes great importance to the role of fathers as a civilizing in families. Anecdotal evidence is offered to support the argument but the narrative works by connecting to our conventionalised understanding (i.e. a discourse) of the effects of divorce on families by which we provide the unspecified details (Ewick and Sibley 1995:208).

A successful narrative (i.e. a believable narrative) is one in which events are configured (emplotted) in ways that can be seen to produce inevitable outcomes. Biographical narratives from The Daily Mail detail Mitchell's movement through childhood in ways that imply that the actualisation of a 'violent monster' is the potential outcome of all such biographies. As Lawler (2002:250) has argued the process of narrating the movement from the potential to the actual serves to 'naturalize the plot, making later events seem the natural and inevitable culmination of earlier ones'. It is in this way that 'events seem to speak for themselves' (Ewick and Sibley, 1995:213).

In this context Mitchell was not born a 'violent monster' but made into one. This making was to be found in the details of his childhood development, his family environment: 'the shift from such apparent innocence to such unthinkable depravity seems rooted in the upheaval of Mitchell's early teenage years' (jan22mail9). Such a narrative accords to the 'intelligibility norms' of our contemporary culture and these prohibit other explanations.

The question of Satanism was of particular interest and was discussed in all three newspapers on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2005:

**Goth fan who craved notoriety and said he was in league with the devil.** Goth rock music, superficial dabbling with the occult and heavy eye make-up are adolescent phases most teenagers grow out of as quickly as they leave behind their black and baggy clothes. But in Luke Mitchell an interest in such things was far more sinister (jan22guard4).

**SHOCK ROCK.** ROCK star Marilyn Manson's influence on teenagers has already been blamed for several murders across the world. Now Jodi Jones's name may be added to that list (jan22mail11).

In The Guardian quote, interest in the occult is normalized as an adolescent phase that is 'normally' left behind, Mitchell is allocated abnormal status because he did not grow out of this but continued a 'sinister interest'. For The Guardian 'No one except Mitchell knows why such bravado escalated into murderous violence' (jan22guard4).

In The Daily Mail quote, an effects model is employed to incriminate Marilyn Manson as a negative influence on youth; the implication being that young people are easily manipulated and persuaded by unscrupulous adults. As we have seen, quite often all young people are seen as susceptible to manipulation (see Such et al, 2005), but more often than not it is particular (classed) young people (for example Sereny, cited in Young, 1996:134).

In earlier times Mitchell's interest in the occult might have been utilized as an explanation; his actions understood as the devil's work. Such an explanation was apparent in 1861 when two eight-year-old boys were convicted of murdering a two-year-old: 'the children concerned were not judged to be inherently evil but to have been (temporarily) led astray by the devil' (Franklin and Petley, 2004:152).

It was also hinted at here in The Daily Mirror who described the murder as a 'ritual killing' (jan22mirror9) and in The Daily Mail who reported that:

Police probed satanic ritual date link to Jodi's murder.  
Officers on the Jodi case discovered the teenager had been murdered on the eve of the festival of 'Demon Revels', involving a ritual associated with 'sexual orgies and blood ceremonies' involving young females. Such festivals must be marked by letting the blood of a female of any age.  
Detectives delved deeply into a possible satanic motive for the murder (jan23mail5).

Though Mitchell's interest in the occult is repeatedly referenced it did not develop as an explanatory theme, perhaps because it is not a feasible contemporary explanation. Mitchell's interest in the occult was presented here as a distorted 'normal' adolescent interest in such things. It was explained in terms of his vulnerability/susceptibility to the negative influences of certain 'perverted' celebrities and youth cultures. And this was ultimately due to a lack of parental discipline and control.

Similarly, Mitchell's cannabis use was repeatedly referenced in reporting of the trial and verdict.

According to police experts he was smoking enough cannabis each day to make him psychotic (Jan22mail3).

He was a heavy cannabis user at the time and had smoked dope shortly before the killing, the court was told (jan22mirror9)

Mitchell also had a heavy cannabis habit and dealt the drug to friends at School (jan22guard4)

Again, however, it remained undeveloped as an explanation in the early stages. Nevertheless, as the months progressed Mitchell's cannabis use was to take on a greater significance in The Daily Mail and Mitchell's case was repeatedly referenced as a 'contextual crime' to illustrate the negative effects of cannabis use:

It was one of a growing number of violent crimes linked to cannabis, including the case of self-styled 'satanist' Luke Mitchell, 16, who killed and mutilated his 14-year-old girlfriend Jodi Jones (Feb28mail2).

AN addiction to cannabis turned a teenager into a killer who savagely mutilated his 14-year-old girlfriend. Luke Mitchell, 16, smoked massive quantities of the drug, which blurred the lines between his fantasies and reality (Mar19mail1).

Experts have warned that the downgrading of cannabis could have devastating consequences for the mental health of a generation. Their concerns have been fuelled by a number of high-profile crimes linked to cannabis such as that of the

Scottish teenager Luke Mitchell. Mitchell, 16, murdered and mutilated his girlfriend Jodi Jones, 14. (Apr02mail2)

SMOKING cannabis was blamed for turning Luke Mitchell into one of Scotland's most notorious killers (june20mail6)

On 11<sup>th</sup> February Mitchell was sentenced; the following day all newspapers reported the Judge's words once more. The Daily Mirror summarizes his argument (see also feb12guard2 and feb12mail4):

... the judge said heavy abuse of cannabis, an obsession with Satanism, shock-rocker Marilyn Manson's gruesome paintings of a Hollywood starlet's murderous mutilation and Mitchell's upbringing in a broken home may well have contributed to twisting his mind (feb12mirror2).

In the space of about three weeks the Judge appeared to have moved from the viewpoint that Mitchell was inherently evil to one in which Mitchell had become a victim of circumstance. The notion of moral culpability had thus been undermined, Luke Mitchell's behaviour was judged due to multiple external effects. Melanie Phillips (feb14mail3) detailed these multiple effects two days later but asserted that:

... the final trigger for this act of savagery was something else again. It was Mitchell's consumption of cannabis ... his cannabis habit meant that when he killed Jodi Jones, Mitchell was simply unable to recognise that what he was doing was truly wicked.

Therefore, Mitchell was not of sound mind when he committed the murder due to cannabis consumption. Consequently, the case could then be reported as symptomatic of a collapsing society in which all young people are potential killers:

What we are facing now among a section of our young people is a terrifying breakdown of the bonds not just of socialisation but of civilisation itself. This is the result of a number of ruinous changes in our society - in which the growing acceptability of drugs is a significant part. For these young people, the moral obligation to accept the difference between right and wrong has disintegrated. [...]

Duty, responsibility, shame and stigma have all but evaporated. Difficulty, pain or failure are viewed as assaults on their right to be happy. What trumps everything else is the need to protect their feelings. Instead of providing boundaries to give young people the security that is vital for emotional health, the adult world has simply abandoned them.

Family disintegration shatters their sense of themselves, schools leave them floundering in their own ignorance and immaturity, and the commercial world exploits and encourages their premature sexualisation. It is among these rising numbers of confused, unhappy or disturbed children that the 'Goth rock' cult of satanism, self-harm and nihilism principally has its lethal appeal [...]

How many more Luke Mitchells will it take before our society wakes up from its lethal, drug-stupefied trance?  
(feb14mail3).

As argued in chapter two, newspapers repeatedly interpret specific crimes as signifying much more than the actual event; events come to be seen as evidence of societal decline and a breakdown of the family, traditional values and law and order (Cohen, 2004, Davies and Bourhill, 2004, Innes, 2003, Muncie, 2004, Pearson, 1983 etc). In the search for causation predictable well-rehearsed concerns appear: 'single parents, lack of self-reliance and dependency on the state ... [and] inadequate discipline'; these are the 'persistent constructs underpinning the causes of crime' (Davies and Bourhill, 2004:36).

The above has attempted to detail the ways in which the press handle murder cases; in doing so many of the research findings discussed in chapter two have been confirmed. Press coverage focuses our attention upon atypical and shocking murders or upon those with a 'good victim' or a particularly nasty 'villain', which are then utilized as examples of wider social malaise. The construction of innocence is key to the construction of the evil villain. Most stories of murder however, are treated in a cursory way and simply disappear.

The impact of court proceedings upon subsequent press coverage is revealed here to be very significant; this conforms to the view that the news media play both a constitutive and constituent role in problem definition. Those stories that attracted attention were communicated via pre-existent inferential structures, narratives and discourses through which individual actors and events were configured into

believable plots. Such plots 'colonize consciousness' to the extent that the facts of the event 'seem to speak for themselves' (Ewick and Sibley, 1995:213); they 'mobilize and reproduce images' that resonate with audiences which all too often reflect 'the prejudices, beliefs and anxieties that hold sway' (Scruton, 2004:170).

## **Conclusion:**

This chapter began with a discussion of Foucault's conception of discourse in which it was argued that discourses are involved in defining and producing objects of knowledge, governing what can be said about them and influencing ways to regulate their practices. In this introduction to my sample of newspaper reports on youth it became apparent that a variety of discourses from a variety of discourse planes were circulating. This is not unusual. As Griffin (1993) highlighted above different and often contradictory discourses frequently connect, compete and coalesce around the subject of youth.

There has been a historical succession of institutions with a specific interest in knowing about and controlling youth that have produced various discourses on youth; these include educational, judicial, medical, political and religious institutions. Others have assisted; not least academic disciplines, such as biology, criminology, geography, medicine, psychology and sociology. There has been a constant stream of commentaries from individuals and institutions such as the news media (though quite often individuals are representatives of institutions such as academics, clergymen, teachers, policemen, reporters, politicians). All of the

above have pronounced on a range of issues from childhood development, genetic disorder, health and illness, juvenile delinquency, educational standards, employability, leisure pursuits and so on.

Moreover, to understand the roots of discourses on youth requires historical examination; the next chapter will attend to this. In so doing the synchronic and diachronic elements of many of the discourses we routinely employ to discuss youth will be revealed. Such discourses developed through modernity but were, and continue to be, informed by earlier traditions and discourses (James et al, 2001:9).

## **Chapter Five: Discourses on Youth; Historical**

### **Antecedents**

This chapter will examine historical antecedents of discourses on youth; this will highlight discursive constructions of childhood. I will focus on nineteenth and twentieth-century developments. I will begin by considering the emergence of a dualistic construction of childhood in the seventeenth century. I will then discuss the development of a discourse of 'the social' in the nineteenth-century and will concentrate on discourses which encompassed youth in this context, those of familialization, education and youth justice. I will illustrate that the nineteenth-century is an important historical juncture in the construction of the category we now understand as 'youth'. I will then concentrate on twentieth-century influences to our contemporary understanding of youth and show how further discourses developed and impacted upon the concept of childhood. Nevertheless, at the end of the twentieth-century the discourses employed to talk about the young (and the effects) were similar to those apparent in the nineteenth-century; they continued the tradition of the previous two centuries.

Attempting to disentangle these discourse strands is a difficult task and I found it virtually impossible to disentangle discourses of youth from those of family and social class (articulated through discourses of poverty). This endeavour is inevitably limited; there are absences. I hope that what is present will be illustrative of the trends apparent in the development of discourses on youth. It will be argued that:

- Over the centuries discourse strands from a variety of discourse planes have combined to produce a discourse of youth.
- This discourse has changed and developed as new knowledge has been articulated and applied. However, remnants of past knowledge, though sometimes hidden/unspoken, are always lurking and come to the surface implicitly or explicitly.
- Where youth have been foregrounded in discourse different strategies of intervention have developed, most notably in education and youth justice. Thus discursive developments have real practical and material effects for young people.
- The discourses strands that have become ‘entangled’ to produce a discourse of youth only occasionally focussed on young people. Systems of differentiation frequently construct young people as the product of ‘problematic’ communities (i.e. the ‘dangerous classes’). Consequently discourses of youth were produced via middle-class concern over threats to social order and morality.
- Discourses on youth are predominantly familial and these discursively developed out of two distinctive conceptualisations of family. One has become normalized and naturalized; it is unproblematic, the standard to which all should aspire and the basis of order in society: the middle-class familial ideal. The other has been constructed as abnormal, as lacking, as a threat to order, it is the ‘problematic’ other of the middle-class ideal and one we should not aspire to: the working-class family. The discourses that developed out of this dichotomised vision demand the regulation, control and discipline of working-class communities in the interest of social order.

- In such discourses ‘dysfunctional’ families are positioned in a causal relationship to ‘problem’ youth; they become the explanation. In so-doing other causal factors remain unspoken/unheard/un-thought. The discourse limits the field of possibilities.
- The development of alternative discourses during the twentieth-century (most notably in psychology and intelligence) continued to locate problems in specific families. The role of the mother was specifically scrutinized and targeted and this produced a set of highly specified maternal responsibilities: a psychological maternal ideal.
- Though alternative discourses competed the impact was limited; alternative discourses were heavily criticised and taken over by events.
- The new right’s approach to poverty was a process of divide and rule, the impoverished were once again set apart according to categories of deserving/undeserving, respectable/disreputable, civilised/uncivilised.
- Theories of underclass developed at this juncture, its language pulled on and reinforced a victim-blaming discourse of poverty; it again targeted mothers. The switch to theories of social exclusion did little to undermine this discourse rather it continued it.
- At the end of the Twentieth-century, as at the start of the nineteenth-century, the notion of abhorrent individuals, families and communities once again dominated. Again it was with parents rather than society (or indeed youth) that blame was located and remedies sought.

Moreover, over the past two centuries multiple discourses have developed, circulated, competed and coalesced on and about children and young people. These discursive formations are apparent throughout society, from macro institutions involved in managing society (local and national government, law enforcement etc) to institutions created to work with children (schools, youth services, youth justice etc) to those studying and/or commenting upon society (academia, news media etc) through to the micro; everyday practices and theories of people. Discourses have become a sort of conventional, common sense wisdom that are ‘both of modernity *and* informed by earlier traditions of thought’ (James et al, 2001:9). The individual will encounter numerous discourses in the course of their lives and through these will be moulded into a subject:

This form of power that applies to immediate everyday life categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognise and others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects (Foucault, 2002b:331).

During the same period families have come under increasing and intense scrutiny from a range of institutions, professions and individuals to the extent that Rose (1999:123) sees childhood as ‘the most intensively governed sector of personal existence’. Throughout the twentieth-century these tendencies have led to an increased professionalisation of ways in which youth are dealt with and has marked them as a group ‘requiring special treatment’.

What has become 'known' (our knowledge) about youth has been realized in a plethora of initiatives, policies and institutions to ensure children's safety, health, education and participation in society as good citizens. As a consequence the young are subject to a number of institutions; the education, training and youth justice systems have become the dispositives of knowledge about youth.

To understand the roots of discourses on youth requires a historical examination but an immediate problem is determining a starting point. Many authors highlight the nineteenth-century development of modern power (e.g. Murdock and McCron, 1976; Rose, 1999; Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998 ). For Wallace and Kovatcheva (1998:12), the most important factor in the discursive construction of 'youth' is the development of the modern state with its 'bureaucratic mechanisms, increasing rationalisation and the capacity to grade, sort, control, punish, mobilise and put under surveillance those it defines as its population'. Nevertheless, though discourses on youth may have crystallized during the nineteenth-century, they did not begin there. Indeed they are not solely the product of modernity but were, and continue to be, informed by earlier traditions and discourses (James et al, 2001:9). I will now attempt to unpack the historical antecedents of discourses on youth.

## **The Dualistic Construction of Childhood in Pre-Industrial Society:**

According to Ariès (1962), the 'idea' of childhood and youth as distinct from adulthood did not exist in medieval society. But in the fourteenth century the idiosyncrasies of youth began to be expressed in art, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century the young began to be clothed differently. The process Ariès (1962) describes is one of a gradual identification and subsequent exclusion of children from adult society; where in medieval society 'as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle-rocker, he belonged to adult society', by the seventeenth-century it began to be considered necessary to separate children from adults and interest switched from amusement in the young to 'psychological interest and moral solicitude' (Ariès, 1962:130-1).

France (2007) suggests life-stage categories were determined by dependency statuses at this time. Childhood was equated with dependence, youth with semi-dependence and adulthood with independence. However, these were not age-based categories; the types of employment available to young people demanded different ages of entry, for example some might enter 'service' before puberty whilst those entering an apprenticeship might wait until they were seventeen.

More importantly, it is in the seventeenth-century that we find the basis of the dichotomised vision of childhood in which children are constructed as innocent, vulnerable and in need of protection, or as evil, wilful and in need of discipline and control. Valentine (1996:583) states that the seventeenth-century had inherited the conception of children as 'inheritors of original sin'. Deriving from the notion of 'Adamic original sin', the image of the evil child 'assumes that evil, corruption and baseness are primary elements in the constitution' of children (James et al, 2001:10). Valentine (1996:583) argues that this discourse regarded children as savage: 'a savage who ironically could be civilized through the use of corporal punishment and other 'harsh' disciplinary measures'. This discourse strand understood children as essentially wilful: as 'demonic harbourers of potentially dark forces'; consequently this wilfulness was to be constrained and disciplined (James et al, 2001:10).

The 'evil child' discourse weaves its way through the centuries and 'finds echoes in contemporary criminology, public moralizing and current debates over pedagogic practice'; it is apparent in debates over the control of youth, the basic premise is that if young people are 'left to their own devices' the potential evil may be unleashed (James et al, 2001:10). It is explicit in attempts to explain the unexplainable: 'the more difficult a crime is to understand, the easier it is to revert to ideas of basic savagery' (Cricher, 1976:167). It is compatible with arguments for a return to traditional values.

In opposition to the above is the discourse strand of essential innocence:

'essentially pure in heart, these infants are angelic and uncorrupted by the world

they have entered' (James et al, 2001:13). Valentine (1996) locates this conception of childhood in the late seventeenth-century work of a group of academics, the Cambridge Platonists, who 'postulated principles of innate 'sympathy' or 'benevolence'' (Sommerville, in Valentine, 1996:583). James et al (2001) locate it in the philosophy of Rousseau in which 'all men are born equal' and good; that is until society corrupts them. Mabbot (1992:279) summarizes Rousseau's argument in 'Emile' (1762):

It held that education should not curb or discipline the natural tendencies of the child but encourage them to grow and blossom. Teaching should not come from books and verbal instruction, but by example and direct experience of people and things. The family, not the school, is its proper field; and love and sympathy, not rules and punishments, the tools of the task.

This discourse requires that childhood innocence be nurtured, protected; not only by parents but also by wider society, hence legislation related to paedophilia and child protection; in which child 'victims' are depicted as having their innocence stolen or their childhood violated (Meyer, 2007). The discourse is also apparent in child-centred learning and rearing strategies. It is compatible with a 'liberal do-gooder' stance.

Valentine (1996:583) argues that over time the concept of childhood innocence has come to dominate, though the 'evil child' is periodically rediscovered. Teenagers, however, sit uncomfortably within this dichotomy, they are:

... awkwardly placed between childhood and adulthood: sometimes constructed and represented as 'innocent children' in need of protection from adult sexuality, violence and commercial exploitation; at other times represented as articulating adult vices of drink, drugs, and violence. These multiple constructions of teenagers thus enable adults to represent their own adolescence (and sometimes their own children's) as a time of innocent fun and harmless pranks whilst perceiving other people's teenagers as troublesome and 'dangerous' (Valentine, 1996:587).

In addition, both James et al (2001) and Valentine (1996) point to another image of the 'immanent child' found in the philosophy of Locke (1632-1704); for whom children were 'intrinsically a no-thing', there were 'no innate capacities, no knowledge lodged in a universal human condition', for Locke 'the drives and dispositions that children possess are on a gradient of becoming, moving towards reason' (James et al, 2001:15-16). Such a discourse proposes that children can be moulded into subjects by parents and education (Valentine, 1996:583). It is thus central to traditions of early learning and schooling in general. This discourse was apparent in chapter three, particularly in relation to the bestowal of rights upon young people and in determining the age of criminal responsibility.

James et al (2001:9) refer to these discursive childhoods (evil, innocent and immanent) as pre-sociological due to their ontological vision of the young as essential and unaffected by 'any concept of social structure'. They present us with three essentialist visions of childhood: born evil, born innocent, born empty. Each vision dictates a treatment for youth: discipline and punish, nurture and protection, education and guidance; and as we have seen each treatment is apparent in contemporary commentaries on youth. Moreover, these were

ontological visions of childhood; childhood could only be one or another, evil, innocent or immanent. Which it was depended upon the philosophical position of those making the judgement.

Furthermore, France (2007) locates the roots of the 'Youth Question' in the seventeenth century. At this time the governance of youth was predominantly locally based and enacted through magistrates, employment, church and tradition. Most youth problems were similarly shaped by locality. However, certain adults were becoming anxious over youthful behaviours; three main anxieties were apparent:

1. Over a collective youth identity embodied in the behaviours of young single men in apprenticeships: 'rioting, political protest, crime and drunkenness'.
2. 'Over the length of time young people were living' independently of family before marriage (which usually occurred in mid to late twenties).
3. Over 'masterless youth': those who resisted or rejected service or apprenticeship. The fear being that such youth would become delinquent and/or involved in disorder (France, 2007:7-8).

As early as the seventeenth-century then the 'youth question' is related to 'problem youth'. Pearson (1983) lists a number of seventeenth-century attempts to regulate (working-class) youthful behaviour through prohibition. Such legislation could contain both the evil and innocent child. Prohibition is suggestive of both discipline and protection: discipline for the inherently 'evil'

youth and protection from adult vices for the inherently or potentially ‘good’ youth.

As we have seen then, notions of youth, containing most of the essential elements, existed prior to industrialization, and such notions determined the treatment of the young. However, the process of industrialization undoubtedly intensified this process.

### **Industrialization and The Birth of the Social:**

Industrialization, from the Eighteenth-century onwards, brought about a new order in society. This included the establishment of a capitalist mode of production, the development of new relations of production, and the creation of the modern state (France, 2007:8). Children were at the heart of industrialisation and were widely employed in factories, indeed employment for (certain classes of) children was ‘universal and inescapable’ at this time (Goldson, 2004:4).

According to Squires (1990), the foundations of our contemporary understandings of ‘the social’ can be located in these changes. ‘The social’ is, for Squires (1990:38), ‘clearly a fabricated entity’ which ‘forms part of a broader discourse on the maintenance of order in society’. References to ‘the social’ emerged in the nineteenth-century but these were ‘essentially references to a problem – often expressed as the social question’ (Squires, 1990:38). The problem was the perceived threat posed by (those in) poverty to the ‘security of property, moral

and political order and society' (Squires, 1990:38). For Squires (1990:7) 'the social' is 'a field', a 'zone of intervention' or a 'political terrain'. It forms the battlesite for a range of competing political programmes, it is the space for which they compete'. In this way power relations constitute 'the social'. Further 'the social' is a discourse: 'a loose affiliation of normative values, principles and objectives ... a normative political language to describe the appropriate structure and organization of society' (Squires, 1990:7). It is an inherited discourse:

'The social' is constructed by particular forces at particular times and, like any society, is saturated with political intrigues, conflicts, alliances and memories.

'The social' comes to us loaded with meaning (Squires, 1990:8).

In various analyses Foucault illustrated the historical development of discourses and their systems of differentiation. These resulted in the identification and construction of 'types' through a process of normalizing and othering. He argued that:

'a certain knowledge of man was formed in the nineteenth-century, a knowledge of individuality, of the normal or abnormal, conforming or non-conforming individual, a knowledge that actually originated in practices of social control and supervision [surveillance]' (Foucault, 2002a:2).

Such knowledge was an attempt to impose order. Foucault (1998:123) highlighted that 'the body, vigour, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that "ruled": the bourgeoisie, were subjected to the new knowledge first and as a result:

... what was formed was a political ordering of life, not through an enslavement of others, but through an affirmation of self ... it provided itself with a body to be cared for, protected, cultivated, and preserved from the many dangers and contacts, to be isolated from others so it would retain its differential value.

The initial focus on the new bourgeoisie allowed them to assert a collective identity:

The emphasis on the body should undoubtedly be linked to the process of growth and establishment of bourgeois hegemony ... because of what the 'cultivation' of its own body could represent politically, economically, and historically for the present and future of the bourgeoisie (Foucault, 1998:125).

This new bourgeoisie were empowered through submission to new knowledge and power, they became centred, normalized, naturalized; the model from which all other classes differed. Thus established, a host of bourgeois concerns emerged related to social change: urbanisation, population growth, disease, and revolution. More precisely, these aspects were perceived as threatening, and methods of control desired. In the mid nineteenth-century they prompted the subjectification of the masses to begin:

The living conditions that were dealt to the proletariat, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth-century, show there was anything but concern for its body and sex: it was of little importance whether they lived or died, since their reproduction was something that took care of its self in any case. Conflicts were necessary (in particular, conflicts over urban space: cohabitation, proximity, contamination, epidemics, such as the cholera outbreak of 1832, or again, prostitution and venereal diseases) in order for the proletariat to be granted a body and sexuality;

economic emergencies had to arise (the development of heavy industry with the need for a stable and competent labour force, the obligation to regulate the population flow and apply demographic controls); lastly, there had to be applied a whole technology of control which made it possible to keep that body and sexuality, finally conceded to them, under surveillance (schooling, the politics of housing, public hygiene, institutions of relief and insurance, the general medicalization of the population, in short, an entire administrative and technical machinery made it possible to safely import the deployment of sexuality into the exploited class; the latter no longer risked playing an assertive class role opposite the bourgeoisie, it would remain the instrument of the bourgeoisie's hegemony (Foucault, 1998:126).

It is in this sense that the concept of 'the social' emerged; it was a 'virtual by product of certain political interventions into the ordering of the population' (Squires, 1990:12). Further 'the social' does not refer to the whole of society but rather:

The 'social' is the product ... of a series of innovative interventions directed towards particular social evils. The social realm is an *artefact*, conditional on the appearance of certain forms of social organization and certain objectives: mass education, the supervision of 'private' conducts in childbearing and health, public health measures, and attempts to eliminate pauperism (Hirst, 1981 in Squires, 1990:15).

Moreover, it was measures such as these that constituted 'the social' - it was not a strategic project. Its coherence could be found in the 'considerations of political order and integration, wealth and authority that it inspired in an age when they seemed to be under threat' (Squires, 1990:15). The response to the perceived

threat was neither repressive nor charitable; rather it was generally coercive and enacted through philanthropy<sup>1</sup> (Rose, 1999:129). Numerous individuals and organisations involved themselves in philanthropic activity:

The major attack came, of course, from the church, and in particular from the new puritans of the evangelical sects, who had made the task of 'taming the passions of the poor' one of their key goals. By the 1840s there were armies of volunteers engaged in this endeavour, from the city missionaries who hunted out unmarried couples and harried them to the altar; to the tens of thousands of lady 'visitors' who descended on working-class households to examine their moral condition; through to Sunday Schools and Mechanics Institutes which constantly preached the virtues of stable family existence (Taylor, 1983:200).

However, the motives and subjects differed, some were explicitly conservative aimed at preserving the social order, some were explicitly radical aimed at a reformation of society. For some, such developments were born out of concern for the welfare of children and effectively granted children the status of citizens. Others desired obedient and docile citizens. Others still, were concerned by 'Malthusian fears of plebian overpopulation' (Taylor, 1983:200).

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<sup>1</sup> That it is the response was not 'violent' or by 'rule of the sword', nor was it generous or a largess. For Foucault modern power has 'devious and subtle mechanisms' which 'is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms' (Foucault, 1998, p86). Thus modern power integrated 'pastoral power' (originating in Christianity) into its mechanisms; making it a 'very special form of power':

'This form of power is salvation-oriented (as opposed to political power). It is oblique (as opposed to the principle of sovereignty); it is individualising (as opposed to legal power); it is coextensive and continuous with life; it is linked with a production of truth – the truth of the individual himself'. (Foucault, 2002b, p333).

Philanthropic interventions were an early form of modern power.

Furthermore, 'Philanthropists and hygienists campaigned to have their strategies enshrined in law and their expertise linked to the activities of social institutions such as courts, hospitals, prisons, and schools' (Rose, 1999:130). The resultant legislation was frequently paternalistic (e.g. factory and mine acts to remove women and children), often productive (welfare, health and schooling) and sometimes repressive. Such legislation had discursive effects, whilst the 1833 Factories Act embodied a humanitarian aim to reduce the exploitation of the 'factory child', the result was increased marginalization and impoverishment amongst urban working-class children (Goldson, 2004:5). Moreover, because welfare policies address the organisation of social relationships they contain both 'models' of society and strategies to govern conduct; they deploy normative principles by which practices are judged. Such judgements are the 'prologue to forms of control' which 'mobilize strategies of normalization comprising both sanctions and incentives' (Squires, 1990:41). The resultant legislation was not repressive because:

... the discourse of the social sphere engineers a remarkable conciliation between the critical demands and aspirations emanating from tensions in society and received normative principles of social justice, economic rationality and political order (Squires, 1990:46).

According to Squires (1990) the first disciplinary interventions facilitated the exploitation of labour; the working-class were not waiting to be exploited, they had to be pushed into the factories. The state was directly involved in this through the New Poor Law Act (1834), which effectively determined the conditions for

the production of labour and dictated the subsistence and material conditions of a whole class (Squires, 1990:49). It embodied three important discursive shifts:

First, a shift from strategies of exclusion and repression to policies of regeneration, inclusion and rehabilitation. Second, a shift from individualist techniques of control rooted in classical liberal jurisprudence and emphasising the absolutist fictions of 'rational economic man', moral choice, individual responsibility and consequential notions of guilt and desert, to essentially collectivist forms of social intervention focussing more directly upon the normative and behavioural characteristics of given populations. And, third, a shift from typically private, philanthropic and evangelical avenues of contact, coupled with juridical modes of access, to essentially statist, administrative and bureaucratic forms of 'social' intervention (Squires, 1990:50).

This is best described as a shift from strategies of repression to strategies of incorporation involving selective promises of conditional well-being.

Philanthropists assisted in the shift to bureaucratic intervention by classifying the poor in what Fraser (1973 in Squires, 1990:51) has described as an 'immense exercise in social scientific imperialism'. Such classification enabled the vicious and degraded to be separated from the reclaimable, the fraudulent pauper from the needy (Squires, 1990:51). Investigations produced a discourse of class that coupled moral abhorrence with discipline, instruction and reform and which posited the working-class as threat: as a dangerous and criminal class. Pauperism and criminality had become a class phenomena.

Industrialization stimulated rapid changes in social relationships; traditional forms of control were swept away and new forms of order desired. Discourses of youth

further developed in this context. The meaning of childhood was openly contested during the nineteenth-century (Valentine, 1996:583). Conservatives argued against childhood innocence; they again proposed children to be 'beings who bring into the world a corrupt nature and evil dispositions' (Robertson, 1976 in Valentine 1996). Alternatively, novelists and poets romanticised innocence; their image 'of the innate goodness of the child violated by an evil society' was one quickly arrogated by the Victorian middle-class for their own offspring (Valentine, 1996:584).

Furthermore, these conceptions of childhood were now to be applied differently. It was not simply childhood itself that was an evil, innocent or immanent condition, rather it was specific children and they were identified through systems of differentiation as normal/abnormal, conforming/non-conforming, good/bad. In effect middle-class childhoods were normalized; naturalized and working-class childhoods pathologised. Valentine (1996:584) emphasizes that whilst the Victorians adopted the notion of childhood innocence for their own this coexisted with the 'brutal exploitation of child labour in the factories'. It was thus an elite notion. Indeed, Goldson (2004:4) argues that the 'bourgeois construction of childhood and its concomitant 'domestic ideal' had little relevance (or application) to the material realities of the working class child'.

In addition, the zeal for classification and counting produced other statistics, Pick (1983:64), for example, asserts that 'in the 1850s it was officially stated that there

were in London a total of 30,000 lawless and deserted children<sup>2</sup>. Goldson (2004) argues that this was the direct result of the 1833 Factories Act:

... the urban juvenile population rapidly exceeded the restricted employment opportunities bringing a serious escalation of child vagrancy and unemployment. Without employment opportunities, children were often abandoned and this swelled the poor population leaving unsupervised children adrift on the streets (Goldson, 2004:5).

In order to contain the threat from this highly visible body of youth congregating in large cities, new regulatory and surveillance techniques were required. Initially indirect attempts were made to control the young via a process of familialization. Later they were to be subjected directly via education and youth justice policies. I will now discuss these disciplinary mechanisms.

### **Familialization**

Familialization did not involve the subjectification of the young directly; rather it was an attempt to impose the familial 'ideal' that had been constructed within the middle-class on to all others. Therefore youth were encompassed nevertheless. The subjectification of the young was a by-product of familialization.

In the nineteenth-century familialization was vital to technologies of government and fundamental to the constitution of individual subjectivity:

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<sup>2</sup> Note that the categories of lawless and deserted are here condensed into one category, i.e.: problematic youth.

'Familialization' was crucial to the means whereby personal capacities and conducts could be socialized, shaped, and maximised in a manner that accorded with the moral and political principles of liberal society (Rose, 1999:128)

For Rose (1999), familial discourses were not merely ideological – for they indeed disguised the operation of power – they also provided a solution by which to regulate individuals and populations: they allowed new forms of governance; identified new problems; constructed new realities and citizens; they incited self-regulation. Further, the family became the 'matrix for the government of the social economy' and negated the need for direct intervention by the state (Rose, 1999:129). The family became a dispositive.

Then (as now), families in certain sectors of society appeared to refuse self-regulation (i.e. the 'dangerous classes'). Some commentators were concerned over the threats they posed; others were concerned for their well-being.

Alexander (1983:4) highlights responses to working women in the 1830s and 1840s who, once discovered, quickly became an object of concern, not over their exploitation in the workforce, but their moral and spiritual degradation.

Alexander (1983:5) quotes Lord Shaftesbury to illustrate:

In the male the moral effects of the system are very sad, but in the female they are infinitely worse ... not alone upon themselves, but upon their families, upon society, and, I may add, upon the country itself. It is bad enough if you corrupt the man, but if you corrupt the woman, you poison the waters of life at the very fountain.

But, as we have seen the presence of a growing urban poor, liberated from traditional controls of church and community, was perceived as a threat to the health and well being of the wealthy; they were therefore understood as a threat to the nation itself, as illustrated by Pearson's quote from the first report of the Philanthropic Society, founded 1788:

They are a class which belongs to no rank of the civil community, they are excommunicates in police, extra social, extra civil, extra legal; they are links which have fallen off the chain of society, and which going to decay, inure and obstruct the movements of the whole machine (1983:185-186).

The New Poor Law (1834) was an innovative refashioning of existent welfare provision; at its core was a discourse on the abuse of public funds, the concern was to prevent, detect, control and repress 'all forms of 'fraud', imposture' and 'abuse' of relief funds' (Squires, 1990:73). This was not new; charitable relief organisations already defended against indiscriminate charity; making support conditional upon 'displaying appropriate habits and customs' (Squires, 1990:57). But what developed in the 1830s was a coherent 'individualising moral 'science' of social classification and casework' that 'formed the basis of a disciplinary social administration' (Squires, 1990:57).

The detection of fraud required, indeed demanded, that the poor open their lives to inspection and judgement; families were targeted. Philanthropic and pauper visitation societies were sophisticated in their attempts to 'distinguish gradations of vice and virtue' (Squires, 1990:63). Further, poverty began to be seen as the result of 'vices', of which the poor were to be cured. Reverend J. Tuckerman was

an influential proponent of 'cure' in deliberations prior to the New Poor Law. He believed poverty resulted from moral rather than physical causes; therefore immorality was to be cured. Tuckerman recommended a guidebook on visiting the poor written by Gerando (1833)<sup>3</sup> to his contemporaries (Squires, 1990:62).

The book implored philanthropists to consider all the facts, to discriminate between need and pretence, to dig beneath the surface and reveal the true character of the poor. Three causes of indigence were identified: 'inability to labour, insufficient produce of labour and absolute want of employment' (Squires, 1990:64). Philanthropists were enjoined to test for 'real' indigence by observing claimants at different times, questioning neighbours and facilitating medical examinations. Where evidence of 'real' indigence was absent poverty was attributed to character and moral rather than material assistance was recommended. Philanthropists were advised to pay great attention to women:

An especially stringent supervision of mothers and wives was called for, because 'misery may lead a woman to a still greater misfortune than poverty. It may expose her to seduction' ... There seemed no task quite so important as the supervision of mothers and, through them the family as a whole. Around the mother an entire family history – a moral history – was to be constructed [...] In scrutinizing each household, 'penetrating their internal history and studying their domestic relations', investigators were called upon to examine a myriad of tiny details of domestic life because 'improvidence has its particular signs' and the investigator had to become a veritable expert in the ways of the poor. 'You must examine the dwelling, see how the furniture is arranged, look at the linen, and, obtaining their confidence, learn how they combine their scanty means ... find out

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<sup>3</sup> Gerando, J.M. Baron de (1833) *The Visitor of the poor, Designed to aid in the formation and working of provident and other kindred societies.*

if the rent is regularly paid, and if the family is peaceable and regular in its habits' (Squires, 1990:66).

Familialization was a particularly gendered project; women were specifically targeted as a site of entry for intervention. Familial arrangements amongst the poor in the early nineteenth-century caused great concern:

In the early nineteenth-century most working-class women and men shared a household with a sexual partner at some stage in their lives, and the majority of these shared households were based on marriage. But this was by no means universally true, nor were marital relations as clearly defined, in both legal and social terms, as they were in the second half of the century. Consensual unions were common in many parts of the country; separations frequent and often succeeded by other temporary relationships. Sexual attitudes seem generally to have been far more pragmatic and flexible than in the middle-class during the same period, or in the working-class half a century later (Taylor, 1983:193).

This evidenced an inability and/or unwillingness to self-regulate according to the codes of middle-class morality<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, such families were judged uncivilized and immoral. Where once there had been 'little concern' for the body and sex of the masses (Foucault, 1998:126), it now became an obsession.

The notion that the institution of marriage was the best place to bring up children was being established, but the working-class resisted this on several fronts: expense (the cost of a marriage licence being equal to a poor artisan's weekly wage), a reluctance to financially contribute to the established church (marriage

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<sup>4</sup> Another discourse strand still much in evidence today.

being perceived as income generation for the church) and the existence of alternative traditions in varying communities, of which Taylor (1983:194-196) provides many examples. Being alert to the middle-class observers' 'prurience and outrage' Taylor (1983:195-6) pieces together a picture of acceptable sexual behaviour amongst the working-class:

Sensitive witnesses ... noted that when pregnancy occurred it nearly always led to the establishment of a common household, and indeed in many areas marriage or cohabitation was not initiated until pregnancy had occurred ... In a case where the man involved could not or would not live with the woman, a sum of money was paid ... Sex was part of courting, and courting led to family life. If a man tried to enjoy the first without doing his duty by the second, community sanctions and pressures would often be brought into play, including public humiliations and loss of employment ... For in an old working-class community the pressure towards sexual conformity was usually very strong.

As Taylor (1983:196) noted 'this was hardly the unregulated, unstructured promiscuity' described by middle-class observers, nor, however, was it any less patriarchal in its effects; where childbirth occurred women's material dependency on men was 'virtually inescapable'.

Taylor's (1983) evidence highlights the enduring moral judgements over working-class women's sexuality. Such judgements were apparent in the 1842 Mines Commission Report (Bradley 1989:109) where never 'was the theme of sexuality made so explicit or conveyed in such blunt language', the commissioners referenced evidence of girls working 'naked to the waist' with 'many a one with her breasts hanging out' and commented that 'No brothel can beat it':

The reader of the report was provided with salacious details ... Colliers spoke of having intercourse in the mine, of horseplay between groups of adolescents and of all sorts of debauched behaviour: drunkenness, swearing, fights in which clothing was ripped off; 'the women are wickeder by th' half than the men,' said a Lancashire man (Bradley, 1989:110).

Such reports made hitherto invisible/unknown lives visible/knowable but they represented the working-class as saturated with sex. These were partial representations of the lives observed, constructed according to evidence deemed worthy of record; partial due to the absence of factors unrecorded/unnoticed by observers, they are a reflection of middle-class dispositions towards those observed<sup>5</sup>.

Visibility is central to Foucault's theorisations, it is related to what power/knowledge guides one to see. It is also linked to corrective action: what is to be done with those identified as problematic (Lidchi, 2003:195). Indeed processes of representation are involved in making visible those who are (or are not) deemed problematic; as well as making visible those lifestyles with which we should identify or aspire to and those we should not. Representation mobilizes and reproduces images, categories and stereotypes that are familiar to us, but, as we saw in chapter two, these all too often reflect 'the prejudices, beliefs and anxieties that hold sway' (Scruton, 2004:170). It could be argued that such 'prejudices, beliefs and anxieties' emerged in the nineteenth-century.

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<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to judge the motivations involved retrospectively, such representation might be understood as a distorted fetishism due to the repressed sexuality of the observer. Alternatively, they could be exaggerations on the part of interested parties to convince others that something had to be done.

The zeal for classification and control at this time made the masses visible and identifiable. Moreover, 'they' were assigned all the attributes that the new bourgeoisie did not want to possess and/or feared (i.e. rampant sexuality). The discourses produced did not reflect these differences rather they created them:

... as a science that mobilizes a classificatory system it manufactures these distinctions on the basis of a certain representation of this difference, and subsequently uses this typology to determine whom it seeks to study and what the best research methods to employ might be (Lidchi, 2003:186).

The masses were thus constructed as a pathological 'other'. But due to the productive nature of modern power the dividing practices did not stop here. Foucault argued, the institutions of the new bourgeoisie employed a:

"divide and rule" tactic against the urban masses, cultivating and heightening the gap between the respectable proletarianized "plebs", who had passed through the training school of factory discipline, and the lumpen category of the criminal, marginal, and precarious fringes of the reserve army' (in Faubion, 2002:xv).

Taylor (1983:201) comments that by the 1830s there was a 'hardening of the line' between working-class sexual respectability and 'irregular' behaviour; the anti-erotic attitudes of the middle-classes were appearing in the working-class. One outcome of a growing 'respectable' proletariat was that the 'lumpen' category was further pathologised.

Squires (1990:72) refers to the processes above as a 'social interventionist phase' in the development of the modern state; by which:

... discipline insinuates itself into the entirety of social relations, people become the bearers of their own discipline, increasingly forms of self discipline become encouraged. Resistance or servitude both reinforce the patterns of subordination; the distinctions between oppressor and oppressed seem less clear cut, less tangible and are, therefore, less easily resisted.

This is not to say that repressive legislation did not result, indeed young women were often targeted by such legislation. Muncie (2004:7) argues that 'concern was only directed towards girls when it was considered that they lacked domestic and moral surveillance'. Consequently any signs of female autonomy were likely to be subjected to official intervention. Taylor (1983) details the Bastardy Clauses in the New Poor Law (1834) that removed unmarried mothers' right to financial support from absent fathers:

Seldom was the underlying unity of evangelical and Malthusian mentalities so obvious as in [the Bastardy Clauses] which was defended with a judicious combination of pious moralism and economic logic. By throwing the full weight of child support on the woman, government spokesman argued, she would be punished for the 'terrible sin' of fornication (thus satisfying God's commands) and also dissuaded from further 'imprudent' pregnancies (thus lowering the rate of population growth). In the words of Lord Althorp, women would learn 'always to bear in mind their individual responsibility and be either the wives of their lovers, or nothing at all' (Taylor, 1983:201).

Clearly this was class and sex legislation. So too was the Contagious Diseases Act 1864 which allowed for the 'sanitary inspection of prostitutes in specific military depots' (Walkowitz, 1985:176). This example illustrates the competition between discourses and the circulation of power. Hygienists implicated 'fallen

women' as pollutants of men, in contrast feminist philanthropists, campaigning to repeal the Act, depicted prostitutes as 'victims of male pollution' (Walkowitz, 1985:176). Such feminists defended prostitutes against the authorities in the spirit of motherhood and sisterhood; thus invoking traditional familial roles. Simultaneously however, their strategy 'sanctioned an authority relationship between older, middle-class women and young working-class women that, although caring and protective, was also hierarchical and custodial (Walkowitz, 1985:177). The material existence of the young women to be protected was ignored:

... the young women brought under the Acts lived as part of a distinct female subgroup in common lodging houses, among a heterogeneous community of the casual labouring poor. They were both victims and survivors. The 'unskilled daughters of the unskilled classes', their lives were a piece with the large body of labouring women who had to eke out a precarious living in the urban job market, for whom sexual coercion was but one form of exploitation to which they were subjected. But prostitutes were not simply victims of male sexual abuse: they could act in their own defence, both individually and collectively, while prostitution itself constituted a 'refuge from uneasy circumstances' for young women who had to live outside the family and who had to choose among a series of unpleasant alternatives (Walkowitz, 1985:177).

France (2007:12) reiterates that concerns over sexually transmitted diseases led to interventions in girls' lives; he argues that:

... throughout modernity, moral reformers, political commentators and the media continued to focus attention on the sexual behaviour of girls. This tended to be interpreted as a sign of moral decline amongst the poor. Girls who were defined as 'sexually promiscuous' were also usually defined as 'troublesome'.

In the nineteenth-century (and now, as we shall later see) working-class young women enter the debate in limited, but almost always sexualised, ways. They are frequently depicted as victims but equally represented as immoral, sexually precocious and deliberate single mothers or seductresses; either way they are always contrasted with an idealized femininity that embodies sexual respectability and domesticity.

Where representations of the sexual behaviour of working-class women caused outrage, representations of the behaviour of their young encouraged fear and disgust. Pearson's (1983) examination of texts from the nineteenth-century illustrates this. He argues that from the early 1800s onwards there was 'a fitful preoccupation' with juvenile crime and disorder and 'various signs of incohesion and demoralisation described: drunkenness, parental irresponsibility, heathen ignorance, promiscuity, the breakdown of the old traditions, and decreasing respect for order among the lower orders' (Pearson, 1983:157). Pearson's (1983:157-8) quote from the Reverend Henry Worsley's *Juvenile Depravity* 1849 sets the tone:

A bane to society, which like an ulcer on the body, is continually enlarging and distributing far and wide its noxious influence ... a general and latent depravity<sup>6</sup>, which a large extent of juvenile depravity seems to indicate, is a state under which the manufacture of a nation must eventually decline, agriculture languish, and commerce disappear ... The numerous juvenile offenders, whose precocity in wickedness is subject of grief and alarm to every well-regulated mind ... the overwhelming mass of vice and crime, now deluging our land ... the increasing degeneracy of the juvenile population ... the current of iniquity which at the present sweeps through our streets ... The statistics of crime cannot develop in half or in a quarter of its fearful extent ... can never trace the monster roots of vice, how widely they spread and diverge themselves, or how deeply they penetrate the congenial soil.

In the search for causal explanation many philanthropists and commentators again identified family and community: 'It was in the failures of parents to inculcate morality, coupled with the contagion of bad habits within the corrupt milieu of city life, that the roots of criminality and vice were to be found' (Rose, 1999:156). As has been argued, it was believed that domesticated families offered a solution to this crime, disease, indigence, inebriety, promiscuity and immorality and it was hoped that through philanthropy the reconstruction of the working-class family could occur.

Further, in the nineteenth-century discourses on youth become discourses about 'problem' youth. Explanations for the 'problem' were located in the culture of working-class communities; the answer was to reorganise working-class arrangements and legislate for immorality through coercion, thus philanthropy:

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<sup>6</sup> Worsley's reference to 'a general and latent depravity' reflects a common tendency for social commentaries to slip into prediction and thus exaggerate the condition being described (Cohen, 2005, p46). Also note the use of metaphorical language which connotes pollution and disease.

... sought a prophylactic mode of action, endeavouring to promote certain kinds of moral conduct by coupling the provision of financial aid with conditions as to the future conduct of recipient. ... Assistance was thus conditional upon marriage, good housekeeping, sobriety, moral supervision of children, and the search for wage labour (Rose, 1999:129).

The discourse delimited the field of possible explanations; then (as now) material inequality and deprivation were ignored (Pearson, 1983). Moreover, by the mid nineteenth-century some commentators believed the project of familialization futile. In 1846 for instance, a Walter Buchanan argued that the parents of juvenile criminals 'care no more for their offspring than hyenas for their whelps after they are suckled' (Pearson, 1983:159). In 1843 Lord Ashley of Shaftsbury described a situation where 'The morals of children are tenfold worse than formerly', providing evidence from around the country where girls 'drink, swear, fight, smoke, whistle, sing, and care for nobody'<sup>7</sup>. Lord Shaftsbury demanded of the House of Commons a 'system of elementary schooling for the children of the 'dangerous classes' believing 'education would instil a proper respect for law, property, and order among the masses' and thus would serve as a corrective for inadequate parenting (Pearson, 1983:160-1). I will now discuss the development of the education system.

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<sup>7</sup> According to sections of the press, as we shall see later, this is not unlike the scenes replicated in 'our towns and cities' on a Saturday night.

## **Education**

Where Rose (1999) and Taylor (1983) point to the reformation of the working-class and their offspring through familiarization, Pearson (1983) and Valentine (1996) point to calls for reformation through education, Pearson (1983:182) argued that:

The reformation of the rising generation was arguably the only means by which to maintain effective control over a fractious people. The education of the young would prevent the working-class from reproducing itself in its present condition – vicious, criminal, heathen, drunken, dangerous and chartist – because the adult population, it was commonly said, were beyond reclamation.

Similarly, Valentine (1996:584) argues that education was perceived as the ‘only solution to prevent the ‘dangerous classes’ from continually reproducing their malevolent characteristics’ (Hendrick, 1990 in Valentine, 1996). Pick (1983:64) identifies the 1870 Education Act as an antidote to lawless youth; and quotes The Century Magazine’s (1887-1888) argument that: ‘The system is not a largess to the recipient, but a natural measure of self-defence’. Valentine (1996:584) identified mixed motives, some perceived children as ‘a natural resource ... to be nurtured and conserved’; others believed the brutalisation of the working-class ‘would lead to moral and social instability’.

Though there had been various ‘ragged schools’ and locally based provision, it was not until 1870 that the state introduced education for all (able-bodied that is). In effect, the 1870 education Act introduced ‘the conceptualisation of a national childhood’ (Goldson, 2004:6). The introduction of elementary schooling was

central both to the ordering of society and the regulation of working-class youth. According to Murdock and McCron (1976:192) 'our modern images of youth and adolescence' were created in these developments. But, initially, the new 'ethos of youth' applied only to the middle classes:

In successive decades however, it was increasingly detached from this original social base and generalized into a description of a universal stage of individual maturation, so that by the turn of the century the social norms of the middle class had become enshrined as the 'natural' attributes of youth per se. From the outset, this image of youth carried a peculiarly powerful cultural charge and was intimately bound up with the hopes and fears of a middle class struggling to hold its own against threats both at home and abroad (Murdock and McCron, 1976:192).

As Valentine (1996:584) argues the development of education enabled the middle-class to simultaneously 'control their own children' and impose their values universally. It was not that the masses had not engaged with education previously, for they had 'made their own arrangements' so to speak; the creation of elementary schooling involved the destruction of alternative forms:

National education was not simply a matter of providing an elementary education to a class that was otherwise intellectually and morally destitute; it was, rather a matter of providing a particular form of education to a class which had (however unsystematically) alternative forms available (Corrigan and Frith, 1976:233).

What was produced was 'a complex machinery to regulate working-class education', knowledge and behaviour (Corrigan and Frith, 1976:233). State

Inspectors condemned existent local provision on a number of counts, Corrigan and Frith (1976:234) summarize: ‘such education was anarchy – the books they wanted to read! No proper teacher! No organisation! No moral structure!’ Above all, inspectors seemed to be concerned that ‘the mind of the growing youth was left to his own direction’ (Corrigan and Frith, 1976:234). Such a direction leads to grounded, partial, illegitimate knowledge, as opposed to authoritative, legitimated bourgeois truth.

As Rose (1999:182) highlights however, throughout the development of education there have been two distinct educations: one for the privileged and one for the working-class:

The former has sought, by and large, to maximise the potential of the adult that the child will become, seeking to convince parents that a particular way of thinking about and acting upon the child in its infancy will help them promote their lineage and secure the best future for their offspring. The latter has sought, in different ways, to minimize the threat to social well-being that the future adult might represent, by supplementing the work of the mother in various ways.

Moreover, with the introduction of elementary schooling there continued a political ordering of life, in which individual young people were first differentiated, then disciplined, rewarded or punished and made into docile bodies. According to Foucault (1991:147):

The organisation of a serial space was one of the great technical mutations of elementary schooling [...] By assigning individual spaces it made possible the supervision of each individual and the simultaneous work of all. It organized a new economy of the time of apprenticeship. It made the educational space function like a learning machine, but also as a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding.

Schools equate to 'architectural, functional and hierarchical' disciplinary mechanisms that, together with 'the constitution of *'tableaux vivants'* ... transform the confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities' (Foucault, 1991:148). Furthermore, 'the table was both a technique of power and a procedure of knowledge'<sup>8</sup> (Foucault, 1991:148). The 'tableaux vivants' was not simply a taxonomy leading to the constitution of classes; it was disciplinary in that:

It allows both the characterization of the individual as individual and the ordering of a given multiplicity. It is the first condition for the control and use of an ensemble of distinct elements: the base for a micro-physics of what might be called a 'cellular' power (Foucault, 1991:149).

The nineteenth-century development of elementary schooling is often understood as a programme to impart knowledge and skills that would enable participation in the labour market. More recently it is promoted as a vehicle for equality of opportunity. But various theorists have argued that education is about more than this: the discourse of education has discursive and material effects for young people. For Althusser schools were an 'ideological state apparatus' that served to

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<sup>8</sup> Rose (1999, p135-154) illustrates a similar construction of tables 'under the gaze of the psychologist' in the study of child development.

impose 'legitimate' knowledge; by which individuals are hailed into certain subject positions and made agents/carriers of social structure (Thompson, 1992:342). Bourdieu (2005:49) argued that schooling contributed to the establishment of a 'hierarchy of linguistic practices'. This resulted in a 'symbolic domination' that induces collaboration from dominated speakers. Symbolic domination succeeds through 'suggestions inscribed in the most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life', these equate to powerful injunctions because they are 'silent and insidious, insistent and insinuating' (Bourdieu, 2005:51). Moreover:

The power of suggestion which is exerted through things and persons and which, instead of telling the child what he must do, tells him what he is, and thus leads him to become durably what he has to be, is the condition for the effectiveness of all kinds of symbolic power that will subsequently be able to operate on a habitus predisposed to respond to them (Bourdieu, 2005:52).

Further, schools are a disciplinary mechanism; they regulate and control pupils with the aim of moulding them into docile bodies (Foucault, 1991). It is in this sense that schools are perceived as a 'corrective' institution to the inadequate socialization and discipline of the young in working-class communities. Moreover, the emergence of education was closely accompanied by the construction of the 'juvenile delinquent' (Valentine, 1996:584). We will now attend to youth Justice.

## Punishment

The justice system underwent massive changes during the nineteenth-century. The growing dominance of a discourse of childhood innocence together with the implicit implication that young criminals were victims of adult corruption, affected the ways in which young people were dealt with profoundly. The requirement that young people be treated differently from adults was emerging. In this section I will detail the development of a specific youth justice system.

In the nineteenth-century, as we have seen, ‘vagrancy and the sight of children eking out a living on the streets’ was increasingly ‘viewed as a serious social problem’; such youth ‘necessarily lived on the edge of crime’<sup>9</sup> (Muncie, 2004:56). The visibility of a considerable number of homeless young people caused ‘notable unease to the literate middle class’ (Pick, 1983:64). Muncie (2004:56) asserts this was not solely about criminality but also ‘the need to tackle a ‘premature precocity’, symbolized by promiscuity, irreligion, pauperism and knowledge of ‘the adult world and its pleasures’. As such the problem identified was as much moral as it was criminal.

Muncie (2004:57) refers to research by *The Society Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis* (1815) which concluded that ‘the main causes of delinquency were the ‘improper conduct of parents’, ‘the want of education’, ‘the want of suitable employment’ and ‘violation of the Sabbath’. Investigators also highlighted the criminogenic nature of the justice system:

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<sup>9</sup> Figures from the London Metropolitan Police in 1847 showed that of those taken into custody ‘16,000 were below the age of twenty, nearly 4000 under the age of fifteen, and 362 below the age of ten’ (Pick, 1983:64).

Dreadful is the situation of the young offender: he becomes the victim of circumstances over which he has no control. The laws of his country operate not to restrain, but to punish, him. The tendency of the police is to accelerate his career in crime. If when apprehended, he has not attained the full measure of guilt, the nature of his confinement is almost sure to complete it; and discharged as he frequently is, penniless, without friends, character or employment, he is driven, for a subsistence, to the renewal of depredations (in Muncie, 2004:57).

Until the late nineteenth-century no distinction was made between child and adult criminals; they were treated similarly. Summary sentencing to imprisonment or flogging was commonplace for both. However, the evidence suggested that such punishments did not work for young people; punishment simply led to a life of criminality; 'it was argued that these institutions were corrupting young people' (Valentine, 1996:584). Pressure to provide alternative arrangements for young criminals was mounting. The society referenced above 'proposed a separate system of dealing with the young offender: one that depended on the 'mildness of persuasion' and the 'gentleness of reproof' rather than the infliction of bodily punishment' (Muncie, 2004:57). Because the cause of youth crime was located in inadequate and immoral parents a form of punishment akin to a disciplinary family was advocated:

The child must be placed where the prevailing principle will be, as far as practicable, carried out –where he will be gradually restored to the true position of childhood ... he must perceive by manifestations which he cannot mistake that this power, whilst controlling him, is guided by interest and love; he must have his own affections called forth by the obvious personal interest felt in his own individual well-being by those around him, he must, in short, be placed in a family (Carpenter, 1853, in Muncie, 2004:61).

In other words, correctional institutions should resemble a substitute family. In reality the regime was often 'hardly less repressive than that afforded to adults' (Muncie, 2004:59). In Britain from the outset, however, two groups of 'problem' youth had been identified: those 'troublesome', 'perishing' and already criminal (but still considered children) and those neglected/vagrant. The difference between the two was blurred from the start; the latter group being considered 'incipient criminals':

In a series of Acts from 1854 onwards, reformatory schools were established for the former and industrial schools for the latter, and provisions were extended to include in this category children thought to be in 'need of care and protection' or 'beyond parental control' (Rose, 1999:156).

Reformatories were established by act of parliament in 1854 and by 1884 there were sixty-two reformatory schools in England and Scotland (forty-two for boys and twenty for girls) (Redfern, 2006:94).

Moreover, during the nineteenth-century the ways in which the criminal justice system perceived young criminals changed dramatically and the notion of original sin found in the evil child was receding. The delinquent was now constructed as victim:

The terms that emerged to describe the problem were 'unnatural independence', 'deterioration', 'contamination' and 'parental neglect and irresponsibility'. Delinquency and youth behaviour in general became firmly associated with conditions of working-class family life. Victorian concern encompassed orphans, the illegitimate, the deserted, the independent young and anyone who failed to live up to the middle-class assumptions of normal family life ... The roots of social disorder were tied directly to the family and the moral life of the poorer classes (Muncie, 2004:62).

Furthermore, by the end of nineteenth-century families were regulated as far as possible but in the absence of parents or where parents were judged incapable of adequate moralization, children would be relocated in industrial schools, such institutions again operating as a corrective; substitute family. The introduction of industrial schools had far reaching discursive effects:

The reformatories and industrial schools were institutional responses to 'justice' and 'welfare needs', embodying the separation of 'depraved' from 'deprived' children and of the 'undeserving' from the 'deserving'. Moreover, they were institutional manifestations of a reconstructed childhood (Goldson, 2004:6).

Both the reformatories and industrial schools can be viewed as the material manifestations for discursive and non-discursive action: their nineteenth-century dispositives. Such dispositives were to develop further in the twentieth-century.

## **Twentieth-century Developments:**

At the turn of the twentieth-century Britain was once again absorbed in socio-economic change and the role of the state was again being redefined (Goldson, 2004:7). Despite the endurance of poverty, it was a time of economic expansionism:

Britain was negotiating its place within an emerging world economic, social and political order and it was a time of great uncertainty which inevitably affected children as 'philanthropy took second place to unadulterated imperialism (and children) were thought of as "Bricks for Empire Building" (Bean and Melville, in Goldson, 2004:7).

The nineteenth-century desire to rescue and reform children had turned into a desire to include children in the nation's interest. The 'post-Boer war movement for 'national efficiency', education, racial hygiene, responsible parenthood, social purity and preventative medicine' stimulated this (Hendrick, 2003:49).

At this juncture the state continued to intervene; various legislative Acts were introduced which legally enforced the concept of childhood as vulnerable and in need of protection. The 1878 Factory and Workshops Act had restricted children's working hours and it 'complemented school attendance by raising the minimum age of employment to ten years'<sup>10</sup>. The Age of Consent Act 1885 raised consent to sixteen years and The Prevention of Cruelty to and Neglect of Children Act 1889 intended to do as it stated (Hendrick, 2003:49). Such legislative change

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/so/youthchron/>

continued into the twentieth-century with the introduction of The School Feeding of Necessitous Children Act (1906), the School Medical Inspection Act (1908) and the Infant Welfare Act (1918). This legislation imposed 'class dominated and expert' constructions of childhood, as Hendrick (2003:51) notes: 'children were being reconstructed as material investments in national progress'.

The idea that children were key to the nation's future was being established. Concern towards children thus shifted from their survival to the realisation of their potential (Hendrick, 2003:49). Goldson (2004:7) argues that 'the ascendancy of Social Darwinism and the eugenics movement focussed attention on the importance of creating and sustaining the conditions within which children could develop healthily for the 'good of the nation''. Though Eugenicists believed reproduction in degenerate families could be curbed by 'segregation or sterilization'; they were 'only one group among many who believed the reproduction of the children of the nation could not be left to chance' (Rose, 1999:139).

Indeed the eugenicist desire to forge a link between hereditary biology and social worth was realized by psychologists (Rose, 1999:141). It was within this context that 'child psychology and the child-study movement emerged and developed, forming the basis of a new authoritative scientism' (Goldson, 2004:7). We will now discuss the development of psychological discourses.

## **The psychological establishment of normality**

The Child Study Movement (established in the late nineteenth-century, see chapter three) was an early influence in the rise of developmental child psychology. It employed natural history techniques to the study of childhood and these revealed children to be natural creatures (Hendrick, 2003:48). Indeed the Child Study Movement:

Popularised the view that the child's conception differed from that of adults, that there were marked differences in normal mental development; and that there were similarities between the mental worlds of children and primitives (Hendrick, 2003:48).

Although there had been nineteenth-century interest in child development, it was in the early twentieth-century that psychological discourses with a gloss of scientific respectability, came to be established. Mass schooling was utilized as an evidence base, but this 'made visible the difference between those who did or did not, could or could not, would or would not learn the lessons of the institution' (Rose, 1999:136).

Such 'scientific' research quickly focussed on those unable to learn (Rose, 1999:140). The problem was to find techniques that could consistently and rigorously ascertain these children and separate them from the population in order to 'reawaken their sensibilities and increase their resistance to the temptations of vice and crime' (Rose, 1999:140). The development of intelligence tests began in an attempt to make 'invisible differences legible' (Rose, 1999:140). Rose (1999:142) argues that such tests enabled age specific norms of performance to be

established, and these were utilized to illustrate degrees of backwardness as 'defective children could be seen to bear a striking resemblance to normal children some years younger'.

Further, such tests were used to create a hierarchy of normality. Rose (1999) highlights the work of Gesell (begun 1910). Gesell utilized photographic images to record, compare and contrast children's development. Descriptive captions and tables accompanied the images and accordingly 'condensed the meaning of many pictures into a single frame'. Thus:

Non-intellectual behaviour was ... rendered into thought, disciplined normalized, and made legible, inscribable, calculable. Norms of posture and locomotion; of vocabulary, comprehension and conversation, of personal habits, initiative, independence, and play could now be deployed in evaluation and diagnosis. The discourse of development established a system of perception that was capable of grasping any feature of life that could be construed as changing over time. It grasped life in a form that could be effected through a few simple operations: advanced or retarded? By how many months? In the table life becomes pre-digested, pre-calibrated, pre-normalized (Rose, 1999:152).

Such developmental scales were more than a means of assessment; these new ways of seeing and thinking spread and were quickly institutionalised in work with children. Again the new knowledge had discursive and material effects for children and their families:

In the space between the behaviours of actual children and the ideals of the norm, new desires and expectations, and new fears and anxieties could be inspired in parents, new administrative and reformatory aspirations awakened in professionals. With the rise of a normative expertise of childhood, family life and subjectivity could be governed in a new way (Rose, 1999:154).

In effect the above knowledge produced another discursive child, one that James et al (2001) identify as the naturally developing child. This discourse resulted from the 'alliance between the human sciences and human nature' found in developmental psychology described above. The discourse capitalizes: 'on two everyday assumptions: first, that children are natural rather than social phenomena; and secondly, that part of this naturalness extends to the inevitable process of their maturation' (James et al, 2001:17). The work of Piaget is also crucial to understanding the naturally developing child because it is here that we find the 'predictable' stages of development mapped out:

ordered temporally and arranged hierarchically along a continuum from infantile, 'figurative' thought, which has relatively low status, up to adult, 'operative' intelligence, which has high status' and equates to 'achieved and deserved' competence (James et al, 2001:18).

In effect, the discourse of developmental psychology constructed children as developing/ evolving into adults according to predictable laws of nature; failure to reach stages suggested pathological and unnatural development (i.e.: 'freaks of nature'). Moreover, Walkerdine (1998:80) argues that this discourse was 'modelled on an active, rationally enquiring boy'. Walkerdine (1998:80) argues that the girl was never 'rational enough to be a natural child' yet her potential to

be 'the nurturant mother-figure' was nonetheless essential, she was to be responsible for the development of the natural child.

In addition to the naturally developing child above, James et al (2001) also identify a fifth pre-sociological conceptualisation: the unconscious child. The discourse of the unconscious child results from the impact of Freudian theory at the turn of the twentieth-century, this 'opened up a concern with childhood as adult pasts,' (James et al, 2001:20). Freud theorized the psyche into three elements: id, ego and super-ego. The id is an unconscious a mixture of primal, instinctive, essentially libidinal drives dominated by pleasure and impulsion and is incompatible with collective life; it must, therefore, be curbed, repressed. Once more the potential evil child emerges to be regulated and disciplined. The ego echoes the immanent child; through interaction and experience the self adjusts to others and the id is monitored. The super-ego represents successful development, it is 'the experience of the collective other which regulates the presentations of self and integrates the child into the world of adult conduct' (James, et al, 2001:20).

Moreover, psychoanalytical knowledge linked psychological problems in adulthood with 'minor and apparently inconsequential disturbances of emotion and conduct in childhood' (Rose, 1999:157). In this discourse then deviance in adulthood is causally explained with reference to childhood and 'throughout late modernity this has developed into an equation of parent-child relationships, transforming the child into the unconscious self' (James et al, 2001:20). Thus deviancy blurred the distinction between criminal and 'neglected' children:

The offence ... was only the outcome of neglect, and neglect, soon enough, would lead to an offence. In either case, what one was seeing was a psychological problem, the outcome of the effects of something wrong in the home on the psychology of the child (Rose, 1999:157).

Consequently familial relationships were once again emphasized. Such a causal link made early identification and correction of abnormal development crucial; a host of material manifestations again assisted (schools, juvenile courts, 'child guidance clinics'); all were informed by the 'new psychological thinking' and sought to persuade the family to protect their child's psychological development: the family was incited 'to take on board the production of normal subjects' (Rose, 1999:160).

Knowledge emanating from these discourses proposed that the well-adjusted child was one whose instincts were correctly channelled, 'for instincts had evolved in such a way that an adjusted child was the natural outcome of a normal family' and consequently, any signs of maladjustment indicated 'something wrong in the emotional economy of the family'; ranging from outright abuse to loving children too much (Rose, 1999:159).

Unconscious motivation became key in explanations of family difficulty and 'problem' youth; interventions took on a psychodynamic character. Consideration of mental health was central in the development of services targeted at problem families and children. Psychoanalysis had thus constructed childhood as the location of adult deviance; which resulted when children's instincts and drives were incorrectly managed and disciplined. The effects of this entanglement of

discourse strands culminated following the Second World War when the importance of the mother came to the fore and in which 'the mundane tasks of mothering came to be rewritten as emanations of a natural and essential state of love' (Rose, 1999:160). Moreover, at this time the family was once again identified as the site of criminogenesis.

### **Locating Criminogenesis: The Maternal Relation**

Young (1996:148) has commented that it is difficult to 'discern where criminology ends and psychology begins'. This is due to a psychological fascination with criminality and within which law breaking is judged to be due to psychological trouble (individual pathology). In both criminology and psychology the family (especially the 'broken home') became focussed upon as a site of criminogenesis. Young (1996:139) utilized Burt (1944<sup>11</sup>) to illustrate the shortcomings identified in the family in the mid twentieth-century.

Cyril Burt (1883-1976), an educational psychologist, was adamant that criminality was not hereditary, rather there were multiple factors leading to crime. Though Burt acknowledged that poverty could be a 'spur to dishonesty and wrong', the most influential cause was 'defective family relationships' (Young, 1996:139). Burt identified a number of defective parental behaviours leading to delinquency including: the 'thoughtless begetting of children' (i.e. instinctive reproduction as opposed to planned; rational); families where one biological parent 'forms a liaison with another adult'; and the existence of working, 'absent' mothers who,

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<sup>11</sup> Burt (1944) *The sub-normal school-child, Vol 1 The Young delinquent*.

neglecting their duty of vigilance at home, 'have helped greatly ... to swell the ranks of youthful crime' (Burt, 1944, in Young, 1996:139). Burt also identified the 'vicious home', with its 'indecent speech and behaviour', 'irregular unions', 'sexual molestation of the child by its own relatives' and within which the 'commonest and most remarked' feature is 'drunkenness'. For Burt (1944) such families:

All tend to set up, by their progressive effect upon the young and sensitive mind, such a sense of injustice, such feelings of indignity, wretchedness, and apprehension, that, as he grows more critical and independent, he finds himself at length impelled to seek relief of distraction by some vehement deed of his own. He may lose self-command, and blindly strike an offending or unoffending party. He may hand on the maltreatment to one of his own tiny juniors, hurting as he has been hurt, cursing as he has been cursed (1944 in Young, 1996:140)<sup>12</sup>.

Some aspects of this thesis would not have been out of place in the mid nineteenth-century, material conditions are absent, moral indignation present. Nevertheless, material inequalities were of utmost concern in Government policy around this time. When the Beveridge report was published (1942) it set out a view of society where poverty would be ended once and for all: the plan was to attack the five great evils: physical want, disease (which often caused want and trouble), ignorance, squalor (due to the haphazard distribution of industry and population) and idleness. The report was not concerned to increase wealth but to redistribute it. Squires (1990:26) argues however that a particular conception of Britishness was central to the Beveridge report, within this women were allotted

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<sup>12</sup> The similarity of the quote above to the Independent's explanation of Venables and Thompson in chapter two is striking.

the role of continuing the 'British race' and 'British ideals' in the world. Such concerns were the considerations behind family and maternity allowances.

Nevertheless, all of this is absent in Burt's explanation. Rather Burt invokes the corruption of innocence. Though multiple causes are acknowledged, and indeed somewhat similar to the concerns raised by Beveridge, the family is marked apart as chiefly responsible. Others, not least Bowlby, reinforced this position. The work of Bowlby (1940s and 1950s) served to naturalize the mother-child relationship:

It is submitted that the evidence is now such that it leaves no room for doubt ... that the prolonged deprivation of the young child of maternal care may have grave and far-reaching effects on his character and on the whole of his future life (Bowlby, 1952, in Rose, 1999:155).

Bowlby had discovered 'a highly variable set of relations between 'deprivation' and 'personality'', and in order to understand these differences Bowlby advocated attention to the minutiae of deprivation<sup>13</sup> (Rose, 1999:168). Thus research:

... must pay attention not only to the ages and periods of deprivation but also to the quality of the child's relation to his mother before deprivation, his experiences with mother-substitutes, if any, during separation, and the reception he gets from his mother or foster mother when at last he becomes settled again (Bowlby, 1952, in Rose:168)

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<sup>13</sup> This is not dissimilar to the position of Gerando (1833) in chapter four.

Such a (im)position transformed a concern with an absence of the mother into concern over the type of mother. It led to the development of a set of tightly specified, ideal mother-child relations. Further, a 'refined psychoanalytic vision of childhood' was produced (Rose, 1999:168). Consequently, 'psychoanalysis was to become a theory of development, and, what is more, a theory of the role of the mother in the development of the adjusted and maladjusted ego' (Rose, 1999:169).

Coppock (2004:150) asserts, it was: 'a convenient message to all those women 'surplus to requirements' in the post war employment market. Women's futures lay in motherhood as their children's mental health depended on it'. Young (1996:149) asserts that mother-love became as important as nutrition for the infant. Further, Young (1996:149) argues that although Bowlby had stressed the diversity of maternal relations, the term 'maternal deprivation' 'implied a single syndrome of unitary causation'; where 'any blame for delinquent behaviour ...could be laid at the feet of the mother'. Similarly, Singer concluded that 'through the child, the mother was made responsible for violence and social chaos in the world outside the family, a world from which she was more or less excluded' (1992, in Coppock, 2004:150).

In the discourse of maternal deprivation the child became a citizen with the right to a family. Gone was the evil child of earlier constructions; replaced by the drives and 'needs' of the unconscious child. In such a discourse there is a virtual absence of any notion of external factors or the part that structural and material inequality might play. Naturalizing the mother/child relationship effectively

pathologised those departing from, protesting or unable to fulfil the obligations of the relationship; indeed once the well-adjusted child had been constructed as the beneficiary of sound mental health the not-so-well adjusted came to be constructed as mentally unhealthy, abnormal, pathological. That 'natural' mothering produced 'normal' children became commonsensical (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). The inherent contradiction apparent in this development concerns the ways in which the family is presented as natural whilst simultaneously seen to require guidance, training, supervision. Far from being natural the family had become subject to the 'normative scrutiny of expertise' (Rose, 1999:177).

By the fifties and sixties the evil child had virtually disappeared and discourses on youth now generally alluded to some notion of childhood immanence. In effect, explanations for 'problematic' youthful behaviour inevitably pulled on notions of external influences and had thus become more 'sociological' so to speak.

Nevertheless, by and large this externality was to be spatially restricted to family with parenting being identified as the main cause of 'problem' youth. The shift to parenting as an explanation for 'problem' youth dominated; the welfare state was believed to have compensated for material deprivation and as an explanation it no longer held institutional authority.

Moreover, the discourse plane of psychology had constructed two visions of children: in the discourse of developmental psychology a naturally developing child, and in the discourse of psychoanalysis an unconscious child with instincts and drives. Despite the apparent essentialism however, neither child's development could be left to chance. Rather their development required attention

in order to channel instincts and drives, to mould potential, and to produce psychologically healthy adults. With material deprivation sorted the only explanation for 'problem' youth lay in parental inability/inadequacy (Rose, 1999:177-78). In the post war years this translated into the need for attentive mothers. This explanation was further utilized in post WWII discourses of intelligence and education and is realized in theories of the cycle of deprivation.

### **Cycles of Deprivation**

As Foucault has shown, knowledge once applied has real effects, that is the way we understand/theorize aspects of society then determines the technologies of control and disciplinary mechanisms. It is in this way that the discourse of intelligence impacted on society post WWII.

Until the mid twentieth-century intelligence had been thought of as something one did or did not have; it was an essential/biological trait. Consequently, the structure of society reflected a 'natural' distribution of intelligence; with those at the 'bottom' being seen as least intelligent. However, according to Rose (1999:188), two dominant themes arose post WWII, firstly, psychological discourses had alerted us to the fact that a propensity for learning was inculcated and nurtured during the early years, and secondly, that the working-classes displayed a 'cultural lag'<sup>14</sup> which prevented them from developing this in their children. Such a revelation did little to change the situation of those at the bottom however; the notion of hereditary degeneracy was 'modernised and rewritten in terms of the

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<sup>14</sup> The 'backwardness' of the working-class is another unyielding discourse strand.

malign effects of environment' (Rose, 1999:188) it provided a familiar narrative account for poverty:

Adults who had themselves suffered deprivation and disadvantage as children, were failures at school, got poor jobs, got married too early, brought too many of their own children into the world in poverty and squalor, were too immature or damaged to rear them well and transmitted their poor physical and mental health to the next generation (Rose, 1999:188).

Moreover, the discourse of intelligence was fundamentally changed, and when a 'discourse changes, the object not only changes its meaning, but it becomes a different object; it loses its previous identity' (Jäger, 2005:43). Stratification would now be meritocratic. Where children struggling to learn were once seen as victims of genetics, they came to be seen as victims of their family environment; intelligence was now a matter of agency, a project of the self and parental choice dictated the future success of children. Indeed research throughout the 1960s had 'revealed' correlations between family background and educational success and indicated that parental attitudes and a lack of interest in education resulted in poor school performance (Rose, 1999:189). Take for example the work of Douglas (1964), he found enormous social class differences in the achievement of qualifications. Douglas pointed to various causal factors but gave most importance to the level of parental interest in the child's education. Middle-class children were deemed to be more successful due to high parental interest; their parents were more intellectually stimulating and attentive.

Moreover, by the 1970s the parent/child relationship in the early years was perceived to be of paramount importance. Such a position connects backwards in history to nineteenth-century philanthropic aims to instil 'good' parenting amongst the masses; and it projects forwards to early twenty-first century concerns to correct parental inadequacy through training programmes such as Sure Start<sup>15</sup>.

The cycle of deprivation thesis causally links numerous variables to poor academic performance in children; such variables contribute to the construction of discursive figures, in this case 'educational failures' and 'defective' parents who were/are themselves deprived, disadvantaged, impoverished, poorly educated, working in dead-end jobs with few prospects; physically and mentally immature and unhealthy they instinctively reproduce excessively and are frequently unmarried (perfect targets for Sure Start). Simultaneously and implicitly the good parent is constructed: privileged, advantaged, rich, well educated, working in a good job with good prospects; physically and mentally mature and healthy they plan and limit their reproduction and are married.

Alternative discourses have circulated and competed with those described above.

For instance in the late sixties and seventies new research emerged that postulated

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<sup>15</sup> Sure Start is a Government initiative (i.e.: discursive dispositive) which is targeted at poor communities. It aims to:

'achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by:

- \* increasing the availability of childcare for all children
- \* improving health, education and emotional development for young children
- \* supporting parents as parents and in their aspirations towards employment'

([http://www.surestart.gov.uk/new/about\\_aim.htm](http://www.surestart.gov.uk/new/about_aim.htm)).

In other words it aims to tackle the cycle of deprivation.

an alternative explanation for working-class educational failure and unruly youthful behaviours; both were theorized as resistance to subordination.

### **The Discourse of Resistance:**

This discourse developed when radical and Marxist theories dominated British sociology, a main concern being to make explicit processes of social control (Thompson, 1999:ix). Here, unruly behaviour by white working-class youth was theorized as resistance; social class was seen as a crucial analytical variable. For instance, Cohen (2005), theorized youth deviance as (partly) a solution to structural/cultural tension, P Cohen (1997) theorized it as resistance to subordination. The resistance theme continued through the work of the Birmingham CCCS in *Resistance through Rituals* (1976) where particular attention was paid to decoding style and interpreting it as a 'symbolic resolution' to structural tension, and *Policing the Crisis* (1978) in which moral panic became one method by which the elite secure their hegemony and dominance.

In *Resistance through rituals* Clarke et al (1976:25) questioned the notion that social classes in Britain were converging under the 'holy trinity of affluence, consensus and embourgeoisement' and argued that 'poverty was a structural not an accidental feature of capitalism, that wealth had been only nominally redistributed and that the main beneficiaries of the welfare state were, in fact, the middle-classes' (Clarke et al, 1976:25). For them the apparent consensus was the result of hegemonic practices. Employing Gramsci, they argued that hegemony worked:

... primarily by inserting the subordinate class into the key institutions and structures which support the power of social authority of the dominant order. It is above all, in these structures and relations that a subordinate class *lives its subordination* (Clarke et al, 1976:39).

However, Clarke et al believed that though consensus was imposed, the working-class resisted this imposition. The public presence of unruly working-class youth was theorized as a strategy of resistance; a class dynamic, it was about controlling one's worlds, which in reality are controlled by outsiders (i.e. landlords and councils).

Similar class concerns could be found in relation to working-class educational failure. Take for instance Corrigan and Frith's (1976:235)<sup>16</sup> assertion of a class dynamic in the schools the working-class must attend:

... the evidence is that working-class kids, do, to a greater or lesser extent resist something in the school system – how else explain the overwhelming evidence (that any teacher would confirm) that a school is a battleground, the pupils' weapons ranging from apathy through indiscipline to straight absence ... Every use of formal, repressive power reinforces working-class experience of education as *imposition* (and not as a good-thing-that-will-extend-my-horizons-and-make-me-a-good-person); every (regular) experience of failure confirms the reality that "this place has *nuthin'* for me"

Here then, behaviour that was previously theorized as delinquent, immoral and abnormal is theorized as resistance - it was noted that such acts of resistance were

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<sup>16</sup> See also Willis (1977).

doomed to fail however: 'They 'solve', but in an imaginary way, problems which at the concrete material level remain unresolved (Clarke et al, 1976:45).

Events towards the end of the 1970s undermined the subcultural approach. The approach was criticised for romanticizing and celebrating white working-class young men whilst ignoring the 'real' harm they caused (to themselves and others) and for neglecting other structuring principles such as gender and race and thus ignoring young women and ethnic groups (Griffin, 1993:55). With the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 the economic and ideological project of the new right became foregrounded in analyses. With the youth labour market collapsing attention was diverted towards transitions research; moral panic and subcultural analysis seemed less relevant (MacDonald et al, 2001:2.5). Youth cultural studies did continue and in the 1990s paid great attention to the Club/Rave/Ecstasy scene. Studies of the phenomenon established it as classless, rave was a mass rather than subcultural phenomenon; it did not symbolize working-class resistance to inequality or dominant culture; within it women and minority ethnicities were not marginal and masculinity was not central; the participants had no 'all-consuming style' to de-code; there was no 'beneath the surface' to uncover (Thompson, 1999:55). Thornton (1995) argued that 'Distinction' was central to club culture but this was not class distinction, rather it was distinction from the mainstream and/or authority that is sought<sup>17</sup>.

As P Cohen (1997, p11) has argued 'up to the mid 1970s a working-class hero was still something to be' but they did not 'live up to the revolutionary

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<sup>17</sup> In order to illustrate 'mainstream' however, Thornton called upon the classed stereotypes of 'Sharon and Tracy dancing around their handbags' (in Thompson, 1999:51).

expectations foisted upon them'. According to P Cohen (1997), by the end of the 1970s the rhetoric had switched to a denunciation of working-class racism and sexism, during the 1980s unemployed youth became 'Yobs' and feminist and anti-racist discourses found common ground with the new right against the so-called underclass. Moreover, the strategies of resistance identified amongst working-class youth were taken to signify the collapse of moral order (Hall et al, 2002).

### **The New Right and The discourse of Underclass:**

Until 1979 Britain had experienced a period of 'post-war consensus'. The state was generally paternalistic and ensured the 'economic and social well-being' of citizens 'by underwriting some of the costs and ill effects of economic production' (David, 1986:141). Conversely, the Thatcher Government believed this duty to have become a 'fetter on the economy and contributed to economic decline' (David, 1986:p141). This belief was the basis of what was to come. Its essence was ideological.

The new right developed from a blend of old revamped ideas mixed with an ideological shift away from government intervention 'which was condemned as collectivist, socialist and economically misguided' (Levitas, 1986:3). They believed more harm than good was done by 'distorting or interfering with the *natural* working of society and the market economy' (Benyon, 1989:101). Their first aim was to 'enable the private sector to flourish by reducing taxation and by lowering the rate of inflation', introducing a blend of economic liberalism and monetarism (O'Donnell, 1987:38). This was a 'Liberal strand' with a strain of Austrian economic thought that saw the market and private ownership as 'natural'

because it ensured a division of labour and allowed efficient allocation of resources (Gamble, 1991:88). Gamble (1991:88) also identified a 'conservative strand' concerned with authority, hierarchy and nation.

Within this those once given authority to speak were systematically undermined. Indeed, conservatives disassociated themselves from ideology whilst characterising it 'as a negative or *alien* mode of thought' (Eccleshall, 1990:2). Conservatives did not share the enlightenment belief that research could improve society through social engineering, and believed 'liberals and socialists [to be] starry-eyed extremists who indulge in a perverted form of knowledge in the vain hope of eradicating human imperfection' (Eccleshall, 1990:2). Support for progressive causes was seen as the 'intrusion of foreign ideological influences' and domestic radicals were accused of being 'infected with the bug of European rationalism' (Eccleshall, 1990:2-3).

Once again the family became targeted. As recession hit, women were accused of taking men's work; the new right believed that 'women ought to take up their natural duties as wives, mothers and daughters and abandon their claim to be workers and citizens' (Carter, 1988:102).

Moreover, the new right developed a discourse of poverty that constructed the poor as culturally deficient and therefore responsible for the 'growth of poverty and incivility among the poor'; single parents were singled out to promote this view (Taylor, 1993:18).

For instance, in 1974 Keith Joseph argued, that families ‘were the foundation of the nation but [were] being undermined by a new establishment which favoured permissiveness and collectivism’; such collectivism undermined parental responsibility and broke down morals (Durham, 1991:12-13). Joseph went on to condemn high birth rates among ‘the lower social classes’ for threatening ‘the balance of our population, our human stock’ (Durham, 1991:13). Joseph also advocated contraception ‘to stop the intelligence of the population becoming diluted’ (Benyon, 1989:104).

Such beliefs represented a re-emergence of nineteenth-century discourses on the poor. With unemployment (and social security spending) rising in the early eighties the government response was to:

... tighten eligibility for benefits<sup>18</sup> and reduce their value, deny the existence of poverty, suppress and abolish some of the key indicators of its extent and blame the poor for their own situation. References to the ‘underclass’ and to a ‘culture of dependency’ became embedded in a discourse concerned with social order and moral integration (Levitas, 1998:14)

Moreover this proved to be a powerful discourse which ‘inexorably took over the public domain’; debate had come to focus once more on the ‘cultural character of the poor’ (Levitas, 1998:15). It was a position consolidated by Murray (1999:25); for whom the term underclass did ‘not refer to a degree of poverty but to a type of poverty’. Those identified were, as Murray himself acknowledged, those known

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<sup>18</sup> As we saw in chapter two, young people were profoundly affected by welfare changes at this time. The collapse in the youth labour market was accompanied by the introduction of youth training schemes such as YOP and later YTS, these were to profoundly impact upon the experiences of young people (see Hollands, 1990 and Hartley, 1997).

to the Victorians as ‘undeserving, unrespectable, depraved, debased, disreputable, feckless’.

Single mothers were a main focus for Murray’s condemnation, especially never-married ones; for him illegitimacy was an unambiguous moral choice, and one that produced an underclass because ‘communities need fathers’ (Murray, 1999:29). Single mothers reproduce the underclass because the lack of fathers results in physically unruly children who run wild. For Murray, fathers (i.e. men) are ‘the’ civilizing force in familial relationships, however ‘young males are essentially barbarians for whom marriage ... is an indispensable civilizing force’ (Murray, 1999:42).

Lister (1999:10) asserts that ‘underclass’ was simply the latest label to be attached to the poor but argues that ‘the power of this discourse and of the language it uses is not to be underestimated’ (Lister, 1999:9). Metaphorically the underclass is constructed as contagion; disease: as a plague (Murray), or a cancer (Dahrendorf), that spawns illegitimate children (The Times, all in Lister, 1999:10). It is employed in this way by the press to indiscriminately refer to those in poverty. Its main characteristics are:

- ‘It presents the underclass ... as culturally distinct’
- The focus is on the behaviour of the poor and not the structure of society
- The implication is that benefits are bad for recipients and encourage dependency
- All other inequalities are ignored

- ‘It is a gendered discourse, about idle, criminal young men and single mothers’
- ‘Unpaid work is not acknowledged’
- Where economic dependency on the state is bad, the dependency of women and children on men is not, rather it is civilising (Levitas, 1998:21).

Haylett (2001:358) argues that underclass discourse embodied a mixture of ‘familial disorder and dysfunction; of dangerous masculinities and dependent femininities, of antisocial behaviour; of moral and ecological decay’. It is a discourse that constructs the white working-class as a ‘racialised other’ and ‘a barrier to development’ (Haylett, 2001:357). For Lister (1999:11) underclass theory is simply a diversionary tactic that assists in the denial of socio-economic and political causes of poverty.

Towards the late nineteen-nineties there was a discursive shift from theories of underclass to theories of social exclusion, a term viewed as less pejorative, more dynamic and as encouraging attention to ‘processes and institutions that create and maintain disadvantage’ (Lister, 1999:11). As Levitas (1998:20) notes however, ‘as social exclusion entered public political discourse, it did so in conjunction with references to the underclass – with Blair himself repeatedly referring to an underclass excluded from the mainstream’.

Moreover, a main aim of the Blair government (1997) was to tackle social exclusion. If we were expecting a discursive change we were wrong. The newly established Social Exclusion Unit employed language infused with underclass

discourse. In the unit's report on young people: *Bridging the Gap* (1999), for instance, disadvantaged youth are portrayed as the victims of 'less advantaged backgrounds'; of 'parents with little or no history of work, particularly those who have suffered unemployment across a number of generations' (Coley and Hodgkinson, 2001:338). Coley and Hodgkinson (2001:340) summarize the SEU's position:

Bridging the Gap describes the young people to which it refers almost exclusively in terms of their lacks and needs ... their attitudes, values and beliefs are seen as key factors in reinforcing their non-participation and, therefore, as aspects of *self-exclusion*. Overwhelmingly, they are portrayed as deficient, delinquent, or a combination of the two, as are their dysfunctional families and communities.

Moreover, new labour's strategy to tackle poverty involved 'problematizing their culture, that is, making their different *culture* rather than their 'race' or class position the problem that predisposes them to fail' (Haylett, 2001:361), furthermore:

'This kind of focus on people and culture conceives them as generative of disadvantage, and deprived areas as the breeding ground of 'welfare dependency'. The biological metaphors of breeding and generation are the key, they not only locate social problems within poor groups as a kind of pathological condition but justify particular kinds of intervention (Haylett 2001:363)

Despite alternative discourses and contrary evidence then, we are back to a notion of abhorrent individuals, families and communities within the rhetoric of theories of underclass. Again it is with parents rather than society (or indeed youth) that

blame is located and remedies sought; 'Defective' parents are always contrasted with good, 'normal' parents:

As Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) have argued, such oppositional constructions amount to a celebration of middle-class practices whilst devaluing others. In order to do this the material realities of working-class life must be ignored. Moreover, in parenting discourse there is a constant slippage/elision between parent and mother; by the 1980s mothers had in effect been constituted as guardians of liberal democracy in their primary responsibility for producing good citizens (Lawler, 2000, Pheonix and Woollett, 1991, Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989, Valentine, 1996), and by default, as the scapegoats when things went wrong (Young, 1996). Further, the role of mothering was gradually expanded to include the role of pedagogue; mundane domestic tasks were re-written as opportunities for learning in the educationally stimulating home.

Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) argue that an 'us' and 'them' theme, underpinned 'partially by a fear of working-class uprising', is apparent in all educational discourses and this fear prescribes the sites for intervention: 'mothers, the family, the community', however, they (1989:187) reject the notion that working-class educational failure is 'born out of deprivation and a lacking, inadequate mother':

These constructs belie the immense complexity of working-class children's failure and at the same time explain it away, make it not 'ours' but 'their' problem. By pathologising working-class culture, working-class mothers, a particular, historically produced 'norm' can remain intact.

## **Conclusion:**

This chapter has shown that the nineteenth-century inherited three essentialist conceptions of childhood: innocent, evil or immanent. During the century the notion of childhood evil receded and innocence came to dominate. Such a development constituted the societal roles of both children and adults, thus children 'ought' to be innocent, vulnerable and dependent; adults 'ought' to protect, control and guide children's lives. This position did not mean that the abhorrent case disappeared however. Rather, in the nineteenth-century such cases came to be understood as constituted by irresponsible/inadequate adults, occasionally manipulative others, but predominantly parents. Moreover:

The socio-economic transition which substituted the 'factory child' by the 'delinquent' child created a residuum, a surplus population of children for whom society had no legitimate space. 'Child-saving' filled this vacuum and prioritised 'resocialization'. This was a process that necessitated 'unlearning', a process involving the restoration of what Carpenter called the 'true position of childhood ... a child is to be treated as a child' (Goldson, 2004:6).

Though the above discussion is inevitably limited, it is already the complex 'milling mass' that Jäger (2005:35) described. Philosophical discourses concerned with social order and morality dominated in the nineteenth-century, though economic discourse was also apparent. It would be easy to assume a conspiracy of forces towards a unified end (i.e. middle class privilege, dominance and hegemony).

Nevertheless, despite my concentration on dominant discourse strands others co-existed and competed throughout the nineteenth-century, including radical political movements such as Chartism, Owenism and Feminism (feminist Owenites campaigned rigorously for changes in familial/domestic relations and proposed systems for mutual support and the raising of children that were the antithesis of the middle-class familial ideal, Taylor, 1983). Pearson (1983:80-81) highlighted the role of the radical press during the same period; they took a different slant on working-class violence and sought to take 'full account of the social and material circumstances of working-class life'. Moreover, the social transformations from the mid nineteenth-century onwards were hard won; they were openly contested, resisted, negotiated, and controlled by those with power. Indeed the do-gooder philanthropists were constantly engaged in struggle with their own class, as this excerpt from *The Times* (02/01/1863, in Pearson, 1983:119) illustrates:

'The dangerous classes seem to be getting the better of society ... under the influence of philanthropic sentiments and a hopeful policy, we have deprived the law of its terrors and justice of its arms'

As Pearson commented in 1983 (128):

'The moral vocabulary of these accusations against sentimentality, leniency and crinolined philanthropy that unfolded in the wake of the great legislative transformations of this era is one which we would find entirely familiar in our own historical time, and which has rolled down to us virtually unchanged across more than a century of resistance to penal reform. It is also worth noting an entirely familiar set of complaints centred on the demoralizing effects of indiscriminate charity and fears of a growing mass of pauperised scroungers.'

Despite alternative discourses and discourse positions, dominant discourse strands delimit what can and cannot be said and done about youth. Though elements of the nineteenth-century discursive regime have survived the last one hundred years virtually intact, in the twentieth-century new knowledge developed which would greatly impact upon contemporary discourses on youth.

The twentieth-century began with an inherited notion of childhood as innocence: children were to be protected (Hendrick, 2003:35). However, this was swiftly replaced by a childhood constructed as immanence/potential in which children were to be nurtured for the sake of the nation. Concerns over delinquency and pauperism endured. The Child Study Movement shared these concerns, they produced a discourse of the naturally developing child which represented 'normal' development as 'natural' and therefore determined by the body (genetics). Simultaneously, psychoanalysis proposed a child of instincts and drives; it transpired that the unconscious of the child had needs; which, if unmet, would eventually lead to at best anti-social adults, at worst, severe psychological disturbance.

Changes to the discourse of intelligence did not divert attention away from families. Where once those identified as unintelligent could be forgiven as victims of genetics, now they were to be targeted as cultural victims of their families. Throughout this the working-class are endlessly described, and the working-class woman is endlessly spoken about:

... everywhere from the 1950s to the present. They stare out of every developmental psychology, education or social work textbook. They are the bad or potentially bad mothers (Walkerdine, 1998:98).

Though radical theories emerged their social impact was limited and they were taken over by events. With the arrival of the radical right, theories of underclass and a particular discourse of poverty, constructions of childhood appeared to have gone full circle and again resembled those of the early nineteenth-century. Families and individuals were blamed for their difficulties; indeed there was 'no such thing as society'.

Furthermore, discourses on youth are particularly dependent upon the discourses of poverty and family; during the last two centuries this has resulted in youth being constructed in a variety of ways. At the end of the twentieth-century the representation of the innocent child appeared to have won through; young people were constructed as victims (of their families and communities).

The above discourses continue to contribute to the construction of discursive figures and stereotypes that possess particular psychological and behavioural characteristics. Such figures are integral in conceptualising social order in that othering difference firms up sameness and reaffirms essentialist categories. However, though these are discursive figures (and not real people) our awareness of them is so prevalent that when we read/hear of a crime or event involving youth we begin to attribute characteristics to actors involved. Indeed, media representations are quick to find individuals who personify the discourse. When we encounter young people resembling such constructions our actions (non-discursive behaviour) are affected. The discourses are powerful (though limited) and are readily to hand in our search for causal explanation.

## **Chapter Six: The Anti-social Representation of Yobs**

In the previous chapter I examined the historical development of discourses on youth, I argued that youth have come to be understood, known and explained in various but limited ways. In this chapter I will seek to make explicit how such discourses are mobilized and sustained by the press in their reporting on ‘Yobs’.

I will begin with a brief discussion of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and show how this is part of a historical continuum of ‘respectable fears’ over unruly youth.

Such ‘fears’ have been seen to prompt moral panics. This chapter will employ elements of Cohen’s (2005) moral panic approach, which I detailed in chapter two, to facilitate an analysis of newspaper reporting on ‘Yobs’. This will enable a degree of abstraction and, ultimately, an attempt at unpacking what is an immense dataset.

This chapter will argue that newspaper representations of the ‘Yob’ are inherently anti-social due to their proclivity to:

- Present virtually all youthful conduct as anti-social;
- Situate ‘Yobs’ as outside of, and in opposition to, the values, traditions and culture of mainstream society so that they become society’s ‘other’; and,
- Employ discourses of explanation that focus upon individual pathologies at the expense of social causes.

## **Anti-Social Behaviour:**

Crime reports dominated this sample of newspaper articles; over one-quarter (27%) of these were related to anti-social behaviour (ASB). As Burney (2005:98) argued: 'the media have been particularly keen to repeat stories about' the anti-social behaviours of the young. However, a host of behaviours was described as ASB, including: arson, assault/ violence against others, attempting to hang a child, bullying, congregation (often to smoke and/or drink alcohol), damage to property, desecration, fighting (sometimes with weapons such as knives; air guns), firing air guns, graffiti, happy slapping, kicking footballs, knocking on doors, letting fireworks off, public disorder, racing cars/motorbikes, rioting, sexual promiscuity, shouting, swearing/foul mouthed abuse, teenage pregnancy, threats of violence, throwing things (from water bombs to bottles, stones and scaffold poles), urinating/vomiting in the street, vandalism. As such, a range of behaviours were conflated under the umbrella of ASB.

Indeed ASB 'is deliberately defined in a particularly open-ended and flexible manner as a range of actions and behaviours' and such a definition is celebrated for being flexible to local concerns (Squires and Stephen, 2005:115). It is in this context that ASB becomes Anti-Adult behaviour. ASB is consistently contrasted with an over-typically law-abiding and adult world (Muncie, 2004:11) and as ASBOs:

... are not based on criminal evidence but rely heavily on hearsay and popular perceptions of the problem. They also tend to represent the interests and voices of the powerful within community settings (France, 2007:103).

Squires and Stephen (2005) argue that the conflation of various behaviours and actions into a category of ASB is a high-risk strategy but that the risk is minimised by 'prioritising enforcement action' towards soft targets (usually the poor and the young); in so-doing ASB rhetoric simply re-cycles a range of 'respectable fears' (Pearson, 1983). Indeed, Burney (2005:10) observed that a (Victorian) fear of the 'dangerous classes' pervades ASB discourses and consequently the targets are 'much the same sort of people'. Similarly, for Squires and Stephen (2005), the rhetoric of ASB is simply a re-problematisation of crime and disorder; the result is a discourse with a new set of priorities, solutions and interventions in which:

We interpret the behaviour as typical of 'that kind of person', as Christie ... has noted, offensive and anti-social people "are their own explanation" thereby ensuring our overreliance upon discipline, punishment and containment (Squires and Stephen, 2005:7).

In newspaper reporting the 'kind of people' that behave anti-socially are quickly revealed to be 'Yobs': 'the most enduring of suitable enemies' (Cohen, 2005:viii). There was nothing new about outrage over 'Yobs'; indeed societal reaction to the notion of the 'Yob' began long before this research. According to Muncie (2004:33) 'the word 'yob' derives from the late nineteenth century as back-slang for boy' and was widely used to describe members of street gangs in city slums. Both Muncie (2004:33) and Scraton (2004:vii) highlight John Major's 'back to basics' initiative in 1994 where the war on 'Yob culture' became a rallying call, and France (2007:101) points to a sustained moral panic over yob culture throughout the 1990s.

But what exactly constitutes a 'Yob'? On one hand I do not know, yet on the other I do; I have an impression of who is being identified when the term is used. The Collins English dictionary defines 'Yob' as 'an aggressive and surly [i.e. sullenly ill-tempered or rude] youth, especially a teenager', I'm sure that in certain circumstances this definition could apply to any of us. Ros Coward's definition from 1994 (quoted in Muncie, 2004:33) is closer to my impression:

Yob is a species of young white working-class male which, if the British media is to be believed, is more common than ever before. The yob is foul mouthed, irresponsible, probably unemployed and violent. The yob hangs around council estates where he terrorizes the local inhabitants, possibly in the company of his pit-bull terrier. He fathers children rather than cares for them. He is often drunk, probably uses drugs and is likely to be involved in crime, including domestic violence. He is the ultimate expression of macho values: mad, bad and dangerous to know.

The 'Yob' is an established stereotype; it is loaded with negative meanings whilst it simultaneously denies the structural relationships of its making. As Watney (1997b:129) has argued:

It is the central ideological business of the communications industry to retail ready-made pictures of human identity, and thus recruit individual consumers to identify with them in a fantasy of collective mutual complementarity.

Moreover, as mentioned in chapter four, initial data analysis highlighted a gradual increase in the proportions of articles applying the term 'Yob' to young people. As such the issue of 'Yobs' emerged from the data. Moreover, the growth in the

attribution of the label 'Yob' appeared similar to the 'amplification of deviance' Cohen (2005) identified in his analysis of mods and rockers. It is for this reason I decided to employ elements from Cohen's approach to this analysis.

Moral panic theory is not without its critics (see McRobbie and Thornton, 1995 and Ungar, 2001 for example). However, others (including Critcher, 2003, Chatterton and Hollands, 2003, Muncie, 2004, Scraton, 2004 and Thompson, 1999) have argued that moral panics are a dominant and recurring feature of media representations of youth. Indeed, Rose (1999:125) asserts that 'upsurges of concern over the young– from juvenile delinquency in the nineteenth century to sexual abuse today – were actually moral panics'. Furthermore, the legacies of moral panics lie in the way that they mobilize and sustain prevailing discourses and establish new ones. Cohen (2005:58) stressed the importance of interpretation because the ways in which problems are interpreted determines the solutions to those problems; the:

... conceptions, images and stereotypes affect how and at what point the deviant is fed into the social control apparatus. If the sexual offender is sick, then one attempts to cure rather than punish him; if the typical shoplifter is seen as the 'harmless little old woman' or the 'kleptomaniac', then this group will be less subject to formal legal sanctions. An integral part of the conceptual machinery then, is the body of justifications and rationalizations for acting in a particular way towards the deviant.

In other words the discursive formations employed to explain events have discursive and material effects. Indeed, newspaper representations of youth pull

on established, historical discourses in an attempt to engender consensus.

Consequently, as Critcher (2003:168) argues, essential elements of Foucault's theoretical works on discourse are both relevant to, and have implications for, moral panic analysis:

Moral panic discourses are located in institutional contexts (Parliament, the mass media, pressure groups), include and exclude topics and groups (folk devils are invariably excluded from society), affect the way we perceive the problem (there is no other way to talk about the mistreatment of children other than as abuse). Discussion of moral panic issues precisely delimits the field (paedophilia, not sexual abuse in families) and, perhaps most crucially of all, lay down the rules for the ways in which the problem can be talked about (as a self-evident threat to the moral order).

For Critcher (2003) the moral panic approach is a heuristic device to be applied in analysis. And it is for this reason that I applied Cohen's approach to this analysis of 'Yobs'. Cohen's concepts have enabled a degree of abstraction and, ultimately, an attempt at unpacking what is an immense dataset.

Though the data presented here is ordered sequentially I must stress that it is not necessarily chronological. Cohen's model implies chronology/sequence; here, however, there were numerous overlapping events, they could be seen as happening at once. Moreover, particular newspaper reports could be theorized as both 'societal reaction' and 'impact events'. Similarly, elements of the control culture were evident early in the data; sensitisation was apparent throughout; and, perhaps most importantly, the research began with the stereotype already having been confirmed.

## **Impact Stages; Discursive Events:**

There was not one but many impact events apparent in this dataset which, throughout the six months, triggered reaction from the newspapers in question and contributed to an amplification of concern. These can be considered discursive events; I have highlighted some of these below.

On 26<sup>th</sup> January 2005 all three newspapers reported the findings of a ‘Home Office Study’:

- Yob UK; 1 In 4 Teenage Boys Claims They've Done Robbery, Burglary, Assault or committing at least six minor crimes a year (Jan26mirror1).
- One in four teenage boys branded a serious offender (jan26guard1).
- Only 1 In 100 Crimes Go To Trial (jan26mail1).

Initially only The Daily Mirror connected this to ‘Yob’ behaviour, however in the days (and weeks) that followed, this report was to be repeatedly used as a ‘contextual’ reference and utilized to signify that youth crime was escalating out of control (Reiner et al, 2003). As Alan Travis from The Guardian commented later that week:

Britain is in the grip of an "appalling" teenage yob crimewave - at least according to the front pages of the country's two biggest-selling tabloid newspapers last week. They reported that a "hardcore" of half a million young "louts" are to blame for rising street crime, and that they had owned up to offences ranging from burglary and drug dealing to muggings and assault (feb02guard6).

In February two events further fuelled the 'Yob' debate: the launch of 'an anti-yob campaign' by a Scottish Justice Minister and the trial of Linda Walker (the teacher who 'shot at car yobs' in August 2004, feb03mirror4). The Linda Walker story was an important discursive event; it was referenced repeatedly as a contextual crime during the six months of this research<sup>1</sup>. In The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror, it became an archetypal story of 'us' versus 'them'; of the decent law-abiding citizen, a special needs teacher who 'fought back with pistol as yobs drove her to breaking point' (feb03mail1) and whose subsequent imprisonment made her into a 'cause célèbre' and a perfect example of 'political correctness gone mad':

This week, a woman teacher was hauled into court, having been taunted beyond endurance by yobs at whom, as the end of her tether was reached, she fired pellets from a gas-powered pistol [...] So it goes on. There will be an increasing number of these cases until there are more normally lawabiding citizens inside than out (mar31mail1).

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<sup>1</sup> Her name is cited one hundred and twenty times.

In April (the month before the general election) the former conservative leader, Michael Howard, joined in: 'Howard pledges to put fear into the hearts of hooligans as he backs air gun teacher' (april01mail8). This is an obvious example of opportunistic campaigning or, in Cohen's (2005:116-117) terms ideological exploitation. Equally, it can be seen as an 'opinion statement' in the operation of the control culture.

On 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005 Tony Blair announced his 'Respect Agenda' and whilst this could be seen as an example of the control culture, it quickly became entwined with other news stories such as the banning of individuals wearing hooded tops from a shopping mall: 'Hoodies Are Baddies As Mall Orders Ban' (may13mirror9). This was another discursive event.

An extremely provocative 'impact event' was an incident in which 'stoning victim' (may21mail8guard) Phil Carroll 'was attacked by youths he confronted when they threw a stone at his car' (may18guard3). This was a definitive discursive event; it prompted numerous opinion statements from a variety of claims makers, including Chief Superintendent Baines who 'painted a horrifying picture ... of communities terrorised by gangs of 'feral youths' (may18mail1). This statement was again repeatedly referenced in later reporting.

During the six months there were reports on so-called 'Happy Slapping' incidents. Such reports were initially episodic (four reports from January to April) but later increased (seventeen reports in May and twenty in June).

"Happy slapping" is the latest craze, in which yobs capture random acts of violence and vandalism on their camera phones just for fun (may13mirror4).

Finally, on 31st May 2005, there was an incident where a 'Boy of five was 'hanged' by youngsters who lured him away in a sickening echo of the James Bulger case' (june02mail1). This particular article used the incident to inter-textually reference the Bulger case in detail. In The Guardian however an effects model was employed:

The incident took place 24 hours after the BBC screened the film Robin Hood Prince of Thieves, in which Kevin Costner rescues a young boy from the threat of hanging. In 1999 the film was linked to the death of an eight-year-old boy in New Zealand (june04guard2).

These are but some examples of discursive events during the first half of 2005. Each was initially described (inventory phase) then interpreted (societal reaction phase).

## The Inventory Phase(s):

In a processual moral panic the 'impact stage' is followed by an 'inventory stage', here events are exaggerated and distorted by the media in terms of the numbers involved, the damage done, and in the use of melodramatic vocabulary, sensational headlines (see appendix five), and generic plurals. This was similarly the case with reporting on yobs. Take for example a Daily Mail report in January headlined: 'Victim of drunken yobs still in a coma seven months after attack', whilst there is no doubt that this was a 'brutal and sadistic attack on a defenceless teenager', when sentencing the Judge is reported to have:

... condemned the **plague**<sup>2</sup> of alcohol-fuelled violence **sweeping**<sup>3</sup> Britain's streets [...] Sentencing the attackers to ten years each in custody for causing grievous bodily harm with intent, the judge told them: '**Repeatedly**<sup>4</sup>, **courts** are dealing with offences of violence, **very often fuelled** by drink and **very often committed** by people of your age, **very often** after nights in nightclubs and after nightclubs are closing' (January19mail2).

Alternatively, an 'event' in February, reported in The Daily Mirror, discusses a Scottish Justice minister's launch of 'an anti-yob campaign'. A group of young people were present at the launch and according to Mcfadyen (feb17mirror1) the

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<sup>2</sup> **Plague**: 1. any widespread and usually highly contagious disease with a high fatality rate. 2. an infectious disease of rodents [...] 4. something that afflicts or harasses. 5. *informal* an annoyance or nuisance. 6. a pestilence, affliction or calamity on a large scale

<sup>3</sup> **Sweeping**: 1. comprehensive and wide ranging. 2. indiscriminate or without reservations. 3. decisive or overwhelming. 4. taking in a wide area. 5. driving steadily onwards, especially over a large area.

<sup>4</sup> **Repeatedly**: done, made, or said again and again, continual or incessant

minister 'found herself in the **front line**<sup>5</sup> of her own **war**<sup>6</sup> on **neds**<sup>7</sup> yesterday as she faced a Buckfast backlash'. In another article, Anna Smith believed the event:

... painted the graphic picture of how **communities** are being **besieged**<sup>8</sup> by this **growing army of thugs** [...] **Most of us**, if asked, could tell a story of being on the receiving end of treatment from the teenage hoodies who hang around in **gangs**<sup>9</sup>. [...] **Many** will have been burgled, robbed or beaten by these useless cretins who will blame everyone but themselves for their behaviour (feb20mirror1).

The imagery produced in these articles through metaphor, adjective and dynamic modality is startling. In the first article (January19mail2) yob behaviour is likened to a contagious disease and occurrences are exaggerated through the adverbs 'very', 'often' and 'repeatedly', the effect is to suggest that violent crime, perpetrated by yobs, is commonplace. In the second quote occurrences of the behaviour described are exaggerated through the use of plurals (communities, thugs) and distorted through the dubious assertion that 'these useless cretins' have 'burgled, robbed or beaten' 'us'. The modality in all three presents the commonplaceness of the behaviours concerned with certainty, it is fact. Notice also the use of the suffix 'ing': 'sweeping', 'growing', 'harassing', such grammar

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<sup>5</sup> **Front line**: 1. *military* the most advanced military units or elements in a battle. 2. the most advanced, or exposed, or conspicuous element in any activity or situation.

<sup>6</sup> **War**: 1. open armed conflict between two or more parties, nations or states. 2. a particular armed conflict. 3. the techniques of armed conflict as a study. 4. any conflict or interest.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'Ned' is held to be the Scottish equivalent of 'Chav', unlike the term 'Chav' however, the term 'Ned' carries its history with it and is an acronym for 'non-educated delinquent' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/4075012.stm>, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

<sup>8</sup> **Besiege**: 1. to surround ... with military forces to bring about surrender. 2. to crowd round, hem in. 3. to overwhelm.

<sup>9</sup> **Gang**: 1. a group of people who associate together or act as an organized body, especially for criminal or illegal purposes ...

implies an ever present; events have not 'happened' in the past, but are 'happening', now.

War imagery was employed in the other articles and this helped to set the debate in us and them terms, 'most' and 'many' of 'us' have been victims of 'them', the enemy whom, we are told, are 'growing' in number. Use of war imagery by crime reporters, commentators and MPs is not uncommon, as Young (1996:7) argues:

The metaphor of the 'war' against crime is one of the most notorious in criminology and criminal justice policy; as a militaristic metaphor it effectively eclipses certain areas of discussion and rules out a number of voices. It depends upon the drawing of lines, the establishment of sides and the belief in an ultimate outright winner, no matter that the victory be Pyrrhic.

The 'drawing of lines' is particularly important here; in all reports 'Yob' behaviour is the antithesis of that displayed by decent hardworking citizens and such citizens are constantly invoked in newspaper reporting, as are innocents such as elderly people and young children. This is illustrative of what Young (1996:54) described as the 'crime couplet'; here the victim 'is the sign through which the couplet of crime is to be read', by sharing in the victimization we become a member of the category 'us': 'to be a victim is to be a citizen' (Young, 1996:55)

In news reporting then, 'Yobs' are situated as the antithesis of the social, they are the outsider, the other, 'them'; the binary opposite of the victim, the citizen, 'us'. All victims of 'Yobs' are 'good' citizens; victims are never other 'Yobs'. The

‘us’ and ‘them’ opposition is a central construction in the reporting and is a theme that will be discussed further throughout this chapter.

The main difference between the two events described above is clearly the type of behaviour being discussed, the first is a story of extreme violence, the others of ‘irritating’; perhaps ‘youthful’ behaviour, the type of which if acted out by a different class of young people might be termed ‘youthful high spirits’. Yet in The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror, both are typed as ‘Yob’ behaviour.

In terms of melodrama and sensation an article in The Daily Mirror at the end of January (Jan31mirror4) fits the bill perfectly. In this article reporters ‘go native’ in Newcastle and Portsmouth in an exposé of ‘urban nightlife’:

**A Night Out In Yob UK; Orgy<sup>10</sup> Of Boozing And Brawling, Yes It's Just A Normal Weekend.** YOUNG thugs brawl in the street, glasses are hurled at cowering doormen while stag night revellers vomit nearby. Welcome to yob Britain. It's just a normal weekend, one that exposes the grim reality of our drink-fuelled culture.

The article begins by presenting all events as happening at once, instantaneously. Again the commonplaceness of events is stressed; one has to ask if this is ‘normal’, where do ‘deviants’ go for a night out? Use of the word orgy saturates the scene with overindulgence and sex. Thus ensconced in ‘Yob Britain’ the article lists the multiple and various actors, in Newcastle:

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<sup>10</sup> **Orgy:** 1. a wild gathering marked by promiscuous sexual activity, excessive drinking etc, 2. an act of immoderate or frenzied indulgence.

Scantily-clad women are joined by stag and hen parties, rugby trips and travelling football fans. ... Teenagers in souped-up hatchbacks cruise past, a group of lads accost any nearby women. [...] "It's payday so it'll be a good night," says bleached blonde Amanda Celino, 18, a beauty therapist [...] Couples snog in doorways as a drunken youth vomits nearby and his friends laugh. "It's his stag do," one says. "But he won't remember much of it."

#### And in Portsmouth:

scantily-clad girls and lads are pouring in to take advantage of "two-for-one" drink offers. [...] This is a seedy place where prostitutes and drug dealers ply their trades in back alleys. [...] More revellers stumble arm-in-arm, clutching two-litre Coke bottles, filled with booze. Men and women are literally falling in and out of the bars.

Symbolization is rife here. References to 'girls', 'lads', and 'teenagers' imply that participants of urban nightlife are young: (if you've ever been to the Bigg Market then you'll know it's not a wholly youthful scene!). Social status/class is attributed to Amanda via reference to her hair<sup>11</sup> and occupation<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, in this article the inherently 'social' activity of participating in the urban night-time economy is constituted as ASB.

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<sup>11</sup> How does the reporter know it's bleached? Is it done badly? Are the roots showing? To report Amanda's hair as bleached implies one or the other; it is a social judgement of taste.

<sup>12</sup> Beauty Therapy stereotypically being seen as available to poorly educated girls.

## **Symbolization**

Cohen (2005:27) highlighted the process of ‘symbolization’ by which a word comes to symbolize a status; objects, such as clothing (or hair), then symbolize the word; and eventually the objects symbolize the status. In Cohen’s work the word Mod symbolized delinquency and deviance, Mod clothing symbolized Mods; hence their clothing symbolized delinquency and deviance, and all ‘the emotions attached’ (Cohen, 2005:27).

Barthes identified symbolic signification in which objects come to symbolize, through convention, something else (in Fiske, 1982:95). There are two levels of signification, the first being denotation: a simple/descriptive shared/agreed meaning, for example the word ‘Porsche’, or ‘souped-up hatchbacks’ denote types of car. The second level is connotation, this is a wider code that connects to broader themes and meanings beyond simple description; these require interpretation in terms of ‘social ideology – the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems of society’ (Hall, 2003b:39). At this level the term Porsche or ‘souped-up hatchback’ connect to other socio-economic and status characteristics:

The first completed meaning functions as the signifier in the second stage of the representation process, and when linked with a wider theme by a reader, yields a second, more elaborate and ideologically framed message or meaning ...

Barthes calls this second level of signification the level of myth (Hall, 2003b:39).

Barthes did not employ the term ‘myth’ to indicate falsity, rather myth is understood as ‘a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of

reality or nature'; it is a way of conceptualising and understanding (Fiske, 1982:93). Where connotation is the second-level meaning of the signifier, myth is the second level of the signified: the signified 'activates the chain of concepts that constitute myth' (Fiske, 1982:93). Myths are not universal: in any society there will be dominant myths and counter-myths; myths are dynamic, changeable according to the needs of a society.

The ways in which newspapers attempt to identify then fix the specific young people about whom they are writing through descriptions of clothing is a good example. Reports on 'Yobs' were consistently accompanied by references to clothes (see appendix six). Clothing is merely another language, clothing signifies, clothing is an indexical sign, clothing symbolizes.

This process of symbolization can be seen most clearly in this sample in the use of the term 'hoodie'. From January to April 2005 'hoodie' was cited only twice, in May it was cited ninety-nine times<sup>13</sup>, and in June twenty-seven times. 'Hoodie' was used to describe both an item of clothing ('the hooded tops used to conceal the wearers' identity' May21mail1) and the wearer(s):

THEY are the uniform of thugs and muggers and the sight of youths kitted out in them strikes fear in law-abiding citizens. Hooded tops and baseball caps have been adopted by cowardly yobs up and down the land to hide their faces from CCTV cameras while they commit crime or terrorise victims unable to identify them (may13mirror3).

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<sup>13</sup> A substantial proportion of citations were related to wearers of hooded tops being banned from entering the Bluewater Shopping Mall as mentioned earlier.

Young people's clothing has consistently been identified as a means by which young people differentiate themselves, and are differentiated by others, from the 'mainstream' adult culture, indeed, 'being seen' is (apparently<sup>14</sup>) one of the pleasures of youth (Hebdige, 1979, 1988). This is highlighted in the range of post-war youth sub-cultural styles, such as Teds, Mods, Rockers, and Punks (Hall et al, 1976, Cohen, 2005). Pearson (1983:93-101) discussed the media's attention to the dress style of the 'Hooligan' at the end of the nineteenth century and argued it became apparent that:

Hooligans all looked alike. But it was not in the way that the poor had always looked alike – it was not, that is, because they were shabby, shoeless and grubby as moles – but because the gangs wished to look alike, and had adopted a uniform dress-style'.

Cohen (2005) advances a similar argument in relation to Mods and Rockers. Their style caused confusion: it simply did not match with the stereotypical deviant; a status previously assigned to lower class urban men. The same could be said of the many references to tracksuits and sports clothing in this sample, for example: 'The teenage tearaway, dressed in a Nike track-suit' (feb17mirror1). Tracksuits are denotatively linked to sporting activities and are known to be costly. But the young people being described here were not perceived to be affluent; nor were they participating in sports. Connotatively, tracksuits are linked to the stereotypical 'Chav' and disapproval of irresponsible consumption is implicit in discussions surrounding the chav. The hooded top, however, is a common and

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<sup>14</sup> Not according to a Guardian interviewee: "Some people use hoods for bad things but some people use it for protection, to hide their faces from people who are looking for them" (may18guard4).

functional item of clothing in contemporary Britain, worn by people of all ages and classes, and it is adults who have appropriated it rather than youth (Cohen and Ainley, 2000:89).

In this context then something other than clothing was being called upon. The word 'hoodie' denotes an item of clothing with hood. At the second, connotative level the term 'Hoodie' connects to a host of behavioural, biological, socio-economic and structuring characteristics: 'anti-social'/criminal, young, working-class and male. In this sample the hooded top came to symbolize the 'Yob'. Moreover, the term 'hoodie' 'acquired wholly negative meanings' (Cohen, 2005:28). At the level of 'myth', it justified the wearer's subordinate status. The reporting of hoodies became so widespread in May that it prompted a dedicated in-depth analysis in *The Guardian* (may13guard5).

### **Symbolizing Innocents**

In addition to the symbolization of 'Yobs' ('them') there was an equal symbolization of 'innocents' ('us'), the victims of 'Yobs'. This maps onto evidence from Reiner et al's (2003) research (see chapter two). They argued that the harmful effects of crime had increasingly become equated with 'the suffering and distress of victims' and that (as in Young's crime couplet) readers were 'invited to identify with victims through portrayals of their ordinariness, innocence and vulnerability' (Reiner et al, 2003:26).

This was especially the case with The Daily Mail; vulnerable groups were frequently referenced, especially the elderly. The main adjectives used to describe innocents were 'decent', 'law-abiding' and 'hardworking', as opposed presumably to indecent, law-breaking and 'work-shy':

Howard promised to stand up for 'hardworking people who do the right thing'. [...] Mr Howard said he wanted to help decent families living in fear of the gangs of hooligans who gleefully defy the authorities. [...] 'The husband and wife who no longer walk home from the local pub on a nice evening, the dad that daren't take his kid to the park to play football anymore and the pensioners who've become prisoners in their own homes' (apr01mail8).

An economic discourse strand was also discernible in symbolizing innocents; ostensibly this related to protection for business and property, but it can also be understood as class interests:

I am describing one week of many in a middle-class suburb where law-abiding people are beginning to despair of the law's ability to protect them. They fear for their safety day and night. They fear for the effects on the value of the property that comprises most of their financial stake in life (feb04mail4).

Moreover, the quotes above attempt to communicate public opinion. Debates about public opinion have circulated in relation to moral panic analyses. Ungar (2001) was particularly critical due to the lack of measurable indicators of 'panic'.

But for Critcher (2003, p137), in moral panics 'support from the public is a bonus not a necessity'. The point is that 'the media neither reflect nor create public opinion; they construct it' and it is to this construction that government and policy makers respond (Cricher, 2003, p137). As such 'a discourse of the people is a discourse about not by the people' (Astroff and Nyberg in Critcher, 2003, p138). For Critcher (2003, p138) then:

... the media are linked to the elites on whom they report, decide who can join the ranks of this elite and construct for the elite a version of 'the public' who are addressed and invoked but never actually consulted.

As mentioned earlier, Linda Walker came to symbolize the decent, law-abiding and hardworking citizen, take for example the following eulogy ('apr02mail3'):

The residents of Holly House Drive take a great deal of pride in their homes. There are primulas and hyacinths in the flowerbeds, conservatories, spotless net curtains in the windows, and one or two of the 26 detached houses in the cul-de-sac have been given names like Rose Briar. But behind the front doors, many of the professionals, retired folk and families who own these homes are living under a modern siege. Like thousands of others all over the country, their peace of mind and property are routinely being violated by thugs who mindlessly hurl abuse and vandalise their possessions. [...]

Like many women of her age, Mrs Walker held down a responsible job, as head of Food Technology and Year 11 at a

school for children with emotional and behavioural problems, as well as looking after three generations of her own family. At home, she cared for her partner and their twin 17-year-old sons, ... but also cooked meals for her father - who lives nearby - and was a constant support to her daughter, ... 20, who has left home.

This again maps onto Cohen's (2005) inventory stage. Firstly, we are given an idyllic vision of an ordered Britain (neat, spotless, one can almost smell the flowers). This is the Britain that must be defended; there are no high-rise concrete jungles here. We also have some quantification of the size of the problem: there are '**thousands** of others all over the country'. We are then given evidence of Ms Walker's caring and responsible character. A word of caution: in using Linda Walker's case as an example I do not wish to undermine the severity of her situation; I am not saying that being Linda was fun; nor that I'd be driven any less 'loopy'. Moreover, many of the questions raised in articles surrounding the case were, in my opinion, fair. Indeed, the direct quotes attributed to Ms Walker were eminently reasonable in view of her circumstances.

What is important here is how the newspapers construct a narrative in which the identification patterns are clear: Ms Walker is an archetype mother and a victim; and (like Mrs Bulger in chapter two), 'she is the victim that could be any of us. She is an imagined member of a community and like every other member of the community' (Young, 1996:118). Never are we invited to identify with the young people at whom she 'fired a pistol'.

Moreover, in The Daily Mail, innocents were employed, lived in families and owned property. In so-doing they were attributed the status of citizens. 'Yobs' were not citizens. This is confirmed through the consistent use of the term 'Yob Culture':

... what drove this bright, educated, respectable middleaged woman to an act of complete folly is no mystery to thousands who are blighted by yob culture (apr02mail3).

Is it illiberal to talk about yob culture and discipline?  
Asbolutely not! (may13guard1).

You can see it everywhere now, what Tony Blair calls a "lack of respect", what others call yob culture and what the law calls "low-level disorder". Whatever label you stick on it, we all know the feeling of seeing a bunch of kids, hooded or not, swearing too loudly, dropping their fast-food trash and carrying themselves with a mob-handed belligerence that dares you to say something (may16mirror3).

Here the term 'culture' is being utilized to describe the 'distinctive ways of life, the shared meanings and values, common to different groups' (Bocock, 1992:232). This use of the term culture is implicit in underclass discourse (discussed in the previous chapter); it serves to construct the white working-class as a 'racialised other' (Haylett, 2001:357), and divert attention from the socio-economic and political causes of poverty (Lister, 1999:11). Furthermore, it is an anti-social discourse in which certain groups in society are expelled from the category of the social.

Moreover, where the inventory stage sets the scene, identifies the problem and symbolizes the actors (victims and perpetrators of ASB), in the societal reaction phase of a moral panic, there is a shift from description to interpretation, similar to that described in news reporting of the murder trials of Venables and Thompson (chapter two) and Mitchell (chapter four).

### **Societal Reaction Phase:**

In Cohen's study (2005:37) three themes arose in the societal reaction phase:

- (i) Orientation: the emotional and intellectual standpoint from which the deviance is evaluated;
- (ii) Images: opinions about the nature of the deviants and their behaviour;
- (iii) Causation: opinions about the causes of the behaviour.

#### **Orientation**

In *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* commentators were oriented to react to events as though they were a disaster, a prophecy of worse to come, concerned with what might have happened or was yet to happen, or as another example of falling moral standards: 'it's not only this' (thus bringing other actors into the discourse) (Cohen, 2005:37). In this sample none of the events were treated as exceptionally disastrous though the language of natural disasters, such as 'plague' and 'blight', was used metaphorically. Perhaps the closest we get is Phillips' analysis of 'this culture of yobbery' in *The Daily Mail*:

The situation is dire. Vicious, even sadistic crime is commonplace. Disorder and threatening behaviour are a modern plague, and whole communities are under siege from crime and yobbery (may19mail5).

There were also limited prophecies of doom. In the article above Phillips refers to a 'progressive collapse of social order'. In a Daily Mirror editorial on youth crime figures (cited above under impact events) 'a yob culture of lawlessness that blights our country both at home and abroad' is highlighted and perceived as 'the greatest challenge facing the new Home Secretary' (jan26mirror2). Again, however, the language and grammar employed in reporting 'Yobs' embodied prediction, adjectives like escalating, growing, increasing, spreading, worsening are commonplace.

Similarly, there were some examples of 'it's not so much what happened' but what could have happened: 'the woman could have fallen over and knocked her head or even fallen on to the road (June01mail3); 'A police officer later said we were lucky they hadn't used a brick, or someone could have been killed' (may21mail4), 'So nearly another Jamie Bulger ... The terrified boy is thought to have escaped death only because they failed to attach the rope properly' (June02mail1).

The majority of reports in this sample tended towards the 'it's not only this' thesis. Incident reports were frequently accompanied by references to previous incidents; this is once more illustrative of Reiner et al's (2003) 'contextual crimes'. The referencing of 'contextual crimes' was particularly apparent in The

Daily Mail. For example, in April 2005 The Daily Mail reported a murder trial of 'another young victim of Britain's growing knife culture', where 'The terrible disturbing truth is that Robert's killer is in no way unique', the paper then lists four other examples of 'knife culture' (apr26mail4). And in May 2005 The Daily Mail (may20mail1) reported a 'Happy Slapping' incident perpetrated on a sixteen-year-old girl, this was understood as 'another example of the appalling yob culture spreading across Britain'; the article then lists another three examples of 'Yob Culture'. The Daily Mail summed up the 'worsening crisis' on 21st May:

Teenagers suspected of beating a 72-year-old man to death on his own doorstep ... a funeral cortege attacked with a plank hurled through the windscreen of a car full of mourners ... a schoolgirl beaten unconscious in a 'happy slapping' assault, her ordeal filmed and shown to her friends ... a school wrecked by vandals aged six, four and three ... a man terribly injured when he confronted the young savages stoning his car. These are just some of the common-or-garden stories of everyday yobbery in modern Britain (may21mail5).

Such lists are frequently and clearly introduced: 'Other examples of the yob culture, reported by the Daily Mail' (may20mail1), or 'In other incidents around the UK' (June01mail3, see also may19mail5, may19mail3, June18mail1). The Daily Mail is not unique however; similar reporting can be found in both The Daily Mirror and The Guardian (may13mirror3 and may21guard2 for example).

As Muncie (2004:11) has highlighted, the reporting of ‘apparently similar (but unrelated) incidents’ suggests the possibility of a particular ‘crime wave’ and thus translates individual incidents into potentially societal wide threats.

There was some evidence of other orientations in the sample. In response to the shopping mall ban of ‘Hoodies’ a number of articles adopted an ‘it’s nothing new’ orientation, for instance, O’Sullivan argued:

the social phenomenon of unruly kids terrorising respectable adults is as old as the hills. Boys will be boys, girls will be girls - and, sadly, there will always be hooligans. [...] But to pick on a lot of kids just because they wear hooded tracksuit tops is not only unfair, it is a viewpoint which ignores history (may13mirror4).

This article provides a history of youth sub-cultural styles and behaviours, from ‘Teddy Boys’ to ‘Skinheads’. Pulling on a notion of the ‘tribal child’ (James et al, 2001:28) O’Sullivan presents youth as a generational category: ‘Just like generations of youngsters before them they enjoy the herd instinct. They want to dress like each other, talk like each other and hang out with each other’. Kenny (may17guard1) adopts a similar approach: ‘hoodie-wearers are not necessarily any worse than we were, in our fishnets and hotpants, or teddy boy winklepickers or Hell's Angels gear’. The list of sub-cultural styles was repeated in other articles (may16mail4, may16mirror3, may20mail5). Here however, rather than symbolizing a generalized youth particular youth were identified: criminal and disaffected: ‘a potent symbol of boorish, lawless youngsters’ (may16mirror3).

Furthermore, through the use of dynamic modality the motivation to wear 'Hoodies' was presented as a deliberate act of defiance: 'the desire to look scarifying' (may16mail4) and to 'upset or scandalise their elders' (may17guard1). What initially appeared as an alternative orientation remained within the context of 'respectable fears' over structurally marginal youth. This becomes explicit in an analysis of the 'images' communicated in newspaper reporting.

### **Images**

In *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, opinions about the nature of the deviants came through the 'spurious attribution' of nouns and personality traits to the young people. There was ample evidence of spurious attribution here, The Daily Mirror, for instance claimed the Bluewater ban might 'help to combat Britain's retail crime epidemic' (may13mirror9), thus attributing all shoplifting to 'Hoodies'.

In the three newspapers a lexicon of nouns and adjectives were utilised to suggest who 'Yobs' might be. The Guardian employed a smaller lexical register than the other two papers and was more likely to describe subjects in 'Yob' stories as young people or youths. However, many of the terms used by The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror appeared in The Guardian in the form of quotes from other tabloids. According to The Daily Mail 'Yobs' were variously (and alphabetically):

Antisocial families, chavs, disaffected teenage youth, drunken and abusive yobs, drunken teenage yobs, drunken yobs and vandals, feral youths, hooded youths, hoodies, louts, mindless yobs, neds, neighbours from hell, out- of- control teenagers, rowdy teenagers, slob and yobs, teenage criminals, teenage tearaways, teenage thugs, teenagers, the untouchables, thugs, tormentors, yobs, young thugs, youngsters, youths.

In the Mirror they were:

Angry teens, animals, boorish, lawless youngsters, boozed-up youth, boys who were wearing tracksuits, Burberry-clad ned, chavs, cowardly little pieces of pond scum, crowd of chanting neds, drunken teens, feral yobs, feral young people, feral youngsters, gangs of youths, half-drunk brain-dead louts, hooded yobs, hoodies, like hyenas going after gazelles, little bastards, louts, lowlifes, mollycoddled creeps, neds, NEETS, savages, shell-suited scum, teen yobs, teenage thugs, teenage vandals, teenage tearaways, troublemakers, undesirables, yob gangs, yobs, young thugs, young yobs.

And in the Guardian:

Chavs, feral wing of the nation's youth, gang of teenage girls and boys, hoodies, hoodlums, louts, Teenagers, troublemakers, unruly pupils, yobs, youths.

Throughout newspaper reporting on 'Yobs' a lack of intelligence is spuriously attributed. As Perkins (1997:83) argued stereotypes tend to highlight mental, sexual and personal personality traits but the mental attributes are most important because they justify economic differentiation and subordinate groups are 'characterised as innately less intelligent'.

This is illustrated in The Daily Mirror where it is said of ‘Yobs’: ‘They can barely read or write, and texting is just about their stretch when it comes to communication’ (may22mirror2). The term ‘Ned’ is held to be the Scottish equivalent of ‘Chav’ (the Collins’ definition is almost the same but refers to a young working-class male; it is similarly elaborated), and was used by The Daily Mail (10 times in 7 articles) and The Daily Mirror (37 times in 28 articles) in their Scottish editions. Unlike the term ‘Chav’ however, the term ‘Ned’ is an acronym for ‘non-educated delinquent’<sup>15</sup>. References to educational ability fulfil the objectives of stereotyping. They justify divisions in society by making it ‘their’ fault (because they lack intelligence) and not ‘ours’ (because we possess intelligence). Furthermore it negates alternative explanations of ASB; ‘Yobs’ have not the intelligence to resist their subordination.

As mentioned, the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ opposition is central to the construction of the ‘Yob’; the ‘Yob’ is everything the decent, hardworking, law-abiding citizen is not. ‘Yobs’ are not like ‘us’, they are, at best, a cultural other, at worst, inhuman. The inhumanity of ‘Yobs’ is confirmed through animalising: such as the ‘Yob’ ‘branded an "animal" in court’ and later ‘caged’ (i.e. imprisoned) (apr13mirror2) or through the use of animal metaphors and similes: like ‘Street rats’ (may14guard2) or ‘hyenas going after gazelles’ (jan27mirror1) or the girls who ‘snort and roll their eyes. They remind me of restless horses, anxious to be out of the stalls’ (mar16guard3). ‘Yobs’ ‘bray’, ‘hound’, ‘stampede’, ‘swarm’ and gather in ‘packs’; they need to be ‘caged’ and/or ‘tamed’. The use of the term ‘plague’ references ‘rats’.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/4075012.stm>, Thursday, 9 June, 2005

The most explicit example of othering was the use of the word 'feral' to describe 'Yobs'. The term 'feral', had been used four times up until 18<sup>th</sup> May, but on this day all three newspapers reported the words of Chief Superintendent David Baines (highlighted earlier under impact events):

'It is part of life for these people. These people are feral by nature, having little control over their behaviour and having little responsibility for their actions and having little parental control over the way they live their lives. They are not concerned about respect or their responsibilities to anybody, other than their own familial ties. The criminal justice system holds no fear for them. Their parents have been through it as well and it holds no fear for them, either. The parents don't challenge them about their criminal behaviour [...] it's just part of their life skills, where to be sent to prison or borstal is just part of growing up'. He warned: 'This is a national problem' (May18mail1).

The young people being discussed in this opinion statement are identified as a 'lunatic fringe' (Cohen, 2005:43). Personality traits are attributed to 'these people' via dynamic modality; they are without self-control, lack respect, are irresponsible and come from criminal families, who fail to raise them properly. We are told the young people care only for their families which provides evidence that they are not part of the wider society. Calling upon a discourse of cultural deprivation (and cycles of criminality) simultaneously de-individualizes and de-socializes the problem; it becomes one of 'feral' families. Having established their existence, Baines situates this as a national problem.

Following Mr Baines' statement the term 'feral' came into popular usage and was used a further thirty-five times in May and fifteen times in June. The term feral is explicitly hierarchical, oppositional and (like most of the terms employed) derogatory. Another popular use of the term feral is related to 'feral cats'; these are othered and situated as problematic in relation to their domesticated relatives, not simply because they are wild (they are not ascribed the status of the majestic; wild feline specimens of far away places). The problem lies in that they are not domesticated (cultured) when they ought to be (they are 'matter out of place' Douglas 1966):

They are the offspring of lost or abandoned domestic cats living wild, often in colonies; because they have not been handled they are wary of people. Domestic and feral cats are the same species of cat, and it follows that domestic cats can have either domestic or feral kittens, depending on their lifestyle. A single lost or abandoned domestic cat that gives birth to feral kittens is practically always the start of a feral cat colony<sup>16</sup>.

To describe young people as 'feral' is to actively pull on the above notions; it is a process that is the opposite of anthropomorphism; it is animalising. Compare the content of the passage above with The Daily Mirror's account of 'feral' youth:

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.cat77.org.uk/articles/feral.htm>

Disintegrating families, parents as drunk and as foul-mouthed as their offspring, Vicky Pollard's mother is likely to be an older version of her daughter. Her father is probably nowhere to be found. This underclass is growing, according to the Department of Education, at the rate of 85,000 a year. They live on sink estates and have little training, prospect of decent employment or education. It is a prodigious job to pull these people out of the darkness and back into the sunlight and it begins at home, goes through into the classroom, vocational training, further education and a belief in family values. That is what society is (may15mirror2).

As Skeggs (2004:94) argues:

The working-class are being spoken about in many ways: as underclass, as white blockage to modernity and global prosperity, as irresponsible selves to blame for structural inequality, as passive non-market competitors, as lacking in agency and culture, whilst the middle-class are presented as at the vanguard of the modern as national identity and a cultural resource.

As such class divisions are being made through symbolic identification and evaluation. The application of the term 'feral' implicates cultural reproduction; it situates 'Yobs' as cultural other, as in opposition to society, as anti-social. Feral establishes the 'Yob' as uncultured, undomesticated, uneducated and outside the structures of society. In the following quote The Daily Mirror constructs 'Yobs' as surplus to society:

The police chief who described them as "feral" yobs was right. These thugs are a rogue breed incapable of considering others. They have little control over their behaviour. They are nobodies going nowhere and they have nothing to offer society. I honestly doubt that they ever will (may26mirror2).

**Moreover, the language employed in newspaper reporting of 'Yobs', either implicitly or explicitly, communicated a 'lunatic fringe' thesis. Indeed, some reports were actively keen not to demonise all young people:**

Ms Hodge yesterday sought to highlight the "talents, inventiveness and drive of our young people", saying that "most young people are not antisocial yobs, criminals, binge drinkers or drug addicts, but images portraying them as such can feed into a climate of distrust and negativity which is both unfair and untrue". Nevertheless, the young people (estimated at 25%-30% of the total by Ms Hodge) who resist involvement in organised activities and are seen as a problem by their local communities will have to be targeted under green paper proposals (jan20guard7).

TO listen to what is said about today's young people, you would think they are the worst generation of all time. Apparently they are all yobs and thugs, lazy and greedy, and interested in nothing but themselves and having an easy life. But it just isn't true, as most parents, grandparents and teachers know. Some are like that, but most are not (mar04mirror1).

Consequently then, the newspapers in this sample were not involved in the negative representation of youth as a generation (as the Young people Now campaign suggested). Rather, it was particular young people from particular social backgrounds that were burdened by negative representation. The ‘lunatic fringe’ thesis is frequently communicated through symbolization but as we move onto ‘causation’ we see that the reporting also frequently and explicitly explains the origins of this ‘lunatic fringe’ in terms of ‘lunatic’ families and communities.

### **Causation**

Cohen organised causal explanations under four headings: ‘A sign of the times’ thesis, ‘It’s like a disease’ thesis, a conspiracy thesis (Cabalism), and a ‘boredom’ thesis (Cohen, 2005, see chapter two).

In this sample the ‘it’s like a disease’ thesis was a grammatical effect rather than explicitly stated and was realized through the use of terms like ‘plague’, ‘blight’ and ‘epidemic’. The term ‘plague’ (employed 26 times) as an adjective:

Gangs plague the genteel streets of Bath<sup>17</sup>(mar02guard6).

Tackling the plague of lawlessness has now become a top election priority for Labour (mar02mirror2).

... the area had been plagued by gangs of youngsters  
(may21mail1).

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<sup>17</sup> Once more ‘matter out of place’.

The term ‘blight’<sup>18</sup> (employed forty times) was used to describe the effects of ‘Yobs’; and suggests that ‘Yob Culture’ is preventing the rest of society from achieving its potential (as white blockage, Skeggs, 2004):

... a yob culture of lawlessness that blights our country  
(jan26mirror2).

... thousands who are blighted by yob culture (apr02mail3).

... this district of east London, blighted as it is by  
poverty, yob culture and, of course, that great 21st-century  
curse - hoodies (june21guard3).

The term ‘epidemic’<sup>19</sup> was used to describe levels of anti-social behaviour, which was said to have reached ‘epidemic proportions’ (mar02mirror2; mar10mail5).

Cabalism was implied through the term campaign<sup>20</sup>:

A TEACHER fired a pistol at the feet of a teenager after  
being pushed to breaking point by a campaign of vandalism  
and abuse (feb03mail1).

That was the start of a campaign by local teenagers  
(mar30guard2).

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<sup>18</sup> **Blight:** 3. A person or thing that mars or prevents growth

<sup>19</sup> The term epidemic was also employed to describe levels of sexually transmitted disease (e.g. feb04mirror3, mar27mirror2, apr30mail3); levels of obesity (june04mail2); cannabis use (jan25mail2, jan30mirror3, apr30mail2) binge drinking (jan12mail1, june07mail1); mumps (may13guard2, may13mirror5) and suicide (apr09mail4) amongst the young.

<sup>20</sup> **Campaign:** 1. a series of coordinated activities, ... designed to achieve a social, political or commercial goal, 2. military, a number of complementary operations aimed at achieving a single objective.

The language above implied that the young people ‘shot at’ were responsible for the ASB directed at Ms Walker and further, that they plotted a range of coordinated activities with the sole intention of upsetting Ms Walker, even though evidence reported from the trial suggested otherwise<sup>21</sup>.

Cabalism was also connoted through the use of the term ‘gang’, a term far more loaded with meaning than ‘group’. Muncie (2004:158-160) argues the ‘gang’ was a twentieth century, American notion that implied ‘some form of identifiable leadership, membership criteria and organisational structure’; that had consistently been absent in studies of youth sub-cultures in Britain. Moreover, Muncie (2004:160-161) cited US research that raised questions over stereotypical understanding of gangs. Ball and Curry (1995, quoted in Muncie, 2004:161), argued that attempts to identify gangs were ‘veiled expressions of bourgeois disapproval’. Further in *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Cohen (2005, 139) found little evidence to support cabalism, or ‘gangs’; on the contrary media representation effectively gave ‘these loose collectivities a structure they never possessed’.

The ‘boredom’ thesis could also be discerned:

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<sup>21</sup> ‘But sentencing Walker yesterday, Recorder Louis Browne said: “After another episode of antisocial behaviour which you and your family have been subjected to you assumed the boys responsible were in your road. It was wholly disproportionate to go out with guns but you got weapons capable of causing lethal injury, approached the boys and fired at least two pellets at the feet of one of them. They denied any anti- social behaviour and there is no reason to disbelieve this”’ (mar30guard2).

It is out of boredom, as much as ignorance and evil, that gangs of kids end up killing grownups for kicks or amusing themselves by trying to lynch a five-year-old child (june06mail6).

Here, the answer to the problem of unruly youth was to 'make daily sport compulsory in all schools' (june06mail6). Griffin (1993:118-121) identified this as a discourse of muscular competition which assumes that natural 'aggressive energies' can be 'channelled into socially acceptable behaviours'. This position was rare, however.

'Cabalism' 'boredom' and 'it's like a disease' accounted for a small proportion of explanations. As already mentioned, reporting on 'Yobs' peaked in May, as Brooks (June07guard2) later asserted 'May was not a good month to be aged under 16'. All three newspapers offered their wisdom on the causes of 'Yobs' and four dominant explanations emerged:

- The Liberalism/ Political Correctness Gone Mad thesis
- The bad parenting thesis, with the sub-theme of the broken family
- The aggressive individualism thesis
- The 'mere adolescent rebellion' thesis

The first three could fit under the 'it's a sign of the times' thesis. All pointed to deteriorating standards of behaviour and discipline and once again harked back to a 'glorious past' (Pearson, 1983). All were concerned with morality.

In this sample there were explicit and implicit explanations of 'Yobs'. Explicit explanations involved reporters' proclamations; these were often backed-up by opinion statements from politicians and professionals. Implicit explanations emerged from the language employed. Whilst The Daily Mirror was powerful in its descriptions of 'Yobs' its attempts to explain the phenomenon identified were limited in comparison to both The Daily Mail and The Guardian. I will now discuss these theses.

### **The Liberalism/ Political Correctness Gone Mad thesis:**

This thesis was favoured by The Daily Mail and corresponded most closely to Cohen's 'a sign of the times'; where 'behaviour was seen as a 'symptom of something much deeper', and events came to be seen as evidence of societal decline involving the disintegration of family, and a breakdown in traditional values and law and order. In the search for causation this thesis repeated a series of predictable well-rehearsed concerns involving notions of inadequate discipline, state interference and liberal indulgence of the permissive society. The Daily Mail also tended towards the bad parenting thesis and identified an 'appalling rate of family breakdown' but this was simply a consequence of liberal government policies; so lone parent families were:

... part of a trend throughout society, where the values and constraints that once encouraged responsibility and decent behaviour are breaking down. The Churches have abandoned any serious attempt to offer a moral lead. Discipline in many schools no longer exists. Parents can no longer smack naughty children without risking jail. Courts too often seem strangers to common sense. Television, films and football loutishness all contribute to the coarsening of society. The moral compass seems to be going badly awry. Can we really be surprised at the consequences? (May21mail5).

One consequence, according to The Daily Mail, was 'Britain's culture of 'anything goes', where 'Society has become lazy and apathetic in its attitude towards directing teenagers to civilised behaviour' (May26mail4). Once more unruly youth are being positioned in opposition to the wider law-abiding society. Such 'Liberal indulgence' was also apparent within the judiciary:

**The liberals who have wrecked our justice system should hang their heads in shame** [...] We now have a liberal judiciary and ministers who pander to the criminals by focusing on their rights at the expense of the right of the victims'. A new breed of criminal has been allowed to flourish [...] criminals are still above the law and it is clear that due to misplaced leniency, sentencing inconsistencies and the shambolic state of our courts, they are escaping justice (Feb15mail6).

An example of this was the under use of anti social behaviour orders (ASBO) in Scotland where:

... young thugs are free to terrorise Scotland's communities because councils are not using Antisocial Behaviour Orders aimed at tackling violent or intimidating behaviour (April01mail4).

At the same time in England however, ASBOs were perceived to encourage crime, being seen as 'a badge of honour' because it increased 'credibility among fellow louts' (June30mail3). According to The Daily Mail the Scottish executive preferred 'soft options' (Feb20mail5) and these tended to encompass political correctness (PC) gone mad. National examples of PC gone mad included:

- 'Teenage criminals are being treated to adventure holidays and pop concerts at a cost of thousands of pounds to taxpayers' (feb07mail1).
- a 'Spray-paint masterclass for children' (march03mail3).
- a decent citizen who 'made the mistake of telling the police that he was so scared of a local street gang that he was carrying CS gas for his protection' who was later 'arrested for possession of a weapon and held for 11 hours at high-security Paddington Green police station'<sup>22</sup> (feb11mail5).
- a former prison warden who 'recommended that criminals should no longer be referred to as 'offenders' in case it hurt their feelings ... these 'fellow members of our society' as the report suggests we should call them do not generally sit at home of an evening discussing opera over a glass of sherry' (feb15mail6).

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<sup>22</sup> In the last sentence it is revealed of this decent citizen 'As well as the gas, the designer was carrying a knife, which he had been using for gardening'.

The repetitive nature of such reporting feeds the impression that the justice system favours perpetrators over victims and that 'courts routinely hand out unduly lenient sentences' (Muncie, 2004:12).

Such a narrative illustrates the historically contested terrain of youth justice in which calls for harsh punishment to control the essential wilfulness of children compete with welfare approaches by which reformers aimed to mend the corruption of innocence, end the cycle of criminality and restore the child to childhood. Scraton (2004:168) has argued however that despite the benefits of welfare approaches to youth justice they are 'roundly dismissed as holidays or rewards for offenders'. There was plenty of evidence for this here, for example Hickley (may16mail1), who argued for the public naming and shaming of offenders:

It would also be a stark departure from the controversial approach taken by some local authorities of giving persistent young thugs adventure activities and even lavish foreign holidays in the hope of reforming them (may16mail1).

There are many more examples but to sum up:

Political correctness does not have much time for sport. It smacks much too heavily of competition for the liking of those who would prefer to give foreign holidays to young muggers, university places to the illiterate, grants to anti-British terrorists, homes to fraudulent asylum seekers

and other people' s babies to homosexual couples  
(June06mail6) .

This is again illustrative of Cohen's (2005) 'it's not only this' thesis; where through a process of free association the problem is presented as not just that of ASB and 'Yobs' but of a whole pattern which threatens to undermine society as we know it.

Numerous opinion statements from politicians, and professionals accompany The Daily Mail's reports on the Liberalism/ Political Correctness Gone Mad theme. Take for example a report on 'Teenage vandals who caused havoc at a golf course' who were subsequently 'given golfing lessons at taxpayers' expense'. The report stated that 'critics launched a savage attack on the scheme because it rewards thugs for their bad behaviour rather than punishing them' (june08mail5). A deputy justice spokesman for the Scottish Tories is quoted to have said: 'This kind of appeasement is incredibly stupid because it rewards bad behaviour and is frankly beyond belief'; a SNP justice spokesman said: 'This exemplifies a problem that we have in our society that we reward bad behaviour rather than good behaviour', and the group leader of Edinburgh's Tories said 'the youngsters should be punished for vandalism before they were considered for golfing lessons' (punishment then reform). The underlying implication was that law abiding young people were losing out whilst bad behaviour was being rewarded and encouraged by 'do-gooders', leading the Tory deputy justice spokesman to proclaim:

This golf club will now have a long queue of children at its door wanting to take advantage of all this, knowing they can behave badly but still benefit at taxpayers' expense (june08mail5).

**Much of the above was echoed in The Daily Mirror, as the following quote illustrates:**

The politicians are too remote, the courts are too soft and the cops are non-existent. Our affluent country feels like it is falling to pieces. Instead of bobbies on the beat we have CCTV cameras. Instead of teachers who are respected we have teachers who get beaten up, raped and sued for raising their voices (may16mirror3).

**Though not as frequently The Daily Mirror also pulled on the Liberalism/ PC gone mad narrative –and ultimately the deserving/ undeserving dichotomy:**

There are so many do-gooders out there with plenty of do-good ideas and do-good schemes: teen community centres, after-school clubs, somewhere to go and hang out, somewhere to get advice and information. But what tends to happen? The spanking new, multi-thousand pound facility is covered in graffiti and vandalised within weeks (june14 mirror4).

**Or,**

IN previous generations, even if young people were not controlled at home, at least there was discipline in schools. Today a widespread breakdown in parental control has been made worse by the lack of order in many schools. Teachers are overwhelmed by trying to deal with classes in which disruptive pupils are determined to wreck lessons (may22 mirror2).

In the above excerpts liberal ‘do-gooders’ are situated alongside unruly youth as part of the problem, they are misguided in attempts at philanthropy; undeserving youth do not appreciate their endeavours. This is mainly due to their ‘bad’ parents but is exacerbated by the absence of corrective schooling. The ‘evil child’ discourse strand is called upon here: parents and schools are failing to constrain and discipline the wilfulness of the young (James et al, 2001:10). Indeed, a main concern of the Liberalism/ PC gone mad thesis is with the absence (or undermining) of effective correctives, whether they be the police, judiciary or schools.

The concept of socialization, the process by which young people internalise social constraints through external regulation, is also present and thus references the immanent child. The underlying assumption is that families have not socialized ‘Yobs’ ‘correctly’; the familial failure to impart the ‘shared’ norms and values (i.e.: morality) of society is perceived to threaten social stability.

Consequently, we see a return to earlier discourses that propose that young people unregulated within the home be regulated by the state. In this context the role of schooling is presented as a corrective to bad parenting rather than the impartation

of knowledge; it is the 'hidden curriculum' rather than the 'formal curriculum' that is important. This reflects the two distinct (classed) educations identified by Rose (1999:182, see chapter five) by which education for the masses has 'sought, in different ways, to minimize the threat to social well-being that the future adult might represent'.

The Liberalism/ PC gone mad narrative has at its core a concern with 'correction', that is regulation, discipline and punishment, and whilst it allows space for the sociological conception of the socially 'developing child' its main concern is with taming and civilizing the essential wilfulness of the 'Evil Child'. Though the family was situated as a 'natural' civilizing force, in this thesis the family had been undermined by the state and interfering 'liberal do-gooders'.

Moreover, the Liberalism/ PC gone mad thesis and the bad parenting thesis frequently invade each other; where The Daily Mail returns ultimately to the Liberalism/ PC gone mad narrative as the overriding explanation for 'Yob Culture', The Daily Mirror points ultimately to bad parenting.

## **The Bad Parenting Thesis:**

Inadequate parenting was the most frequently used explanation for ‘Yobs’ in The Daily Mirror. In January 2005 a Daily Mirror editorial announced: ‘Yob Pupils Must Learn’. Having likened classrooms to ‘zoos at feeding time’ The Daily Mirror stated that teachers ‘have too little support from parents or the government’, however this was about to change with new rules to tackle classroom disorder:

Consistently disruptive pupils will face sanctions, including detention. If that sounds mild for today's unruly kids, it doesn't stop there. Parents are to be brought in to help deal with their errant children ... Ultimately, it is not the responsibility of teachers to sort out bad behaviour - but fathers and mothers. Schools that already tell parents about problems often find those mums and dads are shocked into cracking down on their kids. That is how it should be. But parents who refuse to take action against their children must have action taken against them (jan31mirror1).

This is a particularly individualizing narrative where all responsibility for the socialization of children is placed with the family; ‘it is not the responsibility of teachers’. Where The Daily Mail pulled on essentialist notions of the ‘evil child’, The Daily Mirror leans toward the innocent/immanent child and though reluctant to pathologise young people:

even though the urge is to string them up, the reality is that it's not entirely their fault. That's why we must seriously turn up the heat on parents (may22mirror2).

### **They are less reluctant to pathologise parents:**

This is the essence of the sickness at the heart of our society. The inability of some parents to take responsibility for themselves and their children. It starts at home, but you've only got to look at the trashy specimens who call themselves parents on the likes of Trisha and Jerry Springer to know that there's a lot of work to be done. These are the kind of idiots who empower their children by telling them that teachers can't touch them if they misbehave at school. They're the kind of no-brains who keep their children quiet with violent PlayStation and Gameboy sessions, where life really does have no meaning at all (Junellmirror2).

In this 'sign of the times' quote society's ills are attributed to irresponsible 'parents'; they are the cause of unruly youth, the modality employed establishes this as an unquestionable truth. Use of the term 'no-brains' establishes such parents as ignorant and thus justifies their subordinate status. Notice also the term 'sickness at the heart of society' by which such parents are allocated blame for societies ills. As Scraton (2004:172) has argued notions of 'wayward children', 'dysfunctional families' and 'degenerate communities' are frequently 'closely associated with an implicit, and often explicit, acceptance of pathological models'. The significance of this is:

... not only that they dignify and legitimate the bigotry of popular discourses but also that they actively promote policies of correction. For, if individuals or communities can be identified as inherently pathological, they can be classified, targeted and disciplined accordingly (Scruton, 2004:173).

Take for example the representations of the parents following the hanging incident (mentioned under impact events): 'If police suspicions are correct, these are the adults who bred the monsters capable of trying to hang a little boy from a tree' (June03mirror2). Here 'monsters' are 'bred' by adults but the term bred is imprecise, being the past tense of both to 'bear offspring' and to 'bring up; raise'. In the above article The Daily Mirror believed the assailants' parents were more likely to be 'shouting about their kids' rights and dismissing what is being treated as attempted murder as a prank that went wrong' rather than 'horror at what happened'.

Blame is thus deflected from the young by establishing a causal link between inadequate parenting and unruly youth; 'Yobs' are the product of bad parents. Consequently the discourse of the innocent/immanent child is called upon, this child needs to be nurtured, protected and moulded into a citizen by parents. Bad parents neglect or misdirect:

Most children are not ill or wicked. If they misbehave, it is because their parents have failed to give them a sound upbringing in which respect for each other, and for learning, is accompanied by an understanding of right and wrong (feb04mirror5).

A reference to respect for learning is inserted here; this calls upon the theory of cultural deprivation (see chapter five) in which working-class families are constructed as failing to value education and to inculcate good learning habits in their children.

Where The Daily Mirror focuses on the plural parents, The Daily Mail focussed specifically on families headed by single-mothers in articulation of the bad parenting thesis. Much of the reporting was accompanied by the proviso that 'some' lone parents do a good job, although which ones was never made explicit. Nevertheless, in The Daily Mail the cause of family breakdown was consistently revealed, via the Liberalism/ Political Correctness gone mad narrative, as a consequence of government policy. As The Daily Mail asserted 'Every society, in every age, has understood that strong families foster discipline, responsibility and civic-mindedness' yet in Britain 'successive Governments have removed every incentive to marriage and promoted single parenthood with a tax and benefits system that discriminates against couples' (may19mail3). Or, in the case of 'feral youths':

if they lack the discipline, respect and values of my 'yob' generation, it's because they are the products of substandard, anything goes parenting. That, in turn, is the fault of lazy, selfserving politicians and a society obsessed with materialism (may26mail4).

Bad parents are merely a symptom of deeper social malaise. Ultimately, The Daily Mail places responsibility for civilizing the young with society. Youth are

seen as the future; an 'asset', and the 'betrayal' lies in society's failure to regulate and civilize them. Here then the family is a responsibility of the state. As Young (1996:150) has argued the family is seen to mediate the social 'either by continuing or resisting it'; consequently 'the project of social policy must be the strengthening of the family against that which threatens society and the eradication of anything that might damage social conditions'. In other words the family must be regulated.

This position is of course in contradiction to The Daily Mail's truly 'liberal' position in relation to the sanctity of the private sphere in which parents must be given the freedom to decide what is in the best interests of their children. In relation to unruly youth this includes the freedom to punish children: to 'smack naughty children without risking jail' (May21mail5).

In The Guardian 'Yobs' were explained from a variety of perspectives and alternative, sometimes critical narratives were apparent, for example, Libby Brooks questioned our ability to know what good parenting is:

It is a truism that every child is different, so why do we go along with those who would standardise the behaviour that is deemed acceptable? Perhaps because when you don't, the consequences are severe. Of course, as family and community fragments, parents are forced to turn elsewhere for support. And in a largely individuated society, it's not surprising that the emphasis is placed firmly on personal responsibility. If your child's behaviour is a nightmare, it is All Your Fault (feb19guard1).

Here, in effect, Brooks points to the dominance of middle-class familial discourse through which particular parenting practices are legitimated and promoted as 'good parenting', by default all other practices are deemed 'bad'.

The discursive effect of this discourse has led to a general homogenisation of middle-class parenting and a pathologisation of working-class practices (see chapter five and Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). In this context any deviations from the middle-class parenting norm are cited as causal evidence for unruly youth, utilized to apportion blame to families and communities, and used to facilitate strategies of intervention in (working-class) family life.

Nevertheless, despite Brooks' critical position, a number of Guardian articles concurred with The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror; they too identified inadequate parenting:

I've learned since, with children of my own, that they flourish best with love, friendship and genial control. ... But in many cases kids aren't getting it, even at home. Evidence the TV series Little Angels, a horrendous recital of children rampantly running wild, manipulating their families into chaos and dysfunction. These children arrive at primary school already disruptive, bullying wreckers. It's what they've grown up with (feb04guard1).

In the above quote, the explanation moves between the family and the child. It begins by highlighting essential parenting skills as a disciplinary mechanism, and asserts that such 'gentle' regulation is absent in many children's lives. Yet it next

asserts that children are manipulative; cause chaos, thus essential wilfulness is again referenced. It ends with the implication that children are socialised into being 'disruptive, bullying wreckers'. The article references the importance of love 'truism' but qualifies love as 'genial control'; the mere emotion is not enough. Such an argument can be found in Westian criminology; where 'parental love' was 'converted into a mode of correction (punishment, albeit represented as just)' (Young 1996:152).

Others writing in *The Guardian*, recognised inadequate parenting but attempted to shift the emphasis, Ashley (feb15guard3), for example, argued:

The current vogue for blaming parents isn't the answer. Many extreme problems do start at home and permanent exclusions frequently involve parents who can't control their children, yet refuse to admit they can do any wrong. Much more work needs to go into support for these vulnerable families, who are disproportionately represented in some schools. But most parents of low-level disrupters are doing their best.

Here 'vulnerable' families are acknowledged as a cause of unruly youth, but framed as in need of support. The language reflects a liberal 'do-gooder' stance, however the sentiments are not dissimilar to those in *The Daily Mail* above; the social contract demands vulnerable families are 'supported' (i.e. regulated), even though the regulation is masked in philanthropic sentiment and, as Squires (1990:57) noted, assistance has always been conditional upon the vulnerable 'displaying appropriate habits and customs'.

Discussions of parenting are consistently present in articles interpreting ASB and ‘Yobs’, whether parents are ultimately to blame for their inadequacies depends greatly upon the editorial stance of the newspaper. Nevertheless the repetitive referencing of inadequate parenting in causal narratives across the three newspapers serves to undermine any social explanations forwarded, As Ewick and Sibley (1995:214) argued:

Performative features of narrative such as repetition, vivid concrete details, particularity of characters, and coherence of plot silence epistemological challenges and often generate identification and commitment.

As such, all three newspapers identify good and bad parenting, and thus good and bad parents. We are invited to celebrate in middle-class norms and values and to de-value alternatives, both lifestyles and explanations. Moreover, the bad parenting thesis is an anti-social explanation in that all references to structural inequalities are absent.

### **The Aggressive Individualism thesis:**

As mentioned, The Guardian explained ‘Yobs’ from a variety of (sometimes critical) perspectives. These often reflected the positions taken by The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror. However the notion of aggressive individualism could be discerned as a coherent discourse strand in The Guardian (albeit a minority discourse position predominantly articulated through guest columnists). Here the

'yobbish' behaviour of 'youth' was merely one 'manifestation of our culture of aggressive individualism' (May28guard1).

Moreover, The Daily Mail identified a 'bloated welfare state' as responsible for destroying the independence of citizens (june04mail4). In this thesis the Government was identified as responsible for promoting the belief that 'the satisfaction of our individual needs is the primary purpose in life' and 'in the absence of any bold statement of values' the dominant message was 'we must first look after ourselves' (May28guard1). For Jenni Russell this led to a situation where:

... we are left with the twin messages of meritocracy and consumerism, which, for all but the winners, are very hard to bear. The first says we can be anything we want; the second that we deserve everything we want. Both are powerful myths, and neither is true. They eat away at our wellbeing. If we feel we haven't achieved enough, the message of meritocracy is that we are not good enough, and deserve to be where we are. If we don't possess all we want, the message of consumerism is also that we have failed - and that in some way we have been cheated, because we are entitled to whatever we want. These beliefs need to be challenged because they alienate too many of us. [...] Foul-mouthed louts who don't respect the rest of us aren't being stupid. They are refusing to opt into a value system that, as they see quite clearly, is most unlikely to make them feel valued in return (May28guard1).

I would add that the construction of certain people and communities as pathological, deviant and deficient adds further to this alienation. This thesis was alone in referring to the social causes of ASB and to suggest notions of resistance. As such it was a social discourse. Here society was constructed as competition with inevitable winners and losers. The perpetrators of ASB, 'Yobs' were explicitly situated as losers.

Richard Sennett, a guest columnist in *The Guardian*, continued the aggressive individualism thesis (may19guard1). He discussed New Labour's attempts to legislate for respect but identified their poor record in gaining respect from voters. Sennett believed this was due to the indifference shown by New Labour to those who questioned their wisdom. For Sennett 'indifference insults, indifference divides'. However, the government did not have the monopoly on indifference and there were far reaching consequences:

Condescension or smugness arouses feelings of anger that people seldom know how to manage. In offices, I've seen the insult of indifference prompt people to acts of petty sabotage that wind up only harming themselves; in schools, particularly working-class schools, young people become rebellious "for no good reason", though the reason is often that their superiors don't bother about them one way or another.

Like Russell (May28guard1), Sennett identified meritocracy as a central component of aggressive individualism. The illusion of meritocracy grants achievers a superiority and smugness over those employed in less desirable

occupations, and of course this circulates down the scale of occupational classifications, thus one group of workers feels superior to the next, and all feel superior to the unemployed, as Patrick Ainley (another guest columnist) illustrated:

The result, in terms of educational haves and chavs, is scrawled on a university toilet wall: "Go and get a job, you student ponces" - and underneath, in another hand: "Like I should care what a bog cleaner thinks?" (june14guard3).

The discourse of meritocracy contends that if we are poor, are employed in 'undesirable' occupations or unemployed then 'we deserve to be where we are' (May28guard1). In many ways it is difficult to discuss the notion of 'undesirable' occupations without appearing to join in the discourse, but whether I believe a particular job is desirable or not is not the point. What matters is that we have a tradition of undervaluing essential work; we all know and understand this, and this situation serves to divide us and ascribe to us superior or inferior status. In view of this, it is a tall order indeed to gain honour from certain types of employment in the way that the industrious working-class (apparently) once did, and as for being unemployed, stories of misfortune are not credible in the present climate. Furthermore, this is a situation where, as Ainley, (june14guard3) argued, the illusion of meritocracy hides the real contribution those at the margins have made. For him 'Hoodies' are:

... the downside of the economic miracle that has maintained a decade of "full employability" by combining job insecurity for those who are employed with a periphery of part-time, temporary contract workers, ducking and diving at two or three jobs at once. [...] This is what New Labour, building on Margaret Thatcher's legacy, has brought us to - a society that is self-destructing as it lays waste its future, the end of what is left of the now semi-privatised welfare state [...] A new, respectable working middle class lives in fear and loathing of the hooded, chav "underclass" (june14guard3).

**As an explanation for 'Yobs' The Aggressive Individualism thesis was apparent in The Daily Mirror, though it was unwilling to see the individuals it described as victims of structure, rather they were ascribed agency within the process:**

As a nation, we are finally reaping what we sowed in the '80s. This is the legacy which Thatcherism has bequeathed. An underclass dislocated economically by the greed and materialism of the '80s has taken gross self-interest to its ultimate, ugly conclusion - social isolation and breakdown. Thatcher's monstrous children have now spawned a new generation who see nothing to care about in the rest of society (June03mirror2).

**In the above quote The Daily Mirror appeals to the aggressive individualism narrative yet sees the poor as active in the process; it is an explicit example of victim-blaming (Griffin, 1993). Though the poor are presented as economically dislocated, here greed and self-interest is attributed not to the rich but to the poor**

themselves. A duty to care for the rest 'us' is imposed upon the poor whilst 'we' are justified in not caring about them because they have brought social isolation upon themselves.

The Daily Mirror struggles with the dichotomies apparent in social and political discourse in ways in which The Daily Mail and The Guardian do not. This I believe is due in large part to the composition of their readerships. The Daily Mail is free to construct the poor as pathological, deviant and deficient because this will not offend their readers, and furthermore, it frees them from social responsibility. Alternatively, The Guardian is able to employ the discourse of inequality as an explanation, even excuse, for certain behaviour in a 'forgive them for they know not what they do' kind of way. Indeed, The Guardian recognizes and discusses the dichotomy:

Predictably, many well-meaning people will see the proposed bills as an attack on the poor and the young. But both the government and its opponents are locked in a sterile debate. The home office seeks to cut crime by empowering the police, while the bien-pensants prefer to see young criminals as victims of social inequality (may18guard6).

The Daily Mirror is caught in that its readership constitutes the very communities The Guardian explains (excuses) and The Daily Mail condemns. The Daily Mirror has to contend with the divisions and oppositions created to explain this class of people, and judge between the reputable/disreputable; deserving/undeserving; criminal/ law abiding working class.

Moreover, despite opposing narratives in *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* both included explanations which highlighted the reluctance of individuals to take responsibility for the society in which they live:

For too many of us, street violence is always someone else's problem: society's, the government's, the police's, the schools' [...] as long as enough of us don't seem to care what happens in front of our eyes, then we shouldn't be surprised if some kids don't seem to care what they do (may18guard6)<sup>23</sup>.

For Alexander Deane, a guest columnist in *The Daily Mail* (June04mail4), 'the very people who should have been challenging the lack of respect and morality in modern Britain have been colluding with it' and this 'social cowardice' amounted to a middle-class 'abdication of responsibility'. He argued that the middle-classes were failing to self-regulate:

Moral rigidity is demanding, especially in terms of sexual and financial matters ... it requires real toughness not to give in to the siren voices of licence and luxury. This is particularly true in our climate of aggressive secularity, where the ethics of Christianity have been replaced by the code of individual rights. The great 18th-century philosopher Edmund Burke wrote that 'men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains on their own appetites'. In modern Britain, few people would even know what moral chains are,

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<sup>23</sup> See also June25guard1

never mind be inclined to wear them. As a result, those who should know better feel reluctant to say anything condemnatory about the ease of divorce or having children out of wedlock, of smoking dope or fiddling benefits. After all, such activities all too often happen in their own families.

Thus notions of moral 'vice' appear once more. Although 'self-indulgence' is highlighted, the article returns to The Liberalism/ Political Correctness Gone Mad thesis; the growth of the welfare state and a fall in educational standards (in which the middle-class have also colluded as it 'feeds the illusion that their offspring are performing well') are cited. Ultimately though, political correctness is to blame, indeed, political correctness is perceived as an attack on the middle-class:

On a deeper level, all the dominant cultural and intellectual forces of our age are now battling against traditional respectability, so it is understandable if the middle classes are inclined to give up the fight. Throughout the public services, the BBC, the universities, schools, the London literary scene, Westminster, local government and the arts, notions of morality and domestic responsibility are seen as either ludicrously bourgeois or dangerously extreme. Such ideas do not fit in with the all-pervasive agenda of social inclusion and non-judgmentalism. The values of suburbia have been turned into a source of shame [...] In our civic life, every fashionable ideology has been dragooned into the attempt to undermine the middle classes. So multiculturalism continually stresses the importance of diversity, warning against any imposition of a

universal moral code. For the pseudo-Marxists who fill the higher ranks of the state sector and academia, every sign of middle-class elitism must be eliminated in what amounts to a new kind of cultural revolution (June04mail4).

In this 'sign of the times' quote the moral fabric of society is judged to be under threat. But here this moral fabric is explicitly middle-class. Through a process of free association Deane brings in a raft of evidence of the 'it's not only this' kind. The very institutions that should uphold moral society are positioned as conspiring against it. Deane points to the amoral effects of multiculturalism and the 'all-pervasive agenda of social inclusion and non-judgmentalism' in a way that is suggestive of John Major's 'condemn a little more and understand a little less'. Where such agendas are all-pervasive in society is less than clear – they are certainly not significantly apparent in this sample of newspapers.

There was one historical discourse however that was apparent in all three newspapers, that of adolescence as a time of storm and stress.

### **The 'Mere Adolescent Rebellion' Thesis:**

This thesis can be divided into two further themes: Firstly, youth (i.e. adolescence) in a time of 'storm and stress' coping with contemporary challenges (or as The Daily Mail puts it: 'the emotional and sexual crisis of adolescence' jan24mail4). Here the discourse of development intertwined with a 'sign of the times thesis'. Secondly, youth as a historical, generational category that stands in

opposition to adulthood, here the discourse of the tribal child combines with an 'it's nothing new thesis'.

For Ashley (feb3guard2) the teenage years are 'a time of particular danger and stress' where many 'adolescents who had impeccable early upbringings, in secure families ... erupted with more than spots'. The article highlights the incidence of depression and mental ill health amongst young people<sup>24</sup> and lists a range of explanations :

There are almost as many theories as there are unhappy teenagers. Some highlight a single issue, from the growing evidence of a link between cannabis, particularly the modern super-strength varieties, and psychosis. Others focus particularly on the ready availability of high-proof alcohol and the now notorious culture of binge drinking. Then there are the broader stresses - the intense pressure to perform in endless exams and tests; worries about student debt; the pressures on girls, in particular, from a highly commercial and competitive consumer culture.

Here, through a discourse of consumption, young people are presented as vulnerable to numerous threats and stresses. Moreover, the modality universalises these threats and stresses to 'all' young people: 'all' teenagers experience puberty as a time of 'storm and stress' therefore 'all' teenagers are vulnerable innocents in

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<sup>24</sup> The article states: The Mental Health Foundation estimates that nearly half a million teenagers are self-harming. According to the Office for National Statistics, some 10% of children aged between 11 and 15 have a clinically recognised mental disorder. Among 16- to 19-year-olds, it is even worse - 13% have neurotic disorders. And the problems have increased in the past 50 years. Nor is this simply a middle- class concern: 14% of those in social class five suffer, compared with 5% in social class one.

need of care and protection. The positive effect of the narrative is the implication that any young person could be problematic (i.e. rather than just those with inadequate parents). However, it is the generalised problems to which the narrative refers that disrupt the universalization, are 'all' young people equally vulnerable to the issues given? Are those young people constructed as 'Yobs' worrying over student debt? It is doubtful, though there may be a variety of other pressing concerns that are not covered above.

Generalized adolescence is apparent elsewhere; it is understood as a stage of 'natural' rebellion, such as: 'The incident was more a case of teenage boys being teenage boys' (mar16mail5); 'Most [teenagers] rebel, at some time, against their parents and all they stand for (June16mail3); or 'It's the age when they try out smoking, start drinking cider and give up on the football and dance training (jan22guard2).

In this vein, all three newspapers included articles that discussed past adult concerns over youthful behaviour and by so doing hint that 'normal adolescent rebellion is 'nothing new' but merely a phase; one that is grown out of (jan22guard4). Griffin (1993) highlighted the importance of the term 'normal' in the discourse of development as some level of psychological trouble and rebelliousness is expected (therefore normal) in adolescence as a time of storm and stress. The degree of rebelliousness and troubledness must be carefully demarcated with disaffection being seen as that which is 'a threat to social order'.

As mentioned earlier under orientation, some articles provided a chronology of youthful sub-cultures and styles (e.g. May14guard3). Moreover, these were interpreted as deliberate youthful attempts 'to upset or scandalise their elders' (may17guard1). Further they alluded to a notion of a youth phase as distinct from and different to adulthood, somehow tribal (James et al, 2001:28): 'What the older generation see as antisocial behaviour the younger generation invariably regard as high spirits, light entertainment, a bit of a laugh' (may02mirror2). Such reporting normalizes youth as in resistance/opposition to adulthood. However, the referencing of previous youth 'subcultures' simultaneously calls upon our previous knowledge and understanding and thus (potentially) symbolizes generations of young, white, working-class males.

The normalization thesis employed in the three newspapers situates 'deviant' youthful behaviour historically, as though it is part of a continuum.

Simultaneously however, it points to discontinuity and rupture; suggesting that things are much worse now:

We expect young people to be surly and at odds with everyone around them. It's their job. In the Sixties idealistic youngsters rose up and challenged the stuffy old ways. But this is not born out of being different and wanting to change things. This is wanton violence, wanton vandalism born out of nothing but a desire to destroy (may22mirror2, see also may02mirror2; Junellmirror2).

Moreover, the mere adolescent rebellion thesis simultaneously constructed normal and abnormal adolescent rebellion. This is a classed distinction. Whilst middle-

class youth are understood as vulnerable to contemporary pressures in a period of 'storm and stress', the contemporary pressures upon working-class youth are absent from the debate. Working-class youth are constructed as deliberately defiant and a threat to social order. Moreover they are constructed as worse than ever.

Throughout the newspaper reporting of 'Yobs' the overwhelming impression is that youth behaviour is far worse now than it has ever been, the most referenced indicators of this was a lack of morals and respect:

Somehow in the last two decades, elements of our society have lost the ability to respect other people's lives. We've bred a generation of monsters who blight the lives of Britain's hard-working, law-abiding citizens (June3mirror2).

This is reminiscent of Pearson's (1983) analysis of a history of respectable fears, in which the media consistently harked back to a glorious past. Pearson (1983:3) summarized media representations in the 1980s (just over two decades before the article above):

Now violence and terror lurk in the once-safe streets. The family no longer holds its proper place and parents have abandoned their responsibilities. In the classroom, where once the tidy scholars applied themselves diligently in their neat rows of desks, there is a carnival of disrespect. The police and magistrates have had their hands tied by the interference of sentimentalists and do-gooders. A new generation is upon us of mindless bully boys, vandals, muggers, head-bangers, football rowdies, granny-murderers, boot boys, toughs and tearaways

who laugh in the face of the law, as we stand before the rising tide of violence and disorder with a Canute-like impotence.

Everything changes but stays the same.

## **Conclusion:**

This chapter has employed elements of Cohen's (2005) model of moral panic to a discursive analysis of newspaper reporting on the 'Yob'. Attention to the inventory stages of discursive events highlighted many themes apparent in previous analyses of newspaper representations of youth. I have shown how the language employed served to exaggerate and distort events in terms of threats to the wider society; and how the use of contextual references implied that distinct events were part of a wider problem or crime-wave. Young's (1996) crime couplet was identified in processes of symbolization; this invited readers to identify with victims but never the perpetrators.

Further, through symbolization 'Yobs' were situated outside of culture; excluded from the social. The images of 'Yobs' presented here constructed them as uncultured, undomesticated, uneducated and as a surplus population that threatened the stability of society and blocked progress.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter Cohen (2005:58) stressed the importance of examining the media's interpretation of discursive events because

interpretations determine solutions. In terms of causation we have seen that the newspapers tended towards the 'sign of the times' explanations. These circulated around theories of liberalism/political correctness gone mad, bad parenting, and aggressive individualism. In the first two explanations notions of social structure and inequality were absent and consequently they were anti-social explanations. As Young (1996:112) has argued (in relation to the murder of James Bulger):

One of the key features of the ... discourse of the national press, is that it always responds to the call for interpretation but its response is always haunted by its *failure* to interpret (original emphasis).

These two explanations simply mobilized established discourses by which social problems were individualised and predictable scapegoats identified: working-class youth, liberal do-gooders, single mothers and dysfunctional families.

Though the aggressive individualism thesis highlighted the impact of competition upon the structure of society this was a minority discourse position; mostly articulated through guest columnists.

A fourth explanation emerged in a mere adolescent rebellion thesis; this called upon the discourse of development and theorised youthful rebellion as a normal condition of youth. However, this was revealed as a particularly classed discourse, the storms and stresses highlighted being particularly middle-class concerns.

It is important to highlight that within all interpretations of the ‘Yob’ there were very few attempts to discuss what it means to be poor or the pressing concerns that emerge from living in poverty – which for many are as basic as finding food and shelter.

Moreover, this chapter has shown that newspapers offer a predominantly anti-social representation of youth; they do so in three ways:

- The press focuses upon youthful activities and behaviours that are criminal or antisocial and this presents a distorted version of youth. My brief examination of ASB suggested however, that many anti-social activities are best understood as those annoying to adults. As Squires and Stephen (2005:8) argued, the re-problematisation of crime into ASB:

... marks the arrival of an increasingly insecure, divided and intolerant culture. Likewise, the policing of ASB suggests an increasingly disciplinary society and, contrary to contemporary political rhetoric regarding social inclusion, a markedly more exclusive one, selectively targeting a particular range of stigmatised behaviours and individuals for reasons that are often beyond the perpetrators control.

- Newspaper reporting of ‘Yobs’ is a process of othering by which working-class youth are attributed all the characteristics that must be disowned by civilized society. They are represented as outside of society; excluded. They are society’s other who ‘vindicate our own sense of ourselves as moral and

worthy: respectable as opposed to disreputable' (Squires and Stephen, 2005:10).

Attributing negative value to the working-class is a mechanism for attributing value to middle-class selves (Skeggs, 2004:118). Thus the middle-classes need the 'other' to be all that they are not and youth 'have come to assume this role, the visible, even tangible presence on your street, outside your shops and in your parks' (Squires and Stephen, 2005:10).

- The interpretative discourses employed by the press tended to situate causation in a variety of locations but the social. Issues of poverty, if discussed at all, are positioned as the result of individual inadequacies rather than structural inequalities. The repetitive production of narratives about dysfunctional families and inadequate single mothers serves to delimit causal explanations and establish strategies of intervention into family life under the guise of an 'responsibilisation strategy' by which policies are increasingly targeted at governing the family (Squires and Stephen, 2005:4):

This 'policing of the family' manifests itself most notably in the attempt to discipline parents (Parenting Orders) and hold them ever more criminally responsible for the offending behaviour of their children (Squires and Stephen, 2005:5).

Moreover, the discourses employed by the press identified in this chapter serve to isolate problems and delimit policy intervention. As such, this chapter supports Squires' and Stephen's (2005:7) assertion that:

Unlike earlier discourses we no longer prioritise 'treatment', 'cure' or 'education', and still less do we attempt to improve the disadvantaged social, domestic or environmental contexts in which an overwhelming majority of today's anti-social (and offending) young people fail to develop into successful and responsible adults. We overlook the criminogenic social contexts bearing down upon the 'delinquent' and concentrate largely upon their choices and behaviour. This leaves us with relatively few options in either understanding or dealing with that type of behaviour. We interpret the behaviour as typical of 'that kind of person', as Christie ... has noted, offensive and anti-social people "are their own explanation" thereby ensuring our overreliance upon discipline, punishment and containment (Squires and Stephen, 2005:7).

## **Chapter Seven: Reproducing Vulnerable Young Women**

In chapter four I argued that newspaper reporting represented young women according to a series of problems; these circulated, by and large, around their problematic sexuality and/or their irresponsible consumption. Further I argued that such news reports utilised a limited range of those discourses identified by Griffin (1993): predominantly the discourses of sexual deviance, education, dependency and consumption and leisure. These served to represent young women as particularly promiscuous, or ignorant/irrational, or manipulative, or as particularly vulnerable to certain threats/bad influences. Young women are presented as particularly vulnerable to the effects of popular culture and a 'media effects model' is inter-textually referenced throughout.

In this chapter the vast majority of data refers to young women under eighteen-years old, however there may be some references to young 'adult' women. Which these are, however, is often difficult to discern. The newspapers frequently appear to talk about young women as 'girls' no matter what their age. This may be a result of attempting to define youth as an age-based category (as discussed in chapter three). It could also be related to adherence to news values (discussed in chapter two), a story can be made to symbolize much more if vulnerable or 'shocking' young women are understood as girls.

In this chapter I will examine newspaper representations of young women in relation to their leisure, consumption and sexuality. I will elaborate upon the contradictory 'figures' of young women that are produced in relation to these

themes. I will show how these are 'classed' textual figures. Certain of these classed figures are deemed vulnerable to media effects due to an assumption that working-class parents do not discipline and regulate their media consumption. I will argue that:

- The perceived 'sexualization of our young' is of central moral concern, especially in relation to working-class girls; they are situated as a particular threat to the concept of childhood innocence.
- The notion of female (sexual) vulnerability/naivety is essential to the construction of childhood innocence and that an absence of this would irretrievably undermine the construction of innocence.
- In relation to young women, such innocence is conceptualised, not as the absence of malice, but as the absence of an essential sexuality.

### **Disorders of Leisure:**

Griffin (1993) highlights a discourse of leisure and consumption apparent in youth research. This constructs certain young people as particularly open to inappropriate use of leisure time and vulnerable to the pressures of consumption. This was apparent in newspaper reporting on youth in general in this research (the boredom thesis in relation to 'Yob' behaviour for instance). With regards to young women it was particularly apparent in relation to their consumption of popular culture. Moreover, popular culture was presented in newspaper reporting as an especially dangerous and coercive threat to impressionable young women.

The ‘dangers’ of the Internet, for instance, were frequently cited as a threat to young people and young women in particular. This focussed on those of school age – though the dangers were perceived as threatening to all young women. It was not computer use per se that was judged problematic, after all computer literate youth are essential to Britain’s success in the information society. Rather, it was young women’s leisure use of technology that was situated as problematic.

In news reporting on young women the Internet was presented as a virtual world inhabited by pathological, adult male predators just waiting to manipulate them:

**Net Perv Warning:** A judge yesterday warned of the dangers of online chat rooms as he jailed an internet predator for 10 years (Mar25mirror7).

**Was teenager abducted by man she met online?** (apr02mail4).

**Families' fury after Net pervert is given three-year sentence:** A PAEDOPHILE who used the Internet to snare young victims was jailed for three years yesterday for having sex with a 13-year-old girl (may12mail6).

Such a situation requires that young women be protected from these threats, and consequently protected from the Internet. An article from a Guardian special supplement (jan11guard9) illustrates this. Reporting a scheme to teach young people about the dangers of the Internet: ‘Police pilot schemes to outwit paedophiles’, this article constructs a familiar narrative involving victims

(vulnerable youngsters), 'baddies' (predatory paedophiles), and 'goodies' (seasoned experts: police officers, youth workers, teachers).

The 'baddies' are presented as patient, cunning and predatory, as 'grooming' their victims<sup>1</sup>: 'Paedophiles are cunning in their pursuit of a potential victim and will wait patiently while the trap is set' said a detective sergeant<sup>2</sup>. The 'goodies' are presented as beneficent and knowledgeable (as possessing 'nous') guardians. Potential victims are presented as a (problematic) generational group (i.e. all young people), initially at least. According to a detective sergeant, the job of protection is made difficult by an 'age-old generational issue: the last thing teenagers want to do is confide in adults. It's a bit of a hidden problem with young people'. Here young people are constructed in opposition to and different from adults in generational terms. Through a process of reduction however, this generation is narrowed, firstly to girls and then to particularly vulnerable girls, according to the detective:

A man logs on to a chatroom as 'Tim, 12, from Kent' who wants to meet 'some cool Birmingham girls', for example. Girls respond and because he seems friendly they add his name to their buddy lists and, before long, he's got access to a huge group of young people. Then he picks his target - the weak link in the group, the child who's vulnerable for some reason, doesn't get on with parents or is unhappy at school, and the grooming begins. And these people can wait.

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<sup>1</sup> See Meyer (2007).

<sup>2</sup> We are also informed that 'paedophiles predators' are an increasing threat: "It's an increasing problem in that it's growing with the web. 3G technology, which puts the web in people's pockets, will make it even more likely that people will be more susceptible to unwanted interventions."

They can take months to build up a relationship with a child  
(janllguard9)

Where the villain is consistently constructed in one-dimensional terms as inherently 'bad', potential (child) victims are constructed in more complex ways. The story goes that due to immaturity, irresponsibility and an inevitable lack of 'nous', young women are particularly vulnerable to manipulation by unscrupulous adults; especially on the internet: young people 'however techno-savvy, make themselves and others vulnerable without knowing it'. In effect young women are constructed as having, in part at least, brought the dangers on themselves, albeit as a result of the lack of rationality associated with 'immaturity' or unhappiness. Consequently, young women are seen to require instruction on Internet use, and thus a discourse of education is brought into play. A quote from one teacher illustrates:

In this day and age you can't prohibit children from using chatrooms and messaging but you have to make them aware of how to keep safe and use it responsibly. We don't stop children from crossing the road, we teach them how to do it safely (janllguard9).

Here then 'threats' are located in 'chatrooms' and 'roads' rather than as 'internet predators' and 'cars'. In this context there is an implicit admittance that the problem of 'dangerous' adults is effectively beyond the control of agencies, he cannot be identified and disciplined until after the event. As such, young women are to be disciplined into protecting themselves; they are to regulate their own Internet behaviour.

In this instance then a discourse of leisure and consumption (Griffin, 1993) constructs young women as particularly vulnerable in their pursuit of leisure on the Internet; the implication is that they are placing themselves at risk from manipulative adults. In the above article for instance we are told that girls 'with computers in their bedrooms admitted that the privacy made them less cautious in what they said to other people online'. The implication being that privacy results in young women not policing themselves; young women are less inhibited online. At the same time we are told 'teenage inhibitions can prevent youngsters following their own safety instincts', thus they are presented as having the knowledge to protect themselves but as not acting upon this. Here being 'teenaged' is presented as an inhibitor to policing oneself. The article also quotes a US study 'of men arrested for having sex with young people they had met online' that found that '75% of the victims were girls aged 13 to 15 and many had gone to a chatroom expressly to chat about sex with a man'. As such, going online is presented as a deliberate and defiant act and purposefully sexual. In this way then young women were constructed as vulnerable (due to their age) yet knowing (intellectually and sexually).

The discourse of leisure and consumption was also very apparent in discussions of other areas of concern associated with young women. Young women's health for instance, was frequently discussed in terms of their diet; indeed there was great attention to eating disorders and obesity ('jan02mirror2, feb10mail3, mar09guard2, mar30mail3, may18mirror4).

## **Disorders of Consumption:**

In narratives related to young women's bodies, young women were constructed and dichotomised in terms of 'excess', they ate too little or too much, were too obsessed with their bodies or not obsessed enough. This resulted in young women being understood as either obese or image-obsessed (this was especially the case with eating disorders). The problem of obesity was generally constructed in terms of unhealthy lifestyles, over-consumption of unhealthy products and too little exercise:

Junk food, a sedentary lifestyle and the 'electronic babysitter' of TV and computer screens are blamed for creating a generation of couch potato children who are piling on the pounds (Jan21mail2).

'A sports tsar is bidding to stop Scotland's teenage girls becoming overweight, chain-smoking, binge drinkers. The Scottish Executive fears podgy, chain-smoking teenage brat Vicky Pollard ... is a reality in Scottish playgrounds' (mar07mirror2).

In contrast there are the image-obsessed girls waiting to partake in 'Make Me a Supermodel':

Most of the girls<sup>3</sup> readily admit to being obsessed with their looks and body shape, and to comparing themselves constantly to celebrities and models in magazines. Many spend almost all their disposable income and pocket money on clothes, accessories and beauty products. One girl admits to having succumbed to an eating disorder as a result of the pressure she feels to have the perfect figure. This queue is, in fact, a telling microcosm of a generation of girls for whom the shallow pursuit of physical perfection is seen as the only true route to happiness (feb02mail5).

Paradoxically both Daily Mail quotes attribute the problems of obesity and image-obsession to 'a generation' of young women, but surely they cannot be both at once and surely there are those that are neither. Nevertheless, each position is represented as undesirable.

Obesity is presented as particularly undesirable due to later consequences:

**Obese teenagers heading for heart attacks: Bad habits store up trouble warns British Heart Foundation:** ... In one of the starkest predictions yet of the consequences for young people fed on junk food and doing little exercise (feb11guard3).

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<sup>3</sup> Some of these girls were in their early twenties; one was twenty-three.

Here are the facts: too many western children are fat. Not just a bit fat, a lot fat: according to a recent report from Sport England, as many as 16% are obese. That matters, because obese kids become obese adults, get more diseases and die earlier, costing a fortune in human misery and NHS money (mar09guard3).

Obesity is identified as undesirable because it leads to future ill health; this is attributed to bad habits: the (irresponsible) consumption of 'junk food' and too little exercise. In the second quote an economic discourse strand is discernible, obesity is undesirable because it costs a fortune: 'The burden on the NHS of treating obesity-related illness is already thought to be around £2billion a year' (june23mail2). All three newspapers reported the findings of a British Medical Association (BMA) report. The BMA's causal interpretation is multifaceted:

The BMA has called for a ban on junk food advertising and sponsorship targeted at the young. Celebrities and cartoon characters should only be allowed to promote healthy food. Fruit and vegetables should be subsidised by the Government to make them cheaper, especially in poor areas. It wants a new central body to promote obesity-related policies. There should be new laws to make food manufacturers cut salt, sugar and fat in their pre-prepared meals. And there should be more cash for sport and recreation facilities in schools and communities (June23mirror3).

**Doctors urge action on child 'diabetes'** [...] The BMA is calling for the government to mount a sustained and consistent public education campaign for parents and children on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle (june23guard5).

Doctors want to see a sustained public education campaign by the Government to improve understanding of the benefits of healthy living with 'lifestyle trainers' for obese families (june23mail2).

One cause of obesity is 'advertising' by the junk food industry; young people are perceived to be particularly susceptible to this. Another is a lack of facilities to enable exercise; without which young people are likely to misuse their leisure time. Alternatively, the cost of healthy food is referenced; thus a notion of poverty is called upon and the manufacture of unhealthy food is also cited. At the same time, however, obesity is causally related to inadequate parents who need to be informed and educated 'on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle'. In The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror this is understood as an outcome of parental neglect:

Ignorance, in this case, can no longer be considered a defence. Can there be any parent in Britain today who does not know that choosing a bad diet for their children leads to a catalogue of ailments not the least of them obesity and behavioural problems? When parents allow junk food to dominate their children's diet, then they are guilty of gross neglect just as surely as if they were to force-feed them nicotine (may25mail6)

It's apparently all the fault of the marketing men who push junk food their way. I'm sorry, but nothing is going to improve unless parents take some blame and some responsibility (mar29mirror4).

Here, obesity was identified as a health problem in medical discourse; multiple causes were identified as in need of regulation. Despite the various explanations however, in newspaper reporting obesity was generally understood as the consequence of 'bad habits', the irresponsible behaviours of individuals (and families) **not** 'working' towards a healthy body. Such a body is not 'natural' but something to be pursued through a 'responsible' diet and healthy lifestyle. There is no space granted for 'genetic' causation, "it's my metabolism" just won't wash. The healthy body must be produced. The discursive effect is to make obesity an individualized problem, in so-doing individuals are incited to regulate and discipline their consumption and exercise.

Alternatively, the pursuit of 'physical perfection' -which has just been recommended- was judged to be 'shallow'. It was judged partly a consequence of low self-esteem and a distorted self-image, but was mostly due to the 'impressionable' nature of young women which left them open to exploitation by manipulative others. At the extreme end of this pursuit were eating disorders:

AT 12 I was shy, brooding and oversensitive [...] When I looked in the mirror I saw a fat, ugly girl staring back at me - even though I was only 7st 7lbs (may18mirror4).

But there were other distorted obsessions, such as the 'tanorexics' addicted to sunbeds: 'there are concerns that many teenage girls are becoming 'tanorexics' addicted to using sunbeds as they try to emulate bronzed celebrities' (may28mail2, see also may12mail2, may12mirror2, may13mail8, may17mail5). Or the 'Nip & Tuck Teenagers' so image obsessed that they had resorted to surgery 'in a scenario which is becoming increasingly common in today's 'Nip/Tuck society' - especially amongst impressionable and aspirational teenage women' (jan27mail3). Young women are represented as vulnerable here because they desire to be something else; something they are not.

Numerous threats were identified, such as celebrities and media: 'Celebrities distort girls' search for ideal shape' (jan05guard1); 'The sorry truth about Teen magazines' in which all 'we get is a menu of celebrity tips, makeup that will catch the right boy, and '40 fantastic figure fixers - for boobs and bums big or small, check out our selection of lovely lingerie' (jan14mail4). In one article Weathers and Jackson quote an opinion statement from Bliss magazine's editor on the causes of image obsession:

The endless parade of thin yet curvy, surgically-enhanced celebrities has made young girls become obsessed with their own normal lumpy, bumpy bodies. They also feel pressure from boys who expect their girlfriends to resemble the perfect celebrity body model they've been fed by a looks-obsessed society (jan27mail3).

Weathers and Jackson are quick to highlight such magazines own role in feeding image obsession, thus inter-textually referencing a (hypodermic) effects model (I will discuss this in detail later) <sup>4</sup>:

One which is regularly and loyally served, it must be said, by Britain's multimillion pound magazine industry, which not only features a steady stream of surgically enhanced celebrities, but is not averse to 'retouching' the images to ensure that not even the slightest imperfection remains (jan27mail3).

The Daily Mail also highlighted what it believed to be the exploitation of image-obsessed girls, such as the 'Teen wrinkle cream 'con'' where 'Cosmetics firms have been accused of pressuring young girls into buying anti-wrinkle creams that could damage their skin' (feb21mail3); or 'The push-up bras Asda aimed at girls of nine' (inappropriate sexualization) (apr11mail3). There were also the 'pamper parties' aimed at girls under ten:

**What's wrong with jelly and ice-cream?** ... Instead of the more traditional birthday magician, bouncy castle or a trip to the cinema, girls get their own ... 'pamp tishan' and the smaller ones are offered 'lots of gloss and glitter' together with a range of outfits on the themes princess or

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4 Despite the criticisms directed at young women's magazines however, information from such publications is regularly cited. For instance, all three newspapers reported findings from surveys conducted by Bliss magazine, see feb24guard6, feb24mail4, feb24mirror2 for reports on a survey on depression amongst teenage girls; jan05guard1, jan14mail4, jan05mirror2 for reports on a survey on negative body-image and mar25guard1, mar24mail2, mar24mirror1, for reports on a survey on teenage girls' sexual practices. It seems that in addition to reading what other newspapers say, journalists regularly read young people's magazines.

blushing bride. A karaoke machine and dance mat complete the session, and, if the partygoers get tired, they can even opt for a foot spa (mar10mail7)

In this article Katie Grant stressed that she was not against 'fun' but she believed that something much 'darker' was happening here; 'deeper' messages were being communicated: 'Look in the mirror and see you are not perfect'. For Grant the girls are being 'subtly encouraged to believe they will be more attractive, successful and popular, if they moisturise, apply makeup and generally behave like Joan Collins'. In Grant's article such parties are presented as a threat to childhood innocence, an innocence that should be protected:

For all pre- teens, parties should be about communal childish games, not an introduction to the selfish and self obsessed world of adult glamour (mar10mail7).

The above discussion illustrates how young women's bodies are represented in dichotomised ways in the press. They are obese or image-obsessed but neither is the 'normal' healthily produced body that is implied but remains largely unspecified, unreported (unless it is the 'lumpy, bumpy body' above, jan27mail3). Reading between the lines, the implication is that the bodily norm is one produced by eating healthily, exercising regularly (but not necessarily competitively as this leads to obsession<sup>5</sup>) and through self-discipline. Notions of obese or image-obsessed bodies are dependent upon notions of 'normal' healthy bodies; these are those from which they differ. Yet because the norm is not identified, scrutinized,

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<sup>5</sup> A different implication may have been apparent in sports reports but these are not included here.

it remains unnoticed/uncommented upon/invisible. The implication is that it is a natural body but this is a phantasm:

The Body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest and holidays, is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws (Foucault, 2000:380).

This is partly recognized in press narratives; the bodies of young women being presented as at risk from a variety of threats, but although reference was made to the cosmetic and junk food industries, attention became focussed upon the negative effects of popular culture upon young, vulnerable women.

Furthermore, both the obese and image-obsessed young women were constructed in terms of excess; the obese lacked self-discipline, the image-obsessed were too (pathologically, especially those with eating disorders) self-disciplined. Moreover, it seems that something in addition to gender and age is being invoked in these reports. One reason for this is that a limited number of contradictory conceptualisations of young women are being called upon:

- Those discursively constructed as vulnerable and in need of protection from the contaminating effects of popular culture.
- Those discursively constructed as ‘excessively’ knowing (beyond their years) yet misguided; a threat to themselves.
- Those discursively constructed as at risk in families.

In terms of excess, Skeggs (2004:99) argues that there has been a long tradition of representing working-class women as excessive 'whilst the middle-class are represented by their distance from it, usually through associations with restraint, repression, reasonableness, modesty and denial'<sup>6</sup>. Further, this has been coded in terms of excessive/repressive sexuality and femininity. Foucault (1998:127) argued 'there are classed sexualities'. As we saw in chapter five, when the masses were eventually granted sexuality it was one that was to be controlled; the effect was to induce 'specific class effects' (Foucault, 1998:127). Thus sexuality became a differentiating mechanism; a discourse founded on the notion of repressed middle-class sexuality in opposition to a debauched working-class sexuality. For instance, Skeggs (2004:100) argues that:

... the division between the sexual and the feminine was, historically, most carefully coded at the level of conduct, where the *appearance became the signifier of conduct*; to look was to be. The construction of appearance became a cultural property of the person, the means by which women were categorized, known and placed by others (emphasis in original).

Consequently, appearance has been taken as a signifier of moral worth (Skeggs, 2004). In newspaper reporting both too much and too little attention to appearance was judged negatively. Obesity was taken to signify a total lack of self-discipline and self-respect, as Skeggs (2004:102) has argued 'the fat body displayed –literally inscribed- excess and enabled a reading of lack of self

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<sup>6</sup> An image of middle-classness similar to that called upon by Deane (quoted in the previous chapter) which illustrates the required 'toughness not to give in to the siren voices of licence and luxury' (June04mail4).

governance'. For Skeggs (2004:102-3) such bodies stimulate disgust and this generates consensus:

... when something or someone is designated as disgusting, it provides reassurance that we are not alone in our judgement of the disgusting object, generating consensus for middle-class standards, to maintain symbolic order.

In addition, I would argue that because attention to obesity is rooted here in a medical discourse strand a further opposition is being created between those deserving of medical attention and those who are not. Such reporting feeds the argument that obese individuals (together with smokers, heavy drinkers etc) should not be the beneficiaries of NHS care.

Alternatively, in the newspaper reporting discussed here being image-obsessed signified shallowness, distorted ambitions, and exploitation. Walkerdine (1998:167) asserts that the working-class girl has come to represent a 'struggle for something better' in Anglo-American media, but that attempts to theorize this have consistently failed to understand the productive aspects of popular culture for such girls and have understood it as exploitation. Further, Walkerdine (1998:80) argues that though our conceptions of a natural childhood appear gender-neutral they are in fact constructed around the notion of an 'active, rationally enquiring boy'; the girl was never judged rational enough to be this child, but she was seen as essential to the future production of the natural child in her role as 'the nurturant mother-figure'. In this sense then, being image-obsessed is suggestive of ambitions beyond motherhood; such ambitions threaten 'the possibility of rational order' (Walkerdine, 1998:81).

Moreover, too much attention to appearance makes the work involved in producing oneself explicit and this is not culturally valued: the 'labour is not hidden, as in the fetish of the natural, but is being devalued for being made visible' (Skeggs, 2004:101). Value is given when the labour involved in producing the body is invisible so as to appear natural: 'it is the appearance of natural rather than artifice, that marks a higher cultural value' (Skeggs, 2004:101). Further, Skeggs (2004:100) argues that 'too much attention to one's appearance' is culturally read as 'a sign of sexual deviance, of sexuality in excess'. As we saw in chapter five, excessive sexuality has long been attributed to working-class women. Skeggs (2004) argues that such excess is taken to symbolize impropriety. However, to read another's body as excessive displays 'the investment the reader has in maintaining propriety in themselves' (Skeggs, 2004:100). Such constructions will become more apparent as I go on to discuss reports on binge drinking and sexuality.

### **Binge Drinking**

Nowhere was the problem of 'irresponsible consumption' more apparent than in discussions of Binge drinking. This was another area of press reporting in which young women were represented in terms of excess. Binge drinking was attributed to 'the rise of the 'ladette' culture which has seen a huge increase in binge drinking among young women in Britain' (jan14mail3) and prompted dual concerns, on one hand over the negative affects on health:

Rising toll of mental illness as girls binge (jan14mail3).

BINGE drinking among teenage girls has soared to record levels, storing up a host of health problems in later life ... The risk of cancer, heart attacks, liver disease and mental illness can all be raised by heavy drinking in teenage years (mar10mail1).

On the other hand, the moral degradation of young women (also coded as excess):

...girls<sup>7</sup> sprawling in the gutter with their thongs on show ... girls collapsing, young women being carried fireman style, knickers on show to the world by inebriated young men (jan17mail1).

Articles referencing binge drinking were not solely related to young women; binge drinking was cited as a cause of anti-social behaviour amongst youth in general. However, press attention was more sensationalized in relation to young women because they were perceived to be out-drinking young men: 'Girls of 15 binge drink even more than the boys' (mar10mail1), 'Girls Booze It Up Like Lads' (mar10mirror2); and because the effects of this were seen as leading to female immorality and impropriety.

Indeed binge drinking was frequently constructed as a moral problem; alcohol was identified as a significant factor in sexual immorality amongst young women because 'Alcohol is one of the key factors in girls losing their virginity early, as

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<sup>7</sup> Presumably these girls, being 'out on the town', are over eighteen-years old.

60 per cent of sexually-active 14-year-olds claimed to have been drunk during their first time' (mar24mail2) and 'Alcohol is a huge problem when it comes to sex, causing teenage girls to behave in a way they wouldn't normally (mar24mirror1). As such, the real 'problem' associated with binge drinking and young women is early sexual activity rather than the negative effects on health. The Daily Mirror quote situates propriety as essentially normal behaviour, but alcohol is perceived to undermine this, it contaminates normal female moral assessments.

Skeggs (2006) understands both the binge drinking and ladette phenomenon as an attempt by young women to resist the idealised femininity expected of them (i.e. the nurturant mother-figure identified by Walkerdine): it is 'an attempt not to be proper':

If you look at them they are without restraint. There's always been a big problem in understanding women who cannot be governed. The police are scared – these are ungovernable women to an extent [...] The thing is, they're going to grow up and grow out of it. It's not really that much of an issue because your body can't take that much alcohol for that long. So they'll do it, they'll grow out of it, it's not going to be the same sort of health problem as gout or the men's club drinkers (Skeggs, 2006).

Bourdieu (1998:44-45) argued that the press tend to report only problems that do not pose a problem (see chapter two); binge drinking then appears to fit the argument. However, teenage sexuality is viewed as very problematic and evidence of sexual activity amongst the under sixteens (and sometimes under twenty-ones) is taken to signify that there is something very wrong with society;

that young women are (morally) out of control. Skeggs (2006) has argued that constructing young women who 'binge drink' as resistant to moral control situates them as a social problem. Further, doing so is the only way that the 'threat' can be contained; for once a group or activity is identified as a social problem regulatory mechanisms can be targeted to 'literally contain and control' (Skeggs, 2004:104). For Skeggs (2006) press reporting on binge drinking amongst young women is an obvious and cheap form of journalism that is complicit in attempts to reconstruct a 'proper', 'restrained' femininity.

The data analysed here would support Skeggs' argument, binge drinking itself was not analysed in any of the three newspapers reported in this research, nor was there any attempt to interpret what it meant or why it was done. Binge drinking was predominantly a 'contextual' reference in the articulation of broader social concerns related to social order, such as the ASB associated with 'Yobs', and the sexual immorality of young women. Moreover, evidence of sexual activity amongst girls is perceived to be particularly threatening to the fabric of society. It is not that the girls themselves are threatening; indeed newspaper reporting frequently represents sexually active young women as victims. What is threatening however, is what they signify and what this means for our concept of childhood innocence.

As we move on to consider newspaper representations of young women's sexuality it will become clear that the notion of childhood innocence is rather unstable, dependent on omissions (those things left un-spoken and unspecified) and rigorously defended in the pursuit of social order.

## **The discourse of sexual deviance:**

Griffin (1993:141) argues that 'sexuality is one of the primary sites around which female 'delinquency' is constructed'. For instance, in her research review she found that research on the misuse of leisure time was predominantly restricted to young men and that young women only figured in relation to concerns over their 'premarital, adolescent [hetero]sexuality'. In Griffin's (1993) review such young women were frequently represented as especially promiscuous, manipulative or ignorant. The similarity to newspaper representations is startling.

Take for example the schoolgirls who 'seem to be giving Slack Alice a run for her money' (mar27mirror2) or those in Manchester who 'perch on my desk, skirts rolled up, cleavage bursting out of their too small shirts, breathily asking for help with their schoolwork,' (apr18mail1), or the question of how 'to encourage sink estate'<sup>8</sup> slappers to keep their legs together?' (may30mirror2). Here young women are understood solely in terms of their promiscuity, they are little 'Lolitas' who possess developed powers of seduction and corruption (Walkerdine, 1998):

... we have reaped what we sowed a hypersexualised society  
where small girls are dressed like mini-Lolitas and sex  
sells everything (may27mail3).

In a number of reports a discourse of (inappropriate) dependency was employed and young women were represented as deliberately becoming pregnant in order to

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<sup>8</sup> Here social class is explicitly encoded.

manipulate the state. According to sections of *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror*, far from being ignorant, such young women already knew it all:

The reality is that most of the girls get pregnant deliberately to have a trophy baby and as an entry ticket to a life on benefits and a rent-free council house (mar06mail1).

In the future, girls who have yet to reach their teens will drop a baby and then wait for the benefits to come rolling in (may30mirror2).

Simultaneously, and in contrast to the (sexually) manipulative young women above, young women were represented as particularly vulnerable: as sexually immature, irrational and/or ignorant. Here irrationality was a condition of immaturity: 'children and teenagers are not adults. They are immature, and the choices they make can therefore be catastrophic' (feb21mail4). Irrational young women were seen to require enlightenment:

The need for better education on sex and relationships could not be more urgent. The vast majority of under-18 pregnancies are unplanned [...] The state of ignorance uncovered by the select committee on health in 2003 was devastating: more than a quarter of girls aged 14 and 15 thought contraceptive pills protected them from infection (may28guard2).

Moreover, numerous threats to sexually vulnerable young women were identified (in addition to the internet, discussed above), including the Government teenage pregnancy strategies that by 'making contraception available to children encouraged them to be promiscuous' (may09mail1, see also jan28mail4), or the proposed 'maternity unit within a secondary school' which it was believed would 'normalise teenage pregnancy in the eyes of other pupils' (apr17mail4). Dimbleby (apr18mail1) listed other threats<sup>9</sup>:

Television, books, films and magazines scream 'Sex! Sex! Sex!' and our children have no choice but to listen. [...] The sexualisation of our young has reached terrifying proportions - the teen shopping line Tammy Girl came under fire in 2002 for selling G- strings and padded bras aimed at nine-year-olds. Shops sell preteen T-shirts with logos such as 'Boys make good pets' and 'So many boys, so little time'. You have to ask: who would buy such things for their child? But parents do. Teen band S Club 8, whose average age is 13, sing songs full of innuendo - 'I've been dreamin' baby just to get by, It's so exciting, fantasizin' ' - while gyrating about the stage, their prepubescent bodies barely filling their crop tops and miniskirts. [...] A new genre of teen literature fills the bookshops ... books such as Love Fifteen by Ros Asquith and Pretty Things by Sarra Manning and, consequently, [the young] are fed a pulp-fiction diet of teen pregnancy, drugs and gay relationships. Go into any newsagent and take a look at the magazines aimed at teenagers. They make shocking reading. 'One love? Multi-

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<sup>9</sup> See also mar27mirror2, may10mirror6, June01mirror2, june25mail1

dating is the new monogamy' decrees *Elle Girl*, which, although aimed at 16 to 19-year-olds, features younger teenagers within its pages. *Sugar* magazine invites our teenage girls to 'Meet the lads who only fancy virgins' and learn the 'pulling moves boys can't resist'. And in *Bliss*, 14-year-old girls - hair tousled and lips glossed - are marked out of ten by older boys - the 'Lad's Panel'.

The problem is explicitly stated here: 'The sexualisation of our young'. The implication is that the young are essentially without sexuality, until they are contaminated by adult society. As Walkerdine (1998:173) argues debates about the sexuality of girls are a 'minefield of claim and counter-claim'. Moreover, attempts to approach this subject are:

Confronted by a denial of cultural processes: either little girls have a sexuality which is derived from fantasies of seduction by their fathers or they are innocent of sexuality, which is imposed upon them from outside by pathological or evil men who seduce, abuse or rape them. Culturally, we are left with a stark choice: sexuality in little girls is natural, universal and inevitable; or a ... male gaze is at work in which the little girl is produced as object of an adult male gaze (Walkerdine, 1998:173).

Griffin (1993) summarized feminist interpretations of teenage pregnancy, these were understood as a 'crisis in patriarchal or sex/gender systems', 'assertive acts of resistance', the consequences of sexual inequality or the young women were victims. The vast majority of newspaper reports in this sample tended towards the latter choice. The effect was to deny the existence of sexuality in the young. For Foucault (1998), as for Walkerdine, this denial is part of a historical cultural

process in which the choice between sexuality as essential or imposition was discursively encoded from the eighteenth-century onwards. Foucault (1998:104) summarized this as:

A pedagogization of children's sex: a double assertion that practically all children indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity; and that, being unwarranted, at the same time "natural" and "contrary to nature," this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers; children were defined as "preliminary" sexual beings, on this side of sex, yet within it, astride a dangerous line. Parents, families, educators, doctors, and eventually psychologists would have to take charge, in a continuous way, of this precious and perilous, dangerous and endangered sexual potential.

In this pedagogization of children's sex numerous parties (including children) were induced to speak about sex, it was part of the 'deployment of sexuality'. It is a deployment that continues today. It is a process by which the normal and the abnormal (perverted) are identified and policed; that is constituted through discourse. It is one way by which individuals are incited to regulate their sexual practices. Throughout this history however, as we have seen, certain members of the population have appeared to refuse to self-regulate; they are burdened by the representation of otherness.

Moreover, throughout this research we have discussed the conceptualisations of childhood as essentially innocent or essentially evil. The appearance of the evil child thus far has been in association with particularly shocking events that challenged our ability to make sense of them (such as the murder of James Bulger by two children). In this sense then 'evil' has been utilized to interpret

particularly barbaric, brutal, cruel, malevolent, acts (by young men). In contrast, childhood innocence is understood as an absence of malice, an inability to perform (or think) such acts. In relation to girls however, the attribution of evil is extremely rare. This is even the case when particularly barbaric acts have been perpetrated.

Take for instance the murder of James Dalrymple by Maxine Breakspear, aged 19, and Rochelle Etherington, aged 18:

They smashed a video player over his head, stabbed him with a screwdriver and kicked him repeatedly, inflicting more than 50 injuries to his face, head and body and then leaving him to die. As he lay dying they returned to steal his wallet and mobile phone (feb09guard1, see also feb09mail2, feb09mirror1).

No reports attributed 'evil' to Breakspear or Etherington however. References were made to a 'violent peer group drinking heavily and taking drugs' (feb09guard1), and the judge is reported to have described them as 'disturbed' (feb09mirror1). In The Daily Mail (feb24mail5) a couple of weeks later a more in depth interpretation was offered, first the young women's actions were seen as part of a societal trend in which young women were behaving like young men: 'as recent crime studies reveal, increasing numbers of young women are aping the very worst behaviour of their male counterparts'. Rather predictably this was causally related to the liberalisation of society in the fifties and sixties; research is

quoted to suggest that ‘part of the answer can be found in the post-war breakdown in family life’. According to a 1998 Government study by Dr Ann Hagell:

The change is postwar and is possibly to do with the way girls have been raised. Parents are less likely to supervise girls than they once were. Young girls are spending increasing amounts of time at school and sorting out their own time away from home. Where once a 13-year-old would sit in her bedroom listening to records with a friend, now there is a trend towards girls doing the same as boys have always done, which is going around on the streets in groups of five or more (feb24mail5).

Here, once more, the discourse of leisure and consumption is called upon, girls are not being regulated in families (when they should be) and this is leading to a misuse of leisure time. Further, as a result, gender differences in behaviour are disappearing. Moreover, the above research employs epistemic modality; behaviours are ‘possibly’ a result of changes in the supervision of girls. In The Daily Mail this is transformed into dynamic modality, the behaviour ‘is’ a result of lapsed parenting in which Breakspear and Etherington are merely victims of their ‘fractured backgrounds’. The remainder of this article seeks an explanation in the details of their family lives; this reveals inadequate mothers, domestic violence and marital breakdown. On the basis of this evidence The Daily Mail concludes:

Perhaps it was no wonder that Rochelle and Maxine - who were evidently far beyond the control of their parents - wanted to escape the confines of their homes in the evening and seek refuge in alcohol (feb24mail5).

The essence of the article above is that the families corrupted these young women.

So where the attribution of evil to young women is extremely rare (absent in this data) the attribution of innocence is extremely common. Girls and young women are predominantly conceptualised as innocent in newspaper reporting and in discourse. Within the discourses that circulate around young women however, the binary opposition of innocent femininity is not the essentially 'evil' woman and therefore, the conceptualisation of female innocence is not the absence of malice. Rather, it is the absence of sexual knowledge; what is it being called upon here is the virgin/whore dichotomy, it is:

... the eroticised child, the little Lolita, the girl who presents as a little woman – not of the nurturant kind, but the seductress, the unsanitized whore to the good girl's virgin (Walkerdine, 1998:169).

Female innocence is constructed as a lack of sexuality: the virgin. The binary opposite is the disgraced girl, the fallen woman, the slut, the 'Slack Alices' (mar27mirror2) the schoolgirls with 'cleavage bursting out of their too small shirts' (apr18mail1) and the 'sink estate slappers' who can't 'keep their legs together' (may30mirror2). Moreover, the sexually promiscuous young woman threatens the stability of the notion of female innocence constructed as lacking sexuality. As Walkerdine (1998:4) argues, the 'knowing' sexual girl is a figure

who (together with the violent boy - the 'Yob') 'threatens the safe pastures of natural childhood ... so carefully constructed as a central fiction of the modern order'. These are not 'real' women of course, rather they are textual figures constructed through discourse:

The nature of the child is not discovered but produced in regimes of truth in those very practices which proclaim the child in all his naturalness (Walkerdine, 1998:168).

Moreover, this discussion has highlighted a variety of perceived threats to (vulnerable) young women reported in the news. Indeed the media effects model is consistently employed to suggest that young women are particularly susceptible to media manipulation. A simple causal link is established between exposure to a range of media and abnormal/ inappropriate lifestyle choices which result in deviant/ diseased practices. Indeed, the effects model is referenced frequently in relation to young women, far more so than in relation to the ASB associated with 'Yobs'.

There has been continued concern over the potentially criminogenic consequences of exposure to mass-media, and this has emerged anew with the arrival of 'each new form of mass medium' (Reiner et al, 2003:13). Cohen (2004:xvii) argued that these reactions 'are repetitive and predictable' and employ a 'crude model of media effects ... exposure to this or that medium causes, stimulates or triggers off violent behaviour'. Further, despite the fact that such effects research has failed to establish a causal link it 'continues to dominate popular debates about crime

and media' (Mason, 2003:6). In this context however, it is sexual impropriety rather than criminality that is being seen to be encouraged.

Walkerdine (1998:79) illustrates how techniques of power in the nineteenth-century configured the 'mass mind as vulnerable, easily swayed and infantile'. Such a configuration is a central tenet of the effects model and was apparent in the development of mass-communications media in the mid-twentieth-century; radio and television were to be a strategic component in the regulation of working-class families (Walkerdine, 1998:108). The mother, in her role as producer of 'fit' citizens, was called upon to regulate the quantity and quality of television viewing:

The discourse of normal and natural development had a central part to play in this process. Normal family viewing became understood as viewing correctly regulated by the mother, a sign of the normal family and therefore one which did not pose a threat to the existing social order (Walkerdine, 1998:109).

In this aspect the working-classes were found wanting, specifically in relation to regulating their 'children's exposure to sex and violence' (Walkerdine, 1998:109).

Walkerdine (1998:110) references Himmelwait et al's research of 1958 in which concern was expressed over working-class parents' regulation of viewing practices. Such concern divided audiences into 'normal and pathological' and thus enabled a twin strategy to regulate families, whilst the middle-class 'were to be encouraged in their responsibility to supervise their children's viewing correctly' it was up to broadcasters to regulate the viewing of working-class

children because their parents 'appeared less willing to supervise them in the correct manner' (Walkerdine, 1998:110).

Moreover, the knowledge produced has continued authority today; it assumes a direct link between communication and behaviour (the hypodermic model). The concern is directed towards families where critical assessments (i.e. dialogues) about programme content are believed to be absent. Such families tend to be working-class, the assumption being that rather than critically discuss programmes they 'use television to foster family harmony or as a means of avoidance' (Walkerdine, 1998:110). Such assumptions were clearly articulated in the newspapers reported here:

- The 'electronic babysitter' of TV (jan21mail2).
- Most experts will tell you TV normalises violence, makes it OK (mar22mirror4).
- For a majority of parents have no idea that their children can be targeted by paedophiles far more effectively on the Internet than in the playground, or realise the way that TV violence can have a malign influence on the behaviour of their precious offspring (may05mail5).
- **TV Horror Spawns Lowlife Urban Hell ...** All the hours and hours of late night TV and violent video game junk have rotted an alarming number of little brains (Junel4mirror4).

- Television plays a key role in the lives of the young, they look to it for entertainment and instruction ... if parents, schools and teachers are failing them, so is the magic box flickering in the corner of their bedroom. People once called it the Idiot Lantern. Never has the description seemed more apt or the implications more terrifying (June01mirror2).

Moreover, Walkerdine (1998) argues that the working-class girl who is produced by and consumes popular culture is a central object of social and moral concern. This could be seen clearly in the quote from Dimbleby (apr18mail1) earlier, in that quote, popular culture represented 'the intrusion of adult sexuality into the sanitized space of childhood' and as such it is understood as harmful (Walkerdine, 1998:170). The girl produced via the effects of exposure to such media threatens the discourse of childhood innocence:

She is too precocious, too sexual. While she gyrates to the music of sexually explicit songs, she is deeply threatening to a civilizing process understood in terms of the production and achievement of natural rationality and nurturant femininity (Walkerdine, 1998:4).

As mentioned, the working-class girl in popular culture has been utilized to represent a 'struggle for something better', but in so-doing, two contradictory and classed discourses of femininity have been produced, one a discourse of the innocent bourgeois child, the other the discourse of the upwardly mobile working-class girl (Walkerdine, 1998:168). However, the working-class girl attempting to be something better is presented as forward, uppity, over-mature, too precocious. Such a figure is a threat, her sexuality understood to sully/defile childhood

innocence. To acknowledge sexuality in girls and young women would be to irretrievably undermine the concept of childhood innocence. This sexuality must therefore be disowned/denied as an essential quality and given a learned quality:

It is the consumption of popular culture which is taken as making the little working-class girl understood as potentially more at risk of being victim and perpetrator (Walkerdine, 1998:172).

For Walkerdine (1998:182) however the notion of childhood as an innocence free from sexuality is an 'adult defence' by which generalized adult fantasies are kept at bay. This is a 'silence' which avoids engaging with the issue of adults' erotic desire for girls by either denying it through the discourse of childhood innocence or projecting it back onto sexually precocious figures:

The idea of a sanitized natural childhood in which [sexuality is] kept at bay ... becomes not the guarantor of the safety of children from the perversity of adult desires for them, but a huge defence against the acknowledgement of those dangerous desires on the part of adults.

Such silences were very apparent in newspaper reporting of rape (discussed in chapter four); where rape was understood as an individual pathological act rather than related to structural inequality and attitudes towards young women, or as problematic masculinity.

Moreover, for Walkerdine (1998) this effects model is too simplistic and misses the desire and ambition contained for girls within popular culture. This offers

some form of escape for working-class girls: eroticisation presents them with the 'possibility of a different and better life' (Walkerdine, 1998:172). In relation to image-obsessed working-class girls:

... being looked at presents still one of the only ways in which working-class girls can escape from the routines of domestic drudgery of poorly paid work into the dubious glamour industries (Walkerdine, 1998:142)

Yet in The Daily Mail such desires and ambitions are merely delusions, take for example the report on 'Make me a Supermodel' discussed above, referring to a Bliss magazine survey that found '92 per cent of girls are unhappy with their bodies, and one in four has had some type of eating disorder', Natasha Courtenay-Smith (feb2mail5) argues that:

... youngsters increasingly tend to believe that if they look like celebrities or the models in magazines, then all their problems will disappear. It is obvious that the young women here today are motivated less by a love of fashion than the dream of being beautiful and famous ~ and the adoration and happiness they believe that both will bring. Most display a breathtaking naivety about the downsides of fame, or the psychological implications of a career that is focused on looks alone.

Moreover, in this section we have seen how the discourse of sexual deviance serves to deny an essential sexuality to young women whilst simultaneously categorising any obvious sexuality in young women as threatening and dangerous,

as pathological and this is why ‘Teenage Pregnancy Provokes Such Extreme Reactions’ (Mar19mail5). It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the national press is obsessed with teenage (female) sexuality. In this research a series of ‘moral outbursts’ over teenaged sexual activity was apparent; these are usually prompted by the release of official statistics or the discovery of some abhorrent family or practices (see appendix seven for selected headlines). But which actors are being identified within these moral outbursts?

Attention to the details encoded within the texts reveals them to be poor and structurally disadvantaged, with inadequate (often single) parents. That is they are working-class. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005 reports appeared in both The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror about a family where three teenaged daughters had given birth, The Daily Mail euphemistically named their home ‘the Baby Factory’. The discovery of this family was another discursive event, again all the papers talked about it. I will now consider this reporting.

### **The Baby Factory (may23mail7):**

#### **23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005**

These Three Sisters All Had Babies In Their Teens. Each Year  
They Get Benefits Of £31,000. So Who Does Their Mum Blame?  
Their School (may23mirror3).

Two reports in The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror begin by presenting the facts of the situation:

When a child calls out Mummy in the Atkins household, four voices could answer. Teenagers Jemma, Jade and Natasha Williams are all raising babies of their own (may23mail7).

Three teenage sisters pose proudly with their babies - after all became pregnant while at school and within 10 months of one another (may23mirror3).

Then we are given the detail. It is a familiar media representation of a 'culture of dependency'; indeed this discourse is referenced throughout.

In The Daily Mail we are told that Jemma, Jade and Natasha are 'still almost children themselves', but not quite (perhaps because they are sexually active children). They live with their mother, Julie Atkins who is 38 and '**divorced twice**' (moral coding); she 'believes their three-bedroom **rent-free** (discourse of dependence) **council house** (class coding) is far too small for her rapidly growing **brood**' (animalizing). The daughters are said to have '**embraced** single motherhood before their **studies or a career**' (denoting an active choice of motherhood and a rejection of schooling and career). Ms Atkins is quoted as saying: '**I blame the schools** sex education for young girls should be better' (denoting lack of parental responsibility).

We are told that Jemma was the first to become pregnant: 'She started having sex at 11' with her fourteen year-old boyfriend and 'was pregnant at 12', the boyfriend '**doesn't pay a penny**' (financially absent father) but a '**council-run** nursery looks after her son while she is in class'. Jade's '**case**' (social work speak) 'followed a **one-night** stand' (moral coding): 'It was just one of those

things really ... I **wasn't using contraception** and I suppose I just thought it wouldn't happen to me' (ignorance). The baby's father, we are told 'knows about her but doesn't want to have anything to do with her and he **doesn't contribute anything**. We've put the Child Support Agency onto him' (total absence of father). Jade is reported to say '**we don't need their dads** as we give them all the love and support they need' (this is a particularly threatening statement, implying an active rejection of patriarchal familial relationships). Natasha became pregnant at sixteen and had already left school, she was reported to be 'delighted because she had already had **two miscarriages and an abortion**' (serial sexual impropriety). Natasha just wants to be a full-time mother, she still sees her baby's father, who is a '**38-year-old Asian gambler**' (racist coding referencing the threat of miscegenation and age coding signifying predatory older man), but states 'Hopefully I'm going to get a **house of my own. I'm on the council waiting list** at the moment' (discourse of dependence).

The article then provides a detailed summary of the family's income from benefits and concludes by stating that 'Earlier this year, a report on the tax and benefit system said it had made Britain the single-parent capital of the world'.

This story is by and large repeated in The Daily Mirror with slight differences. The girls 'live with **jobless** mum Julie Atkins and the family **rakes** in £31,000 of benefits a year'. She 'accepts they have "**ruined their lives**" and knows who is to **blame. Not her** but their school'. Rather than simply divorced the mother is said to have 'two **failed marriages** behind her' which suggests that she herself is a failure at relationships. This article employs more direct quotes from Ms Atkins

than The Daily Mail article but, as Young (1996:121) commented on Mrs Thompson in press reporting of the Bulger trial, the more she speaks the more her 'position is confirmed': she is the archetypal 'bad mother'.

## **24<sup>th</sup> May 2005**

The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror again reported on the family. Once more the pregnancies and benefits are detailed but this time two of the girls' father, Martin Dodd, was given space to speak. In The Daily Mirror the 'appalled' father was reported to 'blame' the mother for the situation. Dodd, said:

It's not the school's fault. It's hers. If this had happened to one of them you'd have said it was an accident. But for three of them to do it there's something badly wrong. It's ludicrous (may24mirror6).

The father claimed to have been 'cut out of their lives'; had he not been 'this would not have happened. They're lovely, intelligent children. It's awful to see this. They've thrown their futures away'<sup>10</sup>. In The Daily Mail it was stated that the father had been 'banned' from seeing his children, he said:

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<sup>10</sup> The idea that teenage pregnancy (whether resulting in motherhood or abortion) ruins young women's lives is a constant theme of reporting on the subject.

I don't blame the school for the situation my daughters are in now. I think they have only copied what they have seen at home. They should have been set a better example. Having one pregnant teenage daughter could be an accident but three just looks irresponsible. If only I had been able to see them a little more often and had more influence over them I know they wouldn't have turned out like this (may24mail1).

Furthermore, both articles reported that the police may investigate the family and reported the words of one paternal grandmother who was said to be 'very annoyed and angry' that her son had been prevented from seeing the child he 'loves dearly' (may24mail1); and that he (the father) 'was prepared to go to court to gain access' (may24mirror6). The Daily Mail also reported that 'Yesterday, details of [the mother's] own tangled love life emerged' and went on to detail these.

### **25<sup>th</sup> May 2005**

There were three more articles on this day, two in The Daily Mail and one in The Daily Mirror. In The Daily Mirror the babies are positioned as victims, the perpetrator Ms Atkins: 'She possesses, it transpires, the kind of parenting skills that make Coronation Street's mother-from-hell Cilla look like Dr Spock' (may25mirror1, and inter-textual visual coding). Though Mr Dodd gets some stick, as does the paternal grandmother and her son (who should be in court for child abuse according to The Daily Mirror), the situation is theorized as a 'cycle of deprivation' (though depravation may be more apt):

This is social carnage, an unholy mess and at the centre of it are three innocent babies, powerless over the decisions that affect their childhood. In the case of these girls the father figure is completely absent, and without doubt, they'll raise another generation like themselves, totally lost, irresponsible and with no moral guidance or concept of good parenting. Men, their offspring will learn to believe, are not role-models but feckless, useless creatures who flit in and out of their mother's lives, answerable to no one (may25mirror1).

Thus the article slips into prediction, the children will become 'NEETS' (not in education training or employment) with no qualifications, aspirations and 'no desire to do much else except breed'. Ms Atkins is then positioned as 'a victim of a society that has allowed an underclass to flourish on handouts and nannying'.

One Daily Mail article (may25mail2) provided once more all the details from the article on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May but this time it was delivered under the sensationalized headline:

**I let my daughter have sex at 11, admits the 'baby factory' mother:** The mother of the three teenage 'baby factory' sisters yesterday admitted she gave her blessing to her youngest daughter having sex when she was just 11 (may25mail2).

Again Ms Atkins (who is said to have had 'her daughters by two men') is given space to speak and in an attempt to defend herself she states:

I did let Jemma sleep with her boyfriend under my roof. I can't excuse what I did to let it happen but if I had said "No" they would have done it anyway, whether I was there or not. I have taught my children never to do anything behind my back (may25mail2).

**Ms Atkin's claim to have taught her children honesty has no weight in the narrative being constructed about her. A claims maker is invited to offer his opinion on the situation:**

Dr Adrian Rogers, a GP and adviser to pressure group Family Focus, said her decision to let Jemma have sex at her home at 11 was a 'clear case of crass stupidity'. He added: 'There is an argument which originates from the so-called liberal intelligentsia that it's better to let youngsters have sex upstairs where you know where they are than on a park bench somewhere where they could come to harm. Surely this case shows that the biggest social challenge of what is left of Blair's Britain is to try to reinstate a culture which provides care and control for children. This really ought to be a wakeup call to fire all those people who have given bad advice over the last 30 years that when it comes to sex it's better to be safe than to say no.

**Here then, not only is Ms Atkins 'stupid', but so too are the liberal intelligentsia and the liberalism/political correctness gone mad thesis is brought into play. The second Daily Mail (may25mail3) article is a lengthy essay headlined: 'What This Family Tells Us About Britain Today' by no less than Melanie Phillips, for whom the 'Baby Factory' 'perfectly illustrates the moral degradation that is bringing**

increasing sections of our society to its knees': for instance 'not one committed father', a mother who 'has signally failed to protect her daughters' who 'is surely guilty of the most reckless neglect' and ignorant of the 'maternal role', 'duty' and is totally irresponsible: 'There can be surely not a scintilla of doubt that the whole grisly situation is the very quintessence of irresponsibility'. Again a cycle of deprivation is predicted: 'the tragedy is that their babies will almost certainly follow the same dismal pattern of failed relationships, early pregnancy and an infinite range of other problems'. The family is contrasted to those single parents 'struggling heroically to bring up their children. Their families may be broken through no fault of their own':

But there is another type of family where all standards of restraint and civilised behaviour have broken down: a pattern of recklessness which is increasingly being repeated throughout Britain. Mrs Atkins and her 'baby factory' might be a particularly ripe example, but fatherless children are now being produced on an industrial scale, with generations of female-only households which think they can do without fathers - the single greatest cause of the 'yob' culture and the breakdown of civility and order (may25mail3).

It is a hard task to summarize this article (a dissertation project in itself), but in reality it embodies the familiar rhetoric discussed in chapter two. Values are referenced: 'Sobriety, sexual restraint, hard work and abiding by the law', 'Sex has been redefined as a recreational sport', 'The Government has hugely exacerbated this', helping the poor turns into 'incentives to fecklessness' and so on. The problem is taken to signify the collapse of society. Phillips asserts that

the old societal divisions have disappeared to be replaced by a new one: the law-abiding versus the dissolute:

The divide now is between those who live in a world of basic civilised codes which everyone acknowledges, and those who live in what has been unpleasantly termed an 'underclass' which is disconnected from mainstream life and its values. These are the 'feral' children who cause so much crime and social mayhem, and whose violent, wild or otherwise dysfunctional behaviour presents such a problem in our schools (may25mail3).

Moreover, reports on the 'Baby Factory' were produced on an industrial scale following its discovery<sup>11</sup> and the reportage bore all the marks of a moral panic. Whilst the vitriol directed at Ms Atkins was overwhelming, the lack of vitriol towards the daughters was equally surprising, indeed this was not a moral panic over teenage sexuality, rather it was a moral panic over what one 'classed' single (non-teenage) mother was believed to symbolize. In this reporting it was taken to symbolize the collapse of moral order as we know it. But it wasn't really about moral order at all; the real problem was social class and (as Cohen (2005) has also argued) the future of the patriarchal nuclear family.

Further, these reports were constructed around a discourse of dependency, they specifically identified and stigmatised a feminine 'class' of people who are

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<sup>11</sup> See also: may26mirror1, may28mail1, may28mirror3, may29mail3, may29mirror1, may29mirror5, may30mirror2. Further, the family was reported in all the tabloids, the mid-market press and many broadsheets.

unemployed and impoverished. Although the term 'class' was absent it was consistently invoked through 'alternative references' such as, 'council housing', 'DSS handouts', 'jobless', 'feckless', 'irresponsible' 'mother-from-hell'. The repetitive nature of such reporting was shocking, over and over again the same details are communicated and we are repeatedly provided with detailed accounts of benefits received and of Ms Atkin's sex life. Moreover, a lexical register of deficient and pathological working-class women was presented across the articles in *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror* (Skeggs, 2004:112). Such lexical registers call upon classed stereotypes (which I will discuss in the next chapter), and such negative representations are validated through the narrative that has been constructed because they are individualised, as Ewick and Sibley (1995:214) argue in relation to racism:

Whereas a general claim that a certain group is inferior or dangerous might be contested on empirical grounds, an individual story about being mugged, a story which includes incidental reference to the non-white race of the assailant, communicates a similar message but under the protected guise of simply stating the facts.

If, in the above quote, we replace 'mugging' with being the mother of teenaged mums, and we replace reference to race with that of or age(s), gender, clothing, residence: class, we see that the same process is happening in relation to the Atkins family; they are being used to condemn a class of people in what amounts to class hatred. As Ewick and Sibley (1995:214) argue 'narratives embody general understandings of the world that by their deployment and repetition come to constitute and sustain the lifeworld'. Yet because specific individuals with

specific characteristics are being depicted, these general understandings remain opaque. Therefore, such narratives fail to make explicit their 'unexamined assumptions' (Ewick and Sibley, 1995:214). Skeggs (2004:114) argues similarly:

... the judgements and moral attribution to practices, accompanied by lack of attention to circumstances, enable attention to be deflected away from cause and positioned onto the irresponsible individual.

Further, I have suggested that reporting on the 'Baby Factory' was a moral panic. Critcher (2003) asserts that for something to be termed a moral panic it is important that reporting is taken up in the quality press and the issue becomes a common media agenda. I have not as yet reported The Guardian's take on events I will do so now.

References to the 'Baby Factory' tended to be of the 'contextual' kind in The Guardian. The first Guardian reference was on 26<sup>th</sup> May; the 'Baby Factory' reference was utilized to illustrate the role of parents in preventing teenage pregnancy:

The issue of teenage pregnancy has been highlighted this week by the case of three sisters in Derby. One became pregnant at 12, and the others at 14 and 16. The girls' mother has blamed lack of sex education in school, but their case, dubbed by the press a "baby factory", has been seized upon by some commentators as a further sign of a culture of disrespect (may26guard1).

This article (may26guard1) reported the opinions of children and families minister Beverly Hughes the day before teenage pregnancy statistics were to be published, in which 'Ms Hughes described the sisters case as "a tragic loss of opportunity"'.

The next reference to the 'Baby Factory' was the 27<sup>th</sup> May in an article by Madeline Bunting (may27guard1) headlined 'It isn't babies that blight young lives: The impact of pregnancy on these teenagers' life chances is negligible'.

This is a particularly interesting article in that it offers an alternative interpretation on teenage pregnancy; one which questions the common sense wisdom, offered by Ms Hughes above, that teenage pregnancy ruins young women's lives.

Bunting begins by summarizing the media's argument thus far:

Three teenage pregnancies in one Derby family, and the whole country choruses its horrified disapproval. For the right wing, it's a sign of the country's moral disintegration. But the left has its own equally harsh critique of teenage pregnancy. The argument used is that a baby ruins a girl's life and brings dire consequences, ranging from educational under-achievement and depression to alcohol misuse, drug abuse and poverty. "A baby in your teens is a blight on your life" has become the standard government minister line.

She goes on to argue that the evidence utilized in such debates is a pernicious misuse of social science research: 'teenage pregnancy is not a tragedy, nor does it, on average, entail lost opportunities'. Bunting then discusses the evidence. She highlights a range of 'more likely' statements in a Unicef report:

... she is more likely to drop out of school, to have no or low qualifications, to be unemployed or low-paid, to live in poor housing conditions, to suffer from depression, and to live on welfare. Similarly, the child of a teenage mother is more likely to live in poverty, to grow up without a father, to become a victim of neglect or abuse, to do less well at school, to become involved in crime, use drugs and alcohol.

She then quotes research by Professor John Ermisch from the institute of social and economic research at Essex University and Dr Roger Ingham, director of the centre of sexual health at Southampton University that found:

... if you compare teenage mothers with other girls with similarly deprived social-economic profiles, bad school experiences and low educational aspirations, the difference in their respective life chances is negligible

Where reports in The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror suggest (through language) that teenage mothers are working-class, here it is explicitly stated. Bunting then references 'clear predictors of teen pregnancy':

... mothers who have low educational aspirations for their daughter at 12; the child has already got into trouble for conduct disorder at school by 10; the child has poor reading ability.

For Bunting (and the academics above) such factors lead to poor life chances anyway, and it is in this respect that having 'a baby as a teenager makes very

little difference'. What is noticeable however is that the risk factors quoted are again associated with individualized factors such as mothers, behaviour and academic achievement. Issues of poverty or structural inequality remain absent. I feel uncomfortable with Bunting's definition of 'poor life chances' which she equates with 'the local checkout till' and 'shelf-stacking', such occupations, according to Bunting, are tragic: 'How did opting for baby and motherhood over shelf-stacking ever become a tragedy? (may27guard1). It is not the occupations that are tragic but the pay and conditions that accompany them. Moreover, where Bunting may be correct to assert that the Government is more interested in reducing 'the extra cost to the state of the support' for 'vulnerable young mothers', the main gist of her argument remains the same as in The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror. That is that for girls from culturally deprived families teenage motherhood is a valid and rational career option:

So when a girl at 17 decides to go ahead and have a baby, there is no tragedy of lost opportunity other than the local checkout till waiting for her low-paid labour.

In this Guardian article then teenage pregnancy occurs amongst the culturally deprived and is due to low educational aspirations:

The government might, quite rightly, want to tackle entrenched inter-generational cycles of poverty, but the key to that is educational aspiration; teenage pregnancy is only a consequence of its absence.

A second Guardian article on the 27<sup>th</sup> May (may27guard3) to reference the 'Baby Factory' offered an anthropological style investigation into what being a teenaged mother is like. Headlined 'When I got pregnant it made me feel big. Now I am so jealous when girls my age say they are virgins', Audrey Gillan presents qualitative data gleaned from interviews with two young mothers who are:

Aged just 16, they are the type of parents who have this week been vilified by the tabloid press and at the focus of national debate after it was announced that pregnancy rates among the under-16s are still on the increase.

What is interesting here is the young women's explanations for their situation, on the issue of contraception for instance one, Terri, states: 'I just didn't use contraception. I tried it with condoms but I didn't like it'. Her friend Sapphira agreed: 'I didn't really like condoms either. I think it's just the natural thing of wanting to feel their flesh'. In relation to sexual desire Sapphira said: 'I was thinking about sex all the time. From when I was eight or nine I knew how to kiss. I just wanted boys'. These are hardly statements of sexual naivety contained within the notion of childhood innocence. These young women are explicitly and knowingly sexual.

However, the girls are said to 'agree with the children and families minister, Beverley Hughes, who said that parents should take more responsibility for the sex education of their children.':

Sapphira said: "When I was having sex, my mum didn't say, 'Let's go to the clinic.' Mums don't want to admit that you are doing it. I would ask my mum questions but she wouldn't answer me. I would say 'mum, I need to go on the pill '. I kept on asking her all the time but she wouldn't listen to me. "Some parents don't want to mention it in case their daughter isn't even thinking about it."

Sapphira also disclosed that her mother and grandmother had been teenage mothers, 'they should have helped me understand these desires' she asserts. As Lawler has argued (2002:251) 'people use narratives to interpret the social world and their place within it', by so-doing they constitute their identity, but 'people are not free to fabricate narratives at will', their stories must connect to broader social narratives in order to make sense. The story of the inadequate mother is a 'public narrative'; it circulates socially. By calling upon this narrative the young women here are explaining their position within contemporary discourse, and in a way, they are projecting the responsibility for their behaviours onto their mothers. As Lawler (2002:252) also argues, it is not that such stories are true or false; rather such stories become true 'through their frequent repetition across a range of sites, and, in many cases, through their association with 'expert' disciplines'.

The above article concludes with an opinion statement from claims maker Judy Platts, a project coordinator:

Why do these young women have children? Quite often you have to look at the social aspect - teenage pregnancy is very much linked to poverty and social exclusion, little

information about sex and a complicated family life. If you have got the information and confidence, you are less likely to get pregnant but there's little of that around if you come from a background of poverty (may27guard3).

The issue of poverty is floated here but remains unelaborated upon, the effect is to suggest that the young women 'want' for information in their complicated families, rather than 'want' for material necessities.

As such, most attention to the 'Baby Factory' was in the form of contextual referencing in The Guardian. Only one article approached the issue directly, that by Roy Hattersley (may20guard1) headlined: 'Why we still despise the poor: Natasha and her sisters should arouse sympathy, not resentment'. Hattersley asserts that the sisters have 'reduced the chance they will enjoy the life that most of us would wish for our daughters', and as such deserve sympathy, but instead they have become 'paradigms of the undeserving poor'. This was not because of their 'casual view of sex' but because of the cost to the state. Despite the amount of benefits they were (repeatedly) quoted as receiving, Hattersley argues they are still living in poverty 'and society doesn't care'. For him, a general prosperity has made 'us contemptuous of those who fall behind' who are now constructed as the undeserving poor:

The Williams women may be hungry by the end of the week, but they will not starve, and their council house, although overcrowded, provides better accommodation than they would have found in the workhouse a hundred years ago. So middle-

class consciences are salved and "middle-class morality"  
forbids sympathy for the "undeserving poor"

Hattersley references the 'cycle of deprivation' but argues that 'we ought to be up in arms and at the barricades demanding that the poverty which creates such tragedies is obliterated from our society for ever. It is possible'. For Hattersley then it is about the endurance of poverty we should panic and not the particulars of one family. Here we have old socialist principles of the 'do-gooder' kind so roundly condemned in The Daily Mail. As Hattersley concludes:

To argue about what the family "deserves" misses every point. It is need that matters. And whether or not we respond to its urgent call demonstrates the sort of country we are and the quality of the future we wish to build  
(May30guard1)

Nevertheless, the above article represented a marginal narrative in press reporting of the 'Baby Factory'. Reporting in The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror tended towards the centuries long discourse of (inappropriate) dependence located firmly in the origins of welfare (Squires, 1990) and discussed in chapter five. Further, all three newspapers called upon the notion of a cycle of cultural deprivation, rooted in the post-war years but ever-present in one form or another since, whether it be in theories of educational under-achievement, underclass or social exclusion (see chapter five). A concept of 'ignorance' was present throughout, in The Daily Mail and The Daily Mirror this was the result of dependency, the answer: a (targeted) withdrawal of the state. In The Guardian it was located in specific families the answer was more education.

Moreover, though press reporting on the 'Baby Factory' was ostensibly about the three sisters, they became more marginal to the narrative as it developed; they generally escaped condemnation by the press. Their mother was not so fortunate and became the focus of press vilification. The discursive effect was to deny active sexuality to girls and instead understand their sexuality as a contamination of their innocence. The girls' essential innocence had not been protected from the polluting effects of adult society due to the 'neglectfulness' of their mother.

## **Conclusion:**

This chapter began with a discussion of disorders of leisure and consumption. I argued that in relation to Internet use young women were constructed as knowing yet vulnerable at once. Further, in relation to the production of healthy bodies, young women were dichotomised in terms of excess and here the construction of young women as victims of their families appeared. I argued however, that notions of excess have been used to negatively situate working-class women. Such a positioning requires a notion of a healthily produced natural body but what this was remained a mystery and is as such a phantasm. Binge drinking was also discussed and though it was framed as a social problem due to presumed later negative effects on health (and costs to the NHS), I argued that it was equally a problem of social order; the threat was not so much the young women themselves, but what they were taken to signify: the rejection of idealised femininity.

Moving onto the discourse of sexual deviance, it was argued that the notion of childhood innocence, when attached to young women and girls, is understood as the absence of sexuality rather than the absence of evil. Such a construction does not prevent the existence of childhood sexuality, rather it makes it taboo, it is a sexuality that has to be denied. Further it was argued, with Walkerdine (1998), that this denial of active sexuality was not just central to protecting a notion of innocence but was simultaneously utilized in the avoidance of engaging with the erotic allure of girls and young women for adult men.

Moreover, throughout this chapter, the numerous threats to vulnerable young women reported in the newspapers have been highlighted. I discussed the media effects model in which certain (classed) young people are constituted as vulnerable. It was argued that this model simultaneously constructed classed viewing practices in which middle-class habits were celebrated and working-class habits pathologised. Further, such models (and associated theories) have tended to overlook the pleasures and possibilities that popular culture holds for young women.

Lastly, attention to the 'Baby Factory' revealed that through a discourse of dependence and theories of cultural deprivation, the Williams sisters were constructed as victims of their mother's inadequacy; their active sexuality was denied. In short then, this chapter has shown that the concept of childhood innocence, relative to young women, is extremely fragile and that this poses a threat to our social ordering. As such the concept of childhood innocence must be rigorously defended from the intrusion of sexuality.

## **Chapter Eight: ‘Slobs and Yobs’ (mar31mail1):**

### **Stereotyping (Working-Class Youth).**

This chapter will attend to the concept of the stereotype. As stated in the introduction, ‘Young People Now’ launched a campaign<sup>1</sup> to improve the portrayal of young people in the media; it was their contention that media coverage negatively stereotype young people, as they argue:

Of course some young people commit crimes, but the majority of them are law-abiding. The wall-to-wall coverage of teenage gangs and violent criminals risks stigmatising a whole generation, leading to catch-all policies which discriminate against the vast majority of young people who are just getting on with growing up.

One question with which I was concerned was whether news articles did indeed implicate all young people and stigmatise a whole generation. On the basis of the evidence presented thus far I would argue that they do not. Chapter six revealed the ‘Yob’ to be specifically working-class. Chapter seven illustrated how young women constructed as vulnerable were dichotomised in terms of those in need of protection and those in need of regulation (i.e.: working-class young women).

This chapter will examine the use of stereotypes to describe working-class young people and their families. It will do this through an examination of reports that used the character ‘Vicky Pollard’ in relation to young people. I will argue that:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.youngpeoplenow.com/campaign/index.cfm>

- Stereotypes are an integral part of the inferential structures employed by journalists to identify, contextualize and fix in place the individuals being discussed.
- The inter-textual referencing of known characters from popular culture intensifies processes of symbolization.
- Though the use of stereotypes implies consensus, they do not simply reflect dominant values. Rather stereotypes are utilized to avoid the complexity of social arrangements in the maintenance of social order, in so-doing they serve to make social problems appear ‘their’ problems and not ‘ours’.
- Stereotyping represents a system of differentiation and this impacts upon both those privileged and disprivileged by the content. As such stereotypes are not simple or innocent but have real practical, material and discursive effects. They are a reflection of power.
- To contest stereotypes is a difficult task with many pitfalls; this illustrates their power.
- The repetitive use of stereotypes to describe the working-class in particular ways suggests that social order is not as stable as it might seem.
- Stereotyping is a process of ‘othering’, a system of differentiation and a disciplinary mechanism.
- The stereotypes employed by newspapers are rooted in nineteenth-century discourses through which a familiar set of historical fears is articulated.

Moreover, the use of stereotypical adjectives is a common feature of newspaper reporting. Take for example the title of this thesis (and chapter) which was taken from a The Daily Mail headline:

### **A new title for slobs and yobs**

NEETS. An expression new to me - possibly to you, too. It's a Government acronym for not in employment, education or training aged between 16 and 25 (mar31mail1).

Without the headline this article might almost be referring to any young person 'not in education, employment or training', but it is not discussing those young people taking a 'gap year' abroad or those with independent incomes. The acronym NEET alerts all of us 'in-the-know' that this article is about those young people constructed as experiencing disrupted youth transitions and who are, as a result, constructed as a social problem - The Daily Mail was not in-the-know until The Sunday Times discussed it; nor was The Daily Mirror.

It is the term 'Slobs' and 'Yobs' however, that explicitly represents this as a specific social-class 'problem'. If the reader was still uncertain The Daily Mail further clarifies the social status of those about whom it is speaking:

What used to be known, before we went all sociological<sup>2</sup>, as young tearaways. Or yobs. Or, if female, single mothers, with a separate absentee father for each offspring.

Newspaper representations of youth frequently employ discourses of class. Further, they utilize lexical registers by which class is encoded into the text (this was apparent in reporting on the 'Baby Factory' discussed in the previous chapter) and inter-textual references to figures from popular culture to enable visualization to occur (such as soap characters). These are central to the 'inferential structures'

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<sup>2</sup> Where The Daily Mail is sociological I've yet to discover.

by which individuals and groups are first identified and then placed in a social context and made visible (Hall et al, 2002:54). They call upon historical and contemporary stereotypical images of working-class youth. Their employment serves to make visible certain, classed young people. There can be no doubt, however, that catch-all policies may result from such representations and thus all young people can become subjected to disciplinary mechanisms.

Moreover, a significant number of newspaper reports inter-textually referenced 'Vicky Pollard'; this served as a 'visual' signifier of gender, race, behaviour, and taste: that is social class. I will now discuss these reports

### **The Vicky Pollards:**

The TV character Vicky Pollard was repeatedly referenced in this sample both in text and in accompanying photographic images. 'Vicky Pollard' was utilized in commentaries on obesity and youthful inactivity, teenage pregnancy, the ASB of young women and the category of young people known as NEET (not in education, employment or training).

From the BBC's show *Little Britain*, Vicky Pollard is the creation of David Walliams and Matt Lucas. Attired in pink kappa tracksuit with long blond hair in a 'top knot', Vicky Pollard is played by Lucas (a particularly corpulent figure<sup>3</sup>). In the first series she is represented as a 'difficult', 'mouthy' schoolgirl; her

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<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that 'Vicky Pollard' could only become a signifier of obesity due to the figure of Matt Lucas, had he himself been svelte the symbolization could not work.

catchphrase 'yeah but no but', (said to display the 'don't blame me mentality' apparent in the 'underclass' by The Daily Mail). But as *Little Britain* progressed into a second series and stage show, the characterization became more exaggerated; numerous other defining characteristics were added: she became an aggressive bully, a shoplifter and teenage mother of multiple babies. Vicky Pollard is a parody of the stereotypical 'chav'. Parody 'takes the defining features of its object, exaggerates and mocks them' (Fiske, 1989: p105). Thus Vicky, as The Daily Mail puts it, is a 'grotesque caricature' (may10mail1).

The inter-textual referencing of 'Vicky Pollard' in newspaper reporting represents a coalescence of different sites of media production: news-making and entertainment. As Skeggs (2004:111) argues:

When different sites of representation coincide, such as the political and popular, producing information and entertainment that generate the same representations and the same value allocation, a powerful symbolic condensation may occur.

Furthermore, many reports used photographic images of 'Vicky Pollard' to illustrate texts discussing 'Yobs' and teenage pregnancy; they thus condensed and located the 'problem' into one classed, stereotyped signifier. The photograph is an inferential structure; an inter-textual reference by which, when read in conjunction with the image, the written text gains meaning, clarity and becomes 'fixed', this represents an accumulation of meaning across sites of representation (Hall, 2003c).

The term 'stereotype' is frequently employed as a critical concept to challenge negative representations. Perkins (1997) points to the basic assumptions

contained within a 'classical view' of stereotypical critique; such assumptions are that stereotypes are always simplistic, erroneous and pejorative. I will return to these assumptions during my analysis.

Hall (2003c:257) argues that at a basic level 'stereotyping reduces people to a few simple essential characteristics' and these are 'presented as fixed by nature'.

Furthermore, stereotyping represents a system of differentiation, it is a 'splitting' into categories (such as normal/abnormal) in the service of maintaining social order. Such 'splitting' facilitates a binding together of an 'us, the normal, into an 'imaginary community' and a 'symbolic exile' of them, the 'others'' (Hall, 2003c:258).

Moreover, the reduction of individuals to a set of 'simple essential characteristics' was explicit in the newspaper articles that referenced 'Vicky Pollard'; these consistently referred to the individual behavioural and personality traits performed by and personified in the TV character. Such as:

- puking and screaming, falling over and yelling for kebabs (jan16mail4).
- chain-smoking (mar07mirror2).
- Shoplifting [and] whose notion of responsibility is to blame everyone else (mar29mirror1).

- Screamed obscenities ... during raucous all-night parties ... expelled from a number of schools ... screaming and swearing (may03mail2).
- She is violent, abusive and disruptive (may03mirror3).
- binge drinking (may07mirror1).
- swearing and shouting throughout all-night parties (may10guard8).
- 'I've seen loads of men at her home in various states of undress,' ... 'I've seen her frolicking around on the grass next to her home with boys. I'm sure they were having sex.' (may10mail1).
- As he explained her release terms, McLaughlin, dubbed Vicky Pollard after the Little Britain chav, said "yeah" nine times (may10mirror4).
- Apparently there are now only two types of teenage girl. Ones who say no, and ones who say 'yeah but no'. The ones that say 'yeah but no' have ten babies each by the time they are 15. The babies are more likely to be called Latoyah than Isabella although I hear that Nigella is especially popular on sink estates. These girls have usually mated in their own homes with their mothers' blessing with boys wearing hoods (may29mail4).

Though the last quote is a ‘tongue-in-cheek’ take on newspaper reporting by Suzanne Moore, it nevertheless summarizes the representation quite well. More importantly, this is not a TV character being discussed but actual young women who had been dubbed ‘the real life Vicky Pollards’ by the press (see also mar07mirror2, mar09mirror2, may03mirror1). The young women concerned are symbolized through their behaviour and their language and this is condensed and fixed by the stereotype of ‘Vicky Pollard’; they are made visible.

To summarize, real life ‘Vicky Pollards’: puke, scream, binge-drink, chain-smoke, shoplift, blame everyone but themselves, scream obscenities, hold raucous all-night parties, get expelled from school, are violent, abusive and disruptive, indulge in promiscuous (public) sex acts and say ‘yeah but no’. Like the Germaine Greer quote on ‘Essex Girls’ utilized by Skeggs (2004:112) this list contains almost ‘every item in the representational pathologizing register of working-class women’. Rowe (1995 quoted in Skeggs, 2004:102) argues that working-class women have long been associated with the ‘lower unruly order of bodily functions, such as expulsion and leakage (and reproduction)’ and that this has been utilized as evidence for the lack of self-discipline and control amongst them. Such a process situates the perceived ‘problems’ in individual bodies and evades social explanations. It is a process of reductionism presented as fixed in nature (Hall, 2003c:257).

Moreover, a range of adjectives were utilized to describe these ‘real life Vicky Pollards’: obese, couch-potato, overweight, podgy, teenage brat, teenage slob, yobbish teenager, underachiever, disengaged, hopeless teenage delinquent, foul-

mouthed, monstrous, thug, uneducated and jobless. However, it is in descriptions of appearance that the weight of stereotyping takes place. Skeggs (2000) argues that appearance matters; to make judgements of another's appearance is an act of symbolic violence. Appearance is central to placing restrictions on people, such as in:

- The denial of 'access to economic and cultural resources' (those de-valued are 'not recognized as being worthy recipients')
- Economic and symbolic exchange
- Allocating individuals to belonging or not, us/them, insider/outsider
- Classification and value attribution
- Criminalizing; affecting access into public spaces<sup>4</sup> (Skeggs, 2000:129-30).

All three newspapers referred to the appearances of the 'real life' 'Vicky Pollards'. All quoted the views of neighbours, including a statement by one neighbour in particular: 'She is like the girl from Little Britain - she always wears her hair in a top-knot with a scrunchy and she even talks a bit like her' (may10guard8)<sup>5</sup>. Paul Bracchi, from The Daily Mail (may10mail1), presented the appearance of three 'Vicky Pollards':

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<sup>4</sup> This can be illustrated by the Bluewater mall's ban on 'hoodies'; their appearance was taken as a signifier of young people's criminality/ASB.

<sup>5</sup> I am doubtful whether each newspaper interviewed this neighbour because the quote is the same in each; this is probably an example of the papers referencing each other.

LAST week, perhaps for the first - indeed the only - time in her life, Kerry McLaughlin ventured on to the streets of North Tyneside without her tracksuit. This was not the only shocking surprise. The 'scrunchy' that normally sits on top of her head had been replaced by braids. Classy. Miss McLaughlin, 19, doesn 't like the comparison one bit. Hence the makeover. But she is fooling no one. In fact, she bears an uncanny resemblance to the character - and not just in appearance.

Chelsea Waldron was smoking a cigarette and speaking into her mobile phone. She was in her trademark black tracksuit bottoms with white stripes and zip-up top. Her dyed blonde hair was pulled back tightly into a ponytail, her face painted with lashings of mascara and eyeliner. Dangling from both ears were two large hoops. Remind you of anyone?

In Dorset, 'Vicky' is Chantelle Driver ... Her short life - she is only 17 - is both a modern tragedy and a comedy. 'She has a chubby face and stocky build, just like Vicky Pollard,' said someone who knows her. 'She has bleached blonde hair which is usually tied back into a scrunch on top of her head. She even talks like Vicky.' (may10mail1).

Here the young women are encoded into the category of 'chav' through their clothes (tracksuits), jewellery (large hoped earrings) and hair (the top knot). Skeggs (2004:101) highlights that references to hairstyle are significant 'class signifiers' through which working-class girls are identified and allocated a structural position: 'Excessively styled and dyed hair ... on white women is seen

to be a sign of sexual proclivity, immorality and white trash'. For Skeggs (2004), such hairstyles make the labour of appearance visible and this is judged negatively (see chapter seven).

Further, attribution of the term 'classy' is an explicit judgement of taste (or lack of it). As Skeggs (2004) also argues, attributing tastelessness to the working-class serves to arrogate taste to the middle-class; it is an act of symbolic violence (Skeggs 2004:107).

The attribution of such characteristics to young women appears simplistic, but this is the strength of stereotyping. Stereotyping's force comes from this apparent simplicity, its recognizability, and its 'implicit reference to an assumed consensus about some attribute or complex social relationships' (Perkins, 1997:78). The stereotyping discussed thus far references bodies, clothing and behaviours in a classed way -indeed 'working-class clothing and bodily dispositions seal in class' (Skeggs, 2000:144). In this context, 'Vicky Pollard' signifies a certain class of people, commonly described as 'at the bottom of society' or beneath it: an 'underclass'. The newspapers are appealing to an assumed consensus that this is a 'problematic' class. However:

This does not mean that stereotypes are simple reflections of *social* values; to suggest so would be to oversimplify the case. Stereotypes are selections and arrangements of particular values and their relevance to specific roles (Perkins, 1997:79).

Therefore, 'with a stereotype we must look beneath the evaluation to see the complex social relations that are being referred to' (Perkins, 1997:79). For Perkins then, stereotyping's conceptual power lies in its potential to reveal ideological processes; the form a stereotype takes reflects the structural position of those being described. Utilizing the stereotype of the 'Dumb Blond' Perkins (1997 p76) shows that to understand the stereotype 'implies knowledge of complex social structure'. Perkins (1997:80) argues that 'there are stereotypes of all structurally central groups – class, race, gender and age' and that all 'other stereotypes are partially defined in terms of, or in opposition to them'. Stereotypes are variable and this is explained by the structural position of those stereotyped. That is:

... to understand what is meant by [dumb blond] implies a great deal more than hair colour and intelligence. It refers immediately to her sex, which refers to her status in society, her relationship to men, her inability to behave or think rationally and so on (Perkins, 1997 p76).

So though the 'Vicky Pollard' stereotype appears to be simplistic, referring only to individual character traits and taste, it is simultaneously referencing structuring principles such as gender, race and class. Further, stereotyping represents a system of differentiation, what traits are called upon is as important as those that are not.

Consequently, stereotypes are typifications and all 'typifications are simplifications' that include commonalities and exclude differences, however the simplification is deceptive and may 'better be described as abstractness', therefore stereotypes are 'simple and complex at once' (Perkins, 1997:76). Haylett

(2001:360), for instance, argues that ‘abstract visibilities’ enable the middle-class to reduce the ‘white working-class to what it sees or wants to see whilst remaining dislocated from its own situatedness and the concrete situatedness of those it rages against’.

Stereotypes are selective descriptions; the selections are ideological, qualities such ‘as kindness, compassion, integrity – or even honesty’ are rarely referenced, the tendency being to highlight mental, sexual and personality traits (Perkins, 1997:83). Articles that inter-textually reference ‘Vicky Pollard’ make repeated remarks related to educational achievement and intelligence. This can be seen most clearly in relation to the use of the ‘Vicky Pollard’ stereotype to describe the category of NEET.

### **Vicky Pollard – not in education, employment or training**

As a social policy concept ‘NEET’ has been employed for a number of years and always struck me as a neat (tidy) way to encompass a complex problem. The Guardian employs this acronym in a matter-of-fact way: ‘the so-called Neet category (young people not in education, employment or training)’ (Mar02guard8). But when the term materialized in the tabloid newspapers in this research at the end of March 2005 it was not so matter-of-fact, indeed The Daily Mail made the ‘slobs and yobs’ statement at this time. On 29<sup>th</sup> March Wynne-Jones declared in The Daily Mirror<sup>6</sup>:

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<sup>6</sup> A photograph of Vicky Pollard accompanied the article.

Meet The Neets That's Not In Education, Employment Or Training; More Than A Million Youngsters In New Underclass. Britain could soon become a nation of Vicky Pollards, as the country's urban blackspots overflow with young underachievers (March29mirror1).

Wynne-Jones accredited discovery of the term to 'new research'; The Daily Mail did not name a source - both seem to have got their information and quotes from The Sunday Times on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2005<sup>7</sup>, as Bourdieu has commented nobody reads as many newspapers as journalists do. Only The Daily Mirror utilized 'Vicky Pollard' to symbolize NEETs however. I will now attempt to unpack some significant features in this Daily Mirror report.

In the opening lines above, Wynne-Jones suggests that the number of people classified as 'NEET' is increasing. The Vicky Pollard reference codes such young people as 'Chavs'. The state of being 'not in education, employment or training' is framed as an individual problem because the young people have underachieved. This pulls on the discourse of intelligence (discussed in chapter five) that dismissed the notion of educational ability as genetic inheritance. In this way the young people are presented as having failed to achieve their educational potential. This suggests, therefore, that they are responsible for the position they are in.

Further, though the group is currently contained in certain geographical locations: 'urban blackspots' (class coding), it will not be for long, the term 'overflow' implies an impending flood, seepage - into desirable locations or the countryside

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,1-523-1543363,00.html>

maybe. Or perhaps the term 'overflow' signifies drains. The poor have historically been associated with sewerage, Pearson (1983:172), for instance, refers to the obvious stink from polluted rivers and excrement in mid nineteenth century Manchester, he comments:

Victorian eyes looked upon the poverty of the common people, but often they did not seem to see the poverty. The philanthropists certainly got close enough to smell the poverty of the Rookeries and slums, registered in their obsessional use of the metaphors of sewerage and pollution.

Skeggs (2004:104) also highlights a tradition of 'attributing dirt and danger to the working-class' the contemporary aesthetic continues this by relating 'the working-class with waste, excrement, sewerage, that threatens to spill over and contaminate the order of the nation'.

In The Daily Mirror article 'NEETS' are repeatedly discussed through a discourse of underclass by which they are presented as a coherent 'problematic' group that threatens the stability of society, as: 'one of the biggest challenges facing the country today'; 'tackling the problem of this "uber-underclass" may be one of the most daunting tasks for 21st century Britain'. Such statements situate the young people as a threat to the nation's future, as an 'atavistic block to progress' (Skeggs 2004:98). Wynne-Jones states that NEETs are 'the nation's fastest-growing underclass', thus implying that the group is large and expanding but separated, subterranean.

Wynne-Jones references problems associated with deprivation, unemployment and social change but simultaneously calls upon the 'cycle of cultural deprivation thesis' through references to ambitionless parenting: 'Aged 16-24, these are a generation whose parents were unemployed and who have grown up without ambition in deprived, former industrial areas'. Thus the 'problem' is de-contextualized and individualized. It is their 'lack of ambition' rather than a lack of opportunity that is highlighted.

Positivist social policy research is then utilized to illustrate the seriousness of the problem through a list of 'more likely' statements:

One in five Neets has no qualifications. They are 22 times more likely to give birth under 18, are 60 per cent more likely to have used drugs and are 20 times more likely to commit crime. They are also 50 per cent more likely to be in poor health and likely to die earlier than non-Neets.

There is further reference to deprivation, unemployment and social change and as such the article hints at structural causation:

Neets are most likely to live in Britain's most deprived areas, such as Hull, Liverpool, Barnsley and Dagenham, where docks and mines and manufacturing industries flourished. "The biggest cause of the problem was a massive rise in unemployment in the 1980s," says Geoff Mulgan, Tony Blair's former policy adviser who's credited with identifying Neets as a key issue for the government.

"This had a huge knock-on effect and coincided with a period of family breakdown."

However, though unemployment and deprivation are cited the problem is again 'privatised' by references to the family: 'NEETS' families are 'broken' families. Geoff Mulgan is quoted to say that 'Understanding Neets is key to our future' (representing them as 'blockage' once more). One reason given for this is the £100,000 that the average NEET 'costs' the taxpayer. Here an economic discourse strand is called upon thus the problem is expanded to include a 'culture of dependency'. Furthermore, reference to taxpayers is a dividing mechanism by which NEETs are situated as 'them' rather than 'us'. Understanding NEETs focuses concern onto individual young people rather than structural inequalities. Thus NEETS are understood as causing structural problems (such as unemployment, benefit dependency etc) rather than being a structural consequence; it suggests that if we discipline current 'NEETs' the problem will disappear.

Wynne-Jones then goes anthropological; having found a 'NEET' example to illustrate the argument so far:

"I don't know what Neet is," said 17-year-old Steve yesterday, at his home in Brixton, south London. "But I know what someone who has dropped out of school is - smart ... Alienated and disenfranchised, Steve - who cannot see what education has to offer - is a classic Neet. Neither of his parents have ever worked more than a few months here and there so he has no sense of what it means to earn a

living. Understanding nothing of what he has to offer, he believes he is one of an underclass already on the scrap-heap at 17.

The voyeuristic anthropological stance taken by *The Daily Mirror* enables it to judge and attribute conditions to Steve whilst undermining all he says in the interview. For instance, Steve is described as 'alienated and disenfranchised', but from what is not made clear, from education? Employment? The over-class? As Griffin (1993, see chapter four) has argued the concept of disaffection is regularly called upon in connection to youth and is identified as a particularly dangerous pathological condition. However, the source of disaffection is sought in the details of the individual lives rather than in the institutions from which young people are disaffected. Furthermore, Wynne-Jones does not allow that Steve may well understand 'his lot', but not necessarily as one of the 'underclass', Steve sees what education has to offer to people like him (a dead-end job) but Steve's decision to reject that future is made irrational; misguided. Steve is presented as lacking a range of the attributes required to attain full-time employment; he has not the 'sense' to understand what is good for him. This is common in newspaper reporting and elsewhere, as Lawler (2005:797-8) argues:

... explanations for inequality have come to inhere within the subjectivities of persons who are then marked as 'wrong' or 'right', 'deficient' or 'acceptable', those who fail to succeed are seen to lack something, in this way the grammar of psychology has replaced that of exploitation.

A range of lacks is frequently invoked but this rarely includes poverty thus 'social inequality is transformed into individual pathology and the problem of classed society becomes the 'problem' of working-class people' (Lawler, 2005:800).

One of Steve's main lacks is that of adequate parents. The Daily Mirror's observations stop short of demonising Steve simply because he has not been socialized correctly, his unemployed (inadequate) parents having failed to inculcate a 'sense of what it means to earn a living'. So that we truly understand what Wynne-Jones is getting at the age of Steve's mother when he was born (fifteen years) is referenced. That she 'barely feels grown-up herself' but is now a grandmother, that they are a large family living on a 'rundown' estate are implicit references to a 'cycle of deprivation'. As Haylett (2001:363) argues:

This kind of focus on people and culture conceives them as generative of disadvantage, and deprived areas as the breeding ground of 'welfare dependency'. The biological metaphors of breeding and generation are key, they not only locate social problems within poor groups as a kind of pathological condition but justify particular forms of intervention.

Wynne-Jones' observations are as free of structural analysis as those offered by Victorian Philanthropists' where 'little or no weight' was given to the 'material circumstances of unemployment, wretched housing and poverty' (Pearson, 1983:173).

Leaving the case of Steve and returning to the generalized subject of NEETS The Daily Mirror again references 'Vicky Pollard', who Wynne-Jones dismisses as exaggerated and reifies simultaneously:

While Vicky Pollard, who swapped her baby for a Westlife CD ("You did what?" asks her social worker. "I know," says Vicky, "they're rubbish!"), who lists her hobbies as shoplifting and whose notion of responsibility is to blame everyone else, is exaggerated, researchers are now studying teenagers like her to find out why the Neets group is growing. The key is to take a character like Vicky and find out how she became so disengaged. Poverty and lack of expectations can go hand in hand, yet some kids do rise to become high achievers.

Again Vicky Pollard is utilized as a representative of NEETs, but more than this, she is represented as disconnected and un-obligated then compared to the 'high achievers' from similar backgrounds. In so-doing the 'problem' of being NEET is situated as an individual (familial) problem rather than a class problem. Further, a distinction is being made between types of working-class families. Haylett (2001:361) argues such systems of differentiation have been apparent since the 1980s, this is one of the ways that the poor have been dealt with - the second way has involved the problematization of working-class culture in terms of a predisposition to failure.

What is clearly absent in The Daily Mirror is any in-depth analysis or understanding of material and structural causation or the lived realities of being

NEET. This is perhaps not surprising if the papers relied on Government reports for evidence. As mentioned in chapter five the Labour Government have continued the language of underclass into the new millennium and have relentlessly associated economically marginal young people, their families and communities, with criminality and anti-social behaviour whilst simultaneously ignoring structural and material inequality. As Colley and Hodgkinson (2001:335) argue in relation to the SEU's Bridging the Gap Report (1999):

In a flawed move, the report presents non-participation not just in correlation to a raft of other social problems, but as a cause to their effect. Deep-seated structural inequalities are rendered invisible, as social exclusion is addressed through a strongly individualistic strategy based on personal agency.

Moreover, the category of NEET, as used by both government and newspapers, implies that this group is 'always and forever' unemployed. What is clear from my previous research experience with so-called NEETs was their willingness to take-up opportunities rather than their reluctance. The Routes project (Dolton, 2002) revealed a diverse sample of young people and not all working-class. Most had engaged in several successive definable 'activities' including college/sixth form education, employment and youth training (respondents having on average participated in 2.96 activities with a range from 1-12, n.502). Contemporaneous research by MacDonald and Marsh (2005:202) produced similar findings, they assert:

The flux of transitions meant that virtually all the interviewees had occupied these different statuses at one time or another, usually on several occasions.

It is clear that there is little space in *The Daily Mirror* for the following description provided by a Newcastle Youth Worker (Meagher, 1998):

There is also an almost 'invisible' group of isolated and vulnerable young people who have few if any close friends and rarely venture out of their accommodation. They have often been bullied and are very reluctant to attend the project offices, because of the other young people they might meet there. Initial contact is usually made through another agency, followed by home visits. Once contact has been established these young people can prove very responsive and are generally willing to be helped.

The willingness of disadvantaged young people to take up the opportunities offered to them remains unnoticed in public policy discourse; the problem is located in youthful refusal. Furthermore, this group is now to be targeted under plans from Downing Street, it is an effect of making the discourse true:

Teenagers who refuse to work, attend training or go to school are to be issued with on the spot fines under government proposals. Any who still fail to comply would then be taken to court where they could face further penalties (*The Sunday times*, 04/11/07).

So young people are to be coerced into work but where this fails they will be compelled or punished. This clearly illustrates Perkins (1997:83) contention that stereotypes are descriptions of effects inverted into causes and by which

contradictions are resolved, as such; stereotypes ideologically justify and legitimate social inequalities.

Moreover, attention to articles that inter-textually referenced the TV character 'Vicky Pollard' illustrates the ways in which social problems become individualized to the extent that such people are 'their own explanation' (Squires and Stephen, 2005:7).

A range of characteristics: attitudinal, behavioural, structural and visual, are highlighted and then attached to individual young people, thus making those characteristics appear natural and fixed. But these are partial, selective descriptions, which pull on specific discourses to the neglect of others (such as a discourse of exploitation). That such characteristics are naturalized as innate diverts attention from our socio-economic system. Stereotypes represent a system of differentiation in which individual characteristics are emphasized then pathologised. More than that, stereotypes 'confirm the boundaries' of legitimate activity; the stereotypes of dominant groups legitimate values, behaviour and 'confirm that the goods are 'good' whilst stereotypes of oppressed groups confirm and legitimate their limited access to such goods' (Perkins, 1997:84). But does the contrary evidence presented above mean that the stereotypes employed are erroneous and therefore open to contestation?

## **Contesting the stereotype:**

If we accept the classical view, which states that stereotypes are erroneous, then the implication is that they are amenable to alteration, contestation and rejection. Both Pickering (2001) and Hall (2003c) highlight attempts to do this. Hall (2003c:272) highlights attempts to invert negative stereotypes by celebrating and privileging the binary opposite as in 'Black is Beautiful'. Pickering (2001:11) identifies a variety of positive effects resulting from stereotypical critique, such as raised awareness of xenophobic, racist or sexist values in personnel and policy management. However, both suggest that stereotypes are particularly resistant to change.

Alternatively, Barker (1997) questions the outcomes of such contestation, and believes that demands that the media reflect reality (such as the positive images campaign by Young People Now) actually make the concept of stereotype redundant. He argues that:

In a society where, for example, black people are disproportionately kept in low-paid jobs and on the dole, or sent to prison, to have this simply 'reflected' in the media would cause outrage. Hence the demand shifts to one that these things should only be shown if they are explained in acceptable ways. I do not want to argue with this – only to make clear that thereby 'stereotype' has disappeared as a criterion (Barker, 1997:86)

Barker (1997:87) argues that something is dubbed a stereotype because it either deviates from reality or, on the contrary, because 'it is so very like the world outside'. As he explained:

[A] good deal of media representation is condemned for showing women in the home, providing services to men – though of course it is in fact true that very many do. Or again, black people are overwhelmingly shown living in poor conditions, in ghetto areas; books etc have been condemned for showing this even though it is (regrettably) the case'.

Or we could equally argue that in newspaper coverage of 'Yobs' the vast majority of ASB is attributed to working-class young men and that this simply reflects the fact that most ASBOs are given to this group. As such it is unfair to condemn the press for representing reality. For Barker (1997:87) this represents a contradiction at the heart of the concept which he identified as being between preventing us 'perceiving the world as it really is' and 'preventing us seeing anything but the world as it is'.

However, as I hope to have shown in chapter six, under the notion of ASB a range of behaviours was described, only some of these could be described as criminal. Moreover, whether or not the terms ASB or 'Yob' were employed to describe youthful behaviour was greatly influenced by the type (class) of young person being described, indeed middle-class youth were rarely described as 'Yobs', even when participating in 'Yob behaviour' – in the case of some boys who 'ran riot' at their public school the preferred explanation was: 'The incident was more a case of teenage boys being teenage boys' (mar16mail5).

Both Perkins (1997) and Barker (1997) refer to the stereotypes ‘oppressed’ groups may hold about dominant groups thus refuting the idea that stereotypes are always ‘held about minority or oppressed groups’, and thus implying that stereotyping is democratic -this is especially so in the above quote from Barker. Indeed, Perkins (1997) asserts that there are stereotypes about:

1. ‘Major structural groups’: based on colour, gender, class, age
2. ‘Structurally Significant and Salient groups’: ethnic/religious, professions [youth?]
3. ‘Isolated Groups’ (social or geographic) Gays, American Indians, Gypsies [lone mothers? The impoverished working-class?]
4. ‘Pariah groups’: Gays, Blacks, Communists (in USA) [Muslims? Immigrants?]
5. ‘Opponent Groups’: upper class twit, male chauvinist pig, fascists - these can be conceptualised as counter stereotypes and come from critical attempts to re-evaluate dominant groups; or Blanket stereotypes of non-believers which seek to reinforce solidarity and a group’s monopoly on truth.
6. Socially/Ideologically Insignificant Groups: Milkmen, redheads (Perkins, 1997:81).

Furthermore, both Barker (1997) and Perkins (1997) allude to the possibility that stereotypes are accurate, or at the very least hold a ‘kernel of truth’. Perkins (1997) argues, however, that stereotypes always reflect the structural position of those stereotyped whilst simultaneously naturalizing the described qualities as innate, as such all stereotypes are ‘ideological’. Perkins (1997) also raises the possibility that stereotypes are performative concepts which play a central role in socialization. Perkins (1997:77) argues that to understand stereotypes as erroneous rather than accurate prevents us from identifying the ideological role stereotypes play, especially in socialization:

If there were really no positive correlation between the content (perceived attributes) of a stereotype and the characteristics (actual attributes) of the group concerned, it would be tantamount to arguing either that the social (that is, commonly accepted) definitions of you have no effect on you, in which case it would be very difficult to see how ideology or socialisation works at all; or, that stereotypes do not represent social definitions and are sociologically insignificant since they are manifestations of pathological behaviour and thus mainly the concern of psychologists; or that they affect only your behaviour but not your 'true self', thus implying a divorce between behaviour and self.

Such a position is compatible with that of labelling theory and self-fulfilling prophecies. However, I believe there is a huge difference between stereotypes in service of resistance to power and stereotypes in service of that power. I, for instance, may stereotype some right-wing newspaper columnist as fascist, but I doubt very much that in doing so the columnist will perform in a fascist way (beyond that that I've already accused them of) or even be offended. My response is reactionary; it is an attempt to resist the power to describe, and subsequent descriptions of individuals and groups which sometimes include me (and at others don't). In so-doing I am calling into question the status, intellect, experience and interests of the columnist, albeit it in a simplistic and pejorative way. It is however a reaction that comes from my social status and access to resources (power) in relation to that journalist. Whether my reactionary assessment is erroneous is open to debate. Whether it effects the person I have stereotyped is doubtful. For Perkins:

Oppressed groups pose particular problems of control and definition. The fact that group membership is a much more salient part of the self-definition of oppressed groups than is membership of high status groups to them, reflects these problems ... This saliency is the effect of the contradiction and is a mechanism of social control. Because one's membership of a group is always present, so too is the stereotype of oneself and so too therefore, is a self-derogatory concept - to be socialised is to be self-oppressed (Perkins, 1997:82).

Moreover, when Perkins asserts that group membership is a more salient part of the self-definition amongst oppressed groups, this is precisely because they are repeatedly identified and subjectified via mechanisms of control. We cannot avoid acknowledgement of the descriptions that circulate about us, but in allowing a stereotype to offend me I am in effect oppressing myself. I will perhaps, in Foucault's terms, begin to regulate myself through the rejection of those characteristics I possess but have been judged and found wanting; those characteristics that must be refused and judged negatively in others. Similarly, working-class young women, such as those dubbed 'Vicky Pollard' above, must refrain from stigmatised behaviours, they must not be loud or sexual or too 'done-up', or binge-drink and chain smoke, or throw parties. Rather they must become restrained and perform 'femininity'. One of the effects of stereotyping is to induce individuals to 'police' themselves (and thus become unnoticed/invisible) and others.

Hall (2003c:263) argues that the 'victims' of stereotyping can 'be trapped by the stereotype, unconsciously confirming it by the very terms in which they try to oppose and resist it'. He refers to the ways that, having been 'treated as childish,

some blacks in reaction adopted a ‘macho’, aggressive-masculine style’; such a reaction simply confirmed to whites another stereotype: blacks are ungovernable (Hall, 2003c:263). Similarly, young working-class women can become trapped by classed stereotypes. If such young women are stereotyped as loud, brash, ‘vulgar’ and lacking intelligence (as disgusting) then the suggestion is that the stereotype can be refused through a performance of the opposite: middle-class femininity, but:

The appearance of women, via their lack of/associations with femininity, is often the means by which class becomes read as embodied. The working-class woman is always read through femininity; yet ... femininity is a sign that was made for and only fits middle-class woman (Skeggs, 2000:133).

When working-class women perform femininity it is a femininity that is found wanting and easily (and regularly) mocked as pretentious. This is the stuff of comedy and is the basis of *Keeping up Appearances* (see also Lawler, 1999:18). Moreover, it requires that the young woman deny herself that which gives her pleasure (such as working on appearance, or resisting an idealized femininity, see chapter seven). Describing someone’s life in a negative way: ‘mocking’ it, is, in Rorty’s (1989:89-90) words, the ‘best way to cause people long lasting pain’, it is humiliating to make ‘things that seemed most important to them look futile, obsolete, and powerless’. When this occurs there is no non-circular argument to defend one’s position, beyond it there is only passivity or the resort to force.

When the working-class boy (clothed in hooded top) is spuriously labelled a ‘Yob’ (with all the emotions attached) how should he react? Evidence suggests

working-class parents encourage their children to keep their heads down and 'stay out of trouble' (silence) (Gillies, 2005:845). Alternatively, he might react 'aggressively' or in a surly manner (violence), either way he will conform to a stereotype: the docile and deferent working-class who appear willing to be exploited (Skeggs, 2004:29), or a disaffected, introverted and uncommunicative boy, or a criminalized, anti-social 'Yob'.

As has been argued over the preceding chapters these are stereotypical 'representations' of class that have produced 'discursive figures' and have little to do with real people. According to Haylett (2000:72) the production of an underclass ('through a motif of decay and dereliction rotting the social fabric') can be located in 'the realms of the press and broadcasting media'. This has produced a 'visual regime of meaning', a particular way 'of seeing people and places cast as 'other''. Such images are now part of the British imagination and are apparent in many forms: entertainment, CCTV and public policy (Haylett, 2000:72).

This is what makes the 'Vicky Pollard' stereotype so powerful. Further, an image of the working-class as un-modern, embodied in 'Vicky Pollard', is being reproduced through the spheres of the political (in government and news-making) and the popular (entertainment). This effectively 'generates a powerful concentration of negative value'; in which the working-class are 'represented as backwards and stupid, as well as unmodern' (Skeggs 2004:111). The popular representation of a 'problematic' working-class in the form of 'Vicky Pollard' (or indeed Harry Enfield's Wayne and Waynetta Slob) may indeed be parodic and

exaggerated, however they facilitate visualization and thus ‘inscription to be condensed and embodied more quickly and effectively (Skeggs 2004:114).

Further, Skeggs (2000:137) argues that the working-class (and working-class women in particular) must cope with being misrecognized on a daily basis and must therefore dis-identify with the representations imposed on them. As Fraser (1995 in Skeggs, 2000:137) asserts, being misrecognized:

... is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down on, or devalued in others' conscious attitudes or mental beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of *full partner* in social interaction and prevented from *participating as a peer* in social life – not as a consequence of a distributive inequality ... but rather as a consequence of *institutionalised* patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem. When such patterns of disrespect are institutionalised, for example, in law, social welfare, medicine and/or popular culture, they impede parity of participation, just as surely do distributive inequities.

As we have seen throughout the data reported here, it is not simply individuals that are being identified but communities. Such communities are invoked through the implicit referencing of specific locations to signify status and class (such as the ‘urban blackspots’ and ‘sink estates’ cited above). Such representational practices can have damaging effects on the developing subjectivities of young people.

Reay (2000) argues space and place offers a significant source of meaning for individual subjectivities, but this presents a dilemma for working-class youth

growing up in the kind of estates vilified by the press, as Reay (2000:152) explains of the working-class children in her sample:

... the 'sort of people' who lived in 'our sort of place' were pathologised in both the national and local media, and the children were often caught up in imaginary constructions of the urban poor at the same time as they tried to convey their own different, locally constructed realities.

Such young people do not understand themselves in the same ways that the press presents to them. The effect is that, working-class young people are 'bombarded with shameful recognitions' that they must deal with; they must deal with the fear others hold of them and they must 'continually negotiate feelings of shame that permeate' (Reay, 2000:156-7).

Moreover, to say stereotypes are inaccurate implies possible rectification through the provision of alternative evidence, but this does not always follow 'unless there is a ready predisposition to stand corrected', indeed resistance to contradictory information is a salient feature of stereotypes (Pickering, 2001:12). This does not mean that stereotypes are not vulnerable to modification, because they are ideological; they are related to particular social needs and conditions:

Stereotypes remain fairly stable for quite considerable periods of time, and tend to become more pronounced and hostile when social tensions between ethnic or other groupings arise (Pickering, 2001:12).

But, as Pickering (2001) argues, refutation will not automatically lead to the disappearance of a particular stereotype:

Resting one's case on the empirical establishment of stereotypical error considerably underestimates the play of ideological forces set in motion by processes of stereotyping. [...] In the past, the comparative study of stereotypes and social experience has tended to assume a pre-existent 'reality-out-there' against which images and representations can be transparently measured and found wanting (Pickering, 2001:14)

Trying to determine truth is perhaps a lost cause, it can go either way, it may not be too difficult to find a stereotypical 'Yob', for instance, TV seems to manage this. But this is not really the point; the point lies in exposing the effects of making stereotypes true. There is no 'kernel of truth' in stereotyping but nor is it completely illusory because this simply would not work with people:

Stereotyping involves the stripping down of the manifold characteristics of other people or cultures to such a limited range that any possibility of truth is negated in the exaggeration of this set to cover all of what is represented of other people or cultures in the first place (Pickering, 2001:73).

When the BBC or Channel 4 produce evidence of yobs the representation is controlled, alternative traits are hidden, ignored. Similarly, information in newspaper reports is selected and partial; the voice of young people limited. Pickering (2001:25) prefers to conceptualise stereotypes as 'common sense rhetorical figures'. For him:

It is pointless trying to gauge whether or not they are accurate. What counts is how they circulate, and with what consequences, as base coins in the economy of discourse and representation; how they attain their symbolic currency among those involved in their exchange (Pickering, 2001:25-26)

The provision of alternative empirical information produces a different version of 'reality' and one which is based upon the epistemological and ontological viewpoints of those providing it. Any alternative version cannot mirror reality, though politically (for some of us) it may provide a better version. But though negative representations can be contested 'the overwhelming reproduction of the working-class with specific values across many sites means that the struggle has to be continually fought by those with far less access and resources to the central sites of symbolic domination' (Skeggs 2004:111).

Many groups have tried to correct mis-representation, in for example identity politics (i.e. black is beautiful), but such claims can be made only by those who are 'proud to be recognized as something', this is a problem 'for those who desire dis-identification, for who the judgemental weight of the sign they are positioned by offers little possibility for articulating any recognition politics' (Skeggs, 2000:138). It is in this sense that any critique of stereotyping must involve an engagement with the struggle over meaning:

While the definition of that reality is always part of what is at stake in any construction of it, the necessary struggle over the meanings of cultural representations cannot depend on straightforward appeals to empirical truth outside the circuits of interpretation in which they are mediated and negotiated (Pickering, 2001:15).

Or as bell hooks (quoted in Haylett, 2000:72) argues:

When intellectuals, journalists or politicians speak about nihilism and the despair of the underclass they do not link those states to representations of poverty in the mass media ... to change the face of poverty ... we would need to intervene in existing systems of representation.

Stereotyping is about the power of representation, both the power of individuals to represent others and the power of the content of the stereotype. As Pickering (2001:47) argues:

Struggles over meaning are struggles over truth and are ultimately power struggles. [...] While they occur in all sorts of discourse, and can draw on various ideological assumptions, stereotypes operate as a means of evaluatively placing, and attempting to fix in place, other people or cultures from a particular and privileged perspective. This is also true of the process of 'othering'.

### **Stereotypes as strategies of 'Othering':**

Pickering (2001:) believed that the theoretical insights of 'Othering' 'can be used to revivify and extend' the critical aspects of stereotype: for

Although theorisations of the Other are relatively recent, representations of the Other go back much further. It is because they are clearly rooted in the sedimental layers set down by past cultural practices that they have become entrenched as powerful social myths (Pickering, 2001:49).

Pickering (2001) identifies a central dilemma at the heart of stereotyping which is increasingly overlooked: that of order and power:

Stereotyping may operate as a way of imposing a sense of order on the social world in the same way as categories, but with the crucial difference that stereotyping attempts to deny any flexible thinking with categories. It denies this in the interests of the structures of power which it upholds. It attempts to maintain these structures as they are, or to realign them in the face of a perceived threat. The comfort of inflexibility which stereotypes provide reinforces the conviction that existing relations of power are necessary and fixed (Pickering, 2001:3)

Once the dilemma is recognized a choice is called for, a choice between simplistic representations ‘in the interest of order, security and dominance’ or to invite complexity and flexibility into our ways of thinking. Pickering (2001:4) argues:

Stereotyping functions precisely in order to forget this dilemma. It attempts to annul the dilemma that lies within it and has brought into existence, to hide from what is at the heart of the situation it initially responds to.

As with all choices there are variety of possibilities and these are often in tension and conflict, yet whilst the act of stereotyping dissipates these tensions and closes out the possibilities it is the possibilities that enable us to critique the stereotype:

The paradoxical features of stereotyping are the visible traces of the condition of dilemma it has attempted to make invisible, and this condition always connects back to the ways in which order and power interact (Pickering, 2001:4)

Stereotypes are not simply a need for order, though they can fulfil this.

Simultaneously, however, stereotypes imply a 'natural' and 'settled' hierarchy of relations in which some are granted superiority over others:

The imprecise representations involved in this process of social dissemination create the illusion of precision, of order, of the way things should be. This is convenient for existing relations of power because it lends to them a sense of certainty, regularity and continuity (Pickering, 2001:4).

However, if we consider this in terms of power we see that what one group wins in terms of security and superiority another loses:

The evaluative ordering which stereotyping produces always occurs at a cost to those who are stereotyped, for they are then fixed into a marginal position or subordinate status and judged accordingly, regardless of the inaccuracies that are involved in the stereotypical description given of them (Pickering, 2001:5).

Moreover, a number of working-class, feminist authors have highlighted such 'costs' in relation to the working-class. For instance, Skeggs (2000:136) argued that during the 1990s in Britain, to be 'black or white working-class [was] to be continually judged and found lacking, to have one's cultural capital not recognized as having value and therefore being unable to trade, or be recognised as a worthy recipient'. As such, stereotypes produce discursive effects, as Kuhn (1995) illustrates:

You can so easily internalize the judgements of a different culture and believe – no, *know* – that there is something shameful and wrong about you, that you are inarticulate and stupid, have nothing to say of any value or importance, that no one will listen to you in any case, that you are undeserving, unentitled, cannot think properly, are incapable of 'getting it right'. You know that if you pretend to be something else, if you try to act as if you were one of the entitled, you risk exposure and humiliation. And you learn that these feelings may return to haunt you for the rest of your life. (Kuhn, 1995: 97–8; emphasis in original)

Reay (2005:913) asserts that class generates a host of emotions: resentment, defensiveness, guilt, shame, envy, defence, contempt, arrogance, pride, rage, satisfaction, embarrassment, and pity, these are affective aspects of class, but are felt differently by differently situated social actors:

... the inequitable operations of social class damage all of us regardless of where we are positioned in the social field. But it is the most vulnerable, the working-classes, who are made to bear the greatest psychological burdens of an unequal society [...] Just like sexism and racism, social-class inequalities do terrible damage, but unlike sexism and racism they continue to be condoned, even accepted as normative' (Reay, 2005:924)

Walkerdine (1998:39) highlights the effects of such representations upon the developing child; she argues that oppressed groups:

... have to survive in a way that means they must come to recognize themselves as lacking, deficient, deviant, as being where they are because that is who they are, that is how they are made ... what then are the consequences of living that daily humiliation and for children to grow up watching their parents face it?'

As we have seen repeatedly in this research, parents, more precisely single mothers, have been situated in a causal relationship to ‘problematic’ young people. The single mother is constructed and stereotyped according to simplistic oppositions and moral judgements. Within this, working-class women are judged by their sexuality, maternal practices and their ability to care and observe social limits (Skeggs, 2000:136). In newspaper reporting many representations of single mothers are blatant vitriolic attacks. Take for example an article by Melanie Phillips (may19mail5) on ‘the ‘culture of yobbery’. This article is particularly interesting because Phillips barely uses the word ‘mother’ throughout, though the narrative implicitly sets up a causal link between about single mothers and ‘Yob culture’:

The biggest reason for the rise in crime is the relentless growth of a lethal subculture of fatherless children and disorderly homes. While many lone parents do a good job of bringing up their children, the fact remains that most delinquents have fractured family lives.

Such language suggests that these children are able to cause death, are ‘lethal’. This is because they have not been civilised by Fathers, but brought up in ‘disorderly homes’ (untidy; irregular, uncontrolled; unruly Collins, 2005), presumably by their mothers – and not social services. But the choice of the word ‘fatherless’ here is totally inappropriate. No child is fatherless, even those with dead or ‘absent’ fathers have fathers; hence ‘my father is dead’. Because a father does not reside in the child’s family home does not necessarily mean there is no contact with him – or his civilizing influence.

Such narratives assume, due to the insistence on an abstracted; privatised family unit, that in the absence of a father there are no men around. Single-mothers automatically have no male relatives; they too are fatherless, they do not have brothers, cousins etc; their only male contact being with their 'serial partners' – of which they have too many. As in most diatribes on families headed by a single mother we are informed that 'many lone parents do a good job', here as elsewhere, who they are is not made explicit (one cannot help but assume they are middle-class). Phillips continues:

There are whole communities where committed fathers are unknown. As a result, the process of socialising children has broken down, leading to youngsters from emotionally chaotic backgrounds violently acting out their disturbance in school before being sucked into crime.

Here Phillips dichotomises fatherhood into committed and uncommitted fathers and locates them residentially in different locations, we are to assume that there are communities where committed fathers prevail. She does not suggest that fathers do not exist in other locations; but supposes that those that do do not care. Thus the implication is that committed fathers are the product of certain communities. Philips concludes that socialisation cannot occur: that in the absence of committed fathers, children are abandoned to their emotionally unstable mothers in a state of chaos: 'complete disorder and utter confusion'. Phillips argues:

THE truth is that the family is the crucible of social order. Break the family, and you break social order. How can children respect their parents when at the deepest level they believe that their parents have abandoned them? Such abandonment makes children feel they are worthless. If they don't even respect themselves, how can they be expected to respect authority?

But surely Phillip's argument is that the wrong parent abandoned them. How can children respect the remaining parent when dominant media narratives construct her as so useless and worthy of vitriol and abuse? How can children in lone-parent households respect their families when they are constructed as inferior, dangerous and undesirable? Where, in this narrative, is there space to celebrate the commitment and tenacity shown by these mothers?

Furthermore, such attention to inadequate mothers carries the implication that there is a desirable type of parent, one that is to be commended. In effect such reporting represents an attempt to enforce the 'maternal ideal'; more specifically it is an attempt to stigmatise alternatives: 'by deriding those who step out of place, boundaries are maintained' (Skeggs, 2004:108).

Moreover, stereotyping simultaneously constructs those doing the stereotyping and the stereotyped; stereotyping validates the characteristics and attributes which are implicitly denied the stereotyped whilst simultaneously naturalizing the possession of such characteristics and attributes and making them appear fixed:

It attempts to establish an attributed characteristic as natural and given in ways separable from the relations of power and domination through which it operates. [...] The assessment that is offered in a stereotype is based on the leading precepts and preoccupations of those who reproduce them, and it is this assessment that underlies the perception and positioning of the 'difference' it regards (Pickering, 2001:50).

Stereotyping always involves evaluations and judgements of difference and such 'judgements are an expression of power, even among the relatively powerless, since the norms which are reinforced by stereotyping emanate from established structures of social dominance' (Pickering, 2001:5). As Lawler (1999:11) argues 'the 'working classes' have been the source of much disappointment and disgust for the middle-class observers who have studied them, and, in large part, this is marked out through the lack of legitimacy granted to working-class cultural capital'. Furthermore:

Once any form of difference becomes diametrically set apart from the self-identity of those who define it, any encounter with the difference so constructed is likely to lead to suspicion, confusion and wrongful attribution ... this is often interwoven with the identification of disorder from a self-arrogated perspective of order, where the sources of disorder are always over on the other side from those defining it (Pickering, 2001:7).

Those defining the situation make the cultural practices of those defined 'seem volatile, unpredictable, irrational, inconsistent, capricious or even dangerous' (McDonald, 1993 quoted in Pickering, 2001:7). Or as Skeggs (2004:95) argues 'the political rhetoric that is being circulated about the working-class' is reliant

upon 'imaginary simplifications and assumptive worlds', this is not innocent but benefits the interests of particular groups:

... the powerless are positioned by the symbolic evaluation of immorality, whilst the powerful claim morality for themselves. This is a display of cunning rhetoric, which has very powerful effects, not least by its repetition and its institutionalization'.

Yet, and this is the crux of the dilemma identified by Pickering (2001), the very existence of stereotyping suggests that the established structures of power, norms and values are far from stable; natural and therefore require reinforcement; protection:

In trying to counter something dreaded, or compensate for something deficient, stereotyping characteristically oversteps the mark. It is through this overstepping of the mark that stereotyping betrays itself (Pickering, 2001:7).

A number of authors would concur. Skeggs (2004:103), for instance, argues that 'the unrestrained presence of the working-class generates the fears that expose the fragility of middle-class respectability'. For her:

Any judgement of the working-class as negative (waste, excess, vulgar, unmodern, authentic etc) is an attempt by the middle-class to accrue value. This is what the representations are about; they have absolutely nothing to do with the working-class themselves, but are about the middle-class creating value for themselves in a myriad of ways through distance, denigration and disgust, as well as appropriation and affect attribution (Skeggs 2004:118).

Similarly, Squires (1990) asserts that whilst such stereotypical representations serve to firm up and fix concepts of normality and middle-classness, they simultaneously reveal 'the fault lines' in society. As Squires (1990:19) argues:

Coercive aspects of the 'liberal-democratic' regime bear more heavily upon certain members of the population than others. Precisely where its integrative moral order is least secure, the liberal-democratic regime becomes all the more punitive and disciplinary.

Further, divisions at the 'fault-lines' of society (such as social class, gender, generation, ethnicity and so on) affect the stability of the social. Disaffection, opposition, and resistance amongst a certain population indicate 'a profound failure at the level of the society's mechanisms of integration and its normative commitments to democratic citizenship' (Squires, 1990:20). It is around the fault lines that disciplinary, ideological and administrative practices are deployed. As such, stereotypes can be understood as a disciplinary mechanism.

Pickering (2001) sees stereotypes as characteristic of modernity, though not unique to modernity they have proliferated in line with our encounters with otherness in the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, colonialism, imperialism and increased migration. Pickering (2001:8) argues that:

We need not only to understand the concept of stereotype historically, but also to understand the *content* of stereotypes historically – to bring the repressed historical dimension of stereotyping back into the analysis of the present.

Stereotypes are historical and they accrue meaning over time; this is part of their resilience. Indeed, many of the characteristics that are attributed to working-class families and young people through stereotyping are simply repeating those moral judgements developed in the nineteenth-century that were highlighted in chapter five. Such stereotypes, in cultural repertoire, can become dormant then be reactivated but they always include sediments of meaning and value from past times.

## **Conclusion:**

As Bhabha (2003:371) observed in relation to colonial discourses, it is:

An apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical difference. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for 'subject peoples' through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited. It seeks authorisation for its strategies by the production of coloniser and colonised which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated. The objective of the colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.

If we were to transfer such an argument to an analysis of class discourse we could argue similarly. The production of such knowledges has authorized the categories of 'us' and 'them'; constructing 'them' (the poor, white working-class) as degenerate has justified a division between those judged superior/inferior and thus

enabled the establishment of disciplinary mechanisms. Stereotyping involves disavowal; it is one way in which the social production of the social is denied. As Haylett (2001:361) argues:

Poor whites reveal a contradiction that threatens to unsettle dominant social systems of class-based and race-based privilege, most especially the symbolic order of those systems, that is the way they are visibly marked. First they show that whiteness does not naturally predispose people to social-privilege and success. Second, they show that poverty as a symbolic order has to maintain an appearance, an order of things to justify its existence [...] When large numbers of people are poor, *and* they are white, that symbolic order starts to break down, it seems less justified, less natural. Poor whites thereby come to reveal the symbolically 'worked at', socially produced nature of the order of things.

Consequently, systems of representation attempt to rescue this symbolic order of things; once more making hierarchical social relations appear natural and inevitable:

The rhetorical force of stereotypes depends on the ways in which they seem able to bind contrary features together and banish from view the ambivalent relations which nevertheless underpin them ... Stereotyping always operates in relation to what is culturally ambivalent and thematically contrary within everyday life, and does so as a common-sense rhetorical strategy of naturalising order and control. Stereotypes operate as socially exorcistic rituals in maintaining the boundaries of normality and legitimacy (Pickering, 2001:45).

## Conclusion

As I, and others, have argued, the study of representations is an important sociological project (Hall, 2003a, Griffin, 1993). Further, many authors have pointed to the ways in which newspapers negatively stereotype young people (e.g.: Cohen, 2005, Davis and Bourhill, 2004, Hall et al 2002, Muncie, 2004, Neustatter, 1998, Porteous & Colston, 1980, Scraton, 2004). Yet, in spite of this, there has been surprisingly little empirical study into more **general** representations of youth, other than that by Griffin (1993). This thesis has sought to rectify this through an empirical study of newspaper representations of youth. Here in conclusion I aim to reflect upon the methods employed, the theoretical approach taken and developed, and the findings presented.

## Methods

In analysing representations of youth there were a number of established methods I might have employed. The analyses discussed in chapter two indicated three dominant trends in examining representations of youth in newspaper reporting: content analysis and event oriented processual analysis and discursive analysis. There are advantages and disadvantages to these approaches. The strength of content analysis is its evidence base and ability to illustrate the predominance of negative reporting on youth. However, the quantity of data generated by this approach inevitably demands a shorter time frame; it therefore misses the ebbs and flows in newspaper reporting. Further, due to the quantitative, rather than qualitative, nature of this approach the explanations/ interpretations (i.e.

discourses) contained within reports remain unexamined. Content analysis exposes the weight of negative reporting but does not allow for an adequate study of representations.

Alternatively, event oriented research has the advantage of delimiting the potential sample; only articles on a certain theme are selected for analysis.

However, because the events studied are perceived as particularly shocking the accompanying representations are inevitably negative. In addition, such analyses never set out to examine generalized representations of youth (though these are frequently highlighted).

In contrast, this thesis has aimed to engage with and contribute to existing knowledge by undertaking empirical analysis on more general representations of youth. This required different data collection and handling methods to those detailed above. The data collected covers six months (01/01/05-30/06/05), a longer timescale than is normally used in general analyses, and the data were not event oriented; it was hoped themes would emerge from the data themselves. This generated a considerable volume of data (9385 articles) and meant that none of the approaches discussed above were, on their own, adequate to my task; nor were others I might have employed (such as critical discourse analysis or semiotic analysis). Consequently, the method employed here amounts to an innovative amalgamation of the three approaches; this developed incrementally.

Further, the volume of data required that I be selective. The data presented here is a selective sample representing twenty-per-cent (1885<sup>1</sup>) of the total number of articles generated. Though I was unable to undertake a rigorous content analysis, it was important to communicate the weight of reporting and therefore I produced numerous statistical ‘counts’ from the sample. As I have intimated previously, certain articles were omitted from analysis and this may have reduced the number of positive stories. However, because duplicate articles were also omitted I am convinced that the proportions would not have altered significantly. Therefore, the figures produced in chapter four are a sound indication of the themes by which young people were reported by newspapers in the first half of 2005.

Such figures were produced from the initial data handling stages in which each article was coded according to the main themes covered and the age and gender of the young people being discussed. In effect each article was ‘labelled’ with its attributes (such as: crime, ASB, male, aged 16-21 years). This process enabled the detailed analysis. It revealed the theme of anti-social behaviour and highlighted increasing attention to this theme during the six months. Furthermore, the data handling stages revealed that crime stories dominated in press reporting on young people. This helped explain why previous analyses of press reporting have tended to concentrate upon the criminality of young men. But this had resulted in representations of young women being a largely neglected area of study; one that I was determined to rectify. The data handling stage facilitated an exclusive analysis of the reporting on young women.

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<sup>1</sup> This amounts to 32 megabytes of data.

In sum then, my method involved a process of reduction, a focussing-in on particular themes. The data handling enabled an overview of generalized, age-based and gendered themes to be produced and facilitated thematic analysis. Yet it was the theoretical analyses that enabled the elucidation of the discourses employed within articles through which youth were understood and represented. It enabled us to discover which young people were being focussed upon, how they were explained and to consider the discursive effects of these representations.

## **Theoretical Approach**

This thesis has employed three main theoretical approaches in the analysis of the data presented here. These can be arranged under the headings of discursive analysis, moral panic analysis, and stereotype analysis. To combine such approaches in one thesis may appear eclectic, but it is my contention that these approaches are not antithetical. The approaches are most obviously compatible at the level of critical sociology; the project of which is to dig beneath appearances, 'to reveal the underlying practises, their historical specificity and structural manifestations' (Harvey, 1990, p4). But more than this, they are compatible at the level of discourse. Indeed, this research has utilized the concepts of moral panic and stereotype to develop Foucault's theories of discourse.

Foucault's work has enormous implications for moral panic analysis. As Critcher has argued (2003:167-168) both Foucauldian and moral panic analyses are concerned with how individuals and groups are socially constructed as deviant via systems of differentiation. Both show how constructions of deviance are used to

justify institutional interventions: the ways in which deviants are regulated, disciplined or punished. Finally, both highlight the ambiguities and contradictions apparent in the discourses that circulate. As Critcher (2003:168) further argues, 'the connections are there to be made, if an analyst can be found interested in both Foucault and moral panic'. It is my contention that I have done this.

The usefulness of 'moral panic' analysis has been contested; critics tend to present it as rather outmoded, unable to deal with the complexities of contemporary mass media and generally missing the discursive point (see McRobbie and Thornton, 1995 and Ungar 2001). However, as I hope to have shown in this research, the employment of Cohen's original approach to moral panic analysis (in itself an eclectic use of social theory) facilitated entry into the data. Further, Cohen's concepts, when combined with insights from discourse analysis, enabled a degree of abstraction and an in-depth, critical and rigorous examination of the data on 'Yobs' to proceed. For instance, Cohen identified an 'impact event'; here such 'impact events' were understood as discursive events (Jäger, 2005:46-51). Cohen's inventory analysis attended to language and grammatical effects in the exaggeration and distortion of events; discourse analysis also recommends attention to the rhetorical means of representation employed, that is: the adjectives, adverbs, suffixes, lexical registers and modality utilized and through which imagery, metaphorism and symbolism occur (Jäger, 2005). Further, Cohen's analysis of the societal reaction attended to interpretations of causation; in this research theories of 'causation' were analysed discursively and this exposed the types of knowledge called upon: the explanatory discourses that were present and those that were absent (e.g. underclass discourse not exploitation).

Ungar (2001:276-7) believed moral panic analyses neglected other 'risks' about which the public might panic and to be too narrowly 'focussed on social control processes aimed at the moral failing of dispossessed groups'. In this research however, discourse analysis revealed causal explanations to be too narrowly focussed upon morality at the expense of other explanations. As Thompson (1999:1) argues, the importance of the 'moral' in a moral panic is totally missed by Ungar; there may be panics over food and health, but without a moral element these cannot be understood as moral panics.

Further, Cohen's analysis of mods and rockers was event oriented. It started with an event and followed the media reaction to that event; it was therefore processual and implied chronology. Though this research was not event oriented, numerous discursive events were identified within the dataset and, as stated in chapter six, these could be seen as happening at once. Similarly, elements of the control culture were evident very early in the data; sensitisation was apparent throughout; and the research began with the stereotype already confirmed. But does this mean that the data on the ASB of 'Yobs' did not represent a moral panic? I think it did. The increased attention was suggestive of a 'signification spiral'; an 'amplification of deviance' and, as Critcher (2003, p1) has also commented: 'I did not know what else to call [this] except a moral panic'. Further, I am certain that had I begun with an event (such as the attack on Phil Carroll discussed in chapter six), newspaper reporting would have proceeded in much the same way as that described by Cohen forty years ago.

Analyses of event-oriented reporting enable moral panics to be understood as discrete. However, a more general analysis, as presented here, illustrates that moral panics are a repetitive and predictable journalistic response. Moreover, this research supports the contentions that moral panics: ‘show no signs of abating’ (Cricher, 2003:148), have become ‘characteristic of the modern risk society’ (Thompson, 2005:142) and embody a ‘rather predictable’ discursive formulae (Cohen 2005:viii). Or, as McRobbie and Thornton (1995, p562) put it:

Moral panics have become the way in which daily events are brought to the attention of the public ... a standard response, a familiar, sometimes weary, even ridiculous rhetoric rather than an exceptional emergency intervention. Used by politicians to orchestrate consent, by business to promote sales in niche markets, and by media to make home and social affairs newsworthy, moral panics are constructed on a daily basis.

Though moral panics may represent a repetitive and predictable response this in no way undermines the potential effects. As argued previously, the legacy of moral panics is the way they mobilize, sustain and reify prevailing discourses and establish new ones. For Foucault, the question would not be whether such discourses are true, rather he would ask what the effects are of making them true.

A similar question can be asked of stereotypes. Indeed, the most salient issue being addressed within debates on stereotyping is that of accuracy, as Perkins (1997, p82) puts it: ‘Accuracy – The Central Problem?’ Common understandings of the term ‘stereotype’ ultimately derive from the work of Walter Lipman in the 1920s (Perkins, 1997, Pickering, 2001, p16). Lipman related the use of

stereotypes to an abiding problem of modernity: informed participation in a liberal democracy. Lipman did not perceive of stereotypes as malevolent but in two ways: (i). As inadequate and biased obstacles to rational assessment that endorse the interests of those using them. (ii). As a necessary mode of processing information, especially in highly differentiated societies; as inescapable ways of creating order (Pickering, 2001, p18). Initially, therefore, stereotyping was conceptualised as a conflict of needs: the need for order over the need for understanding. In this scenario, any concrete, embedded understanding of individual lives became secondary to the gains won in understanding the complexity of the world around us in a participatory liberal democracy.

This is the central dilemma that Pickering (2001, p20) highlighted: should stereotypes 'be endorsed in the interests of order, or critiqued as strategies of power' (see chapter eight). Pickering (2001, p22-46) illustrates how this dilemma has been neglected in academic research; social psychology, he argues, has resorted to 'pathologising prejudice and naturalizing stereotyping' whilst media and cultural studies has pathologised 'stereotypical cultural texts and representations' and naturalized 'stereotypical critique' (Pickering, 2001, p44). However, to pathologize stereotyping is an exteriorising device and denies the role of academia in the construction of stereotypes.

Take youth research for example. Roberts (2003:15) contends that it is 'sustained by young people posing constant problems for the authorities and adult society in general' and consequently the sociology of youth is frequently directed by the political concerns of others. Jones et al (2003:55-6) concur, arguing that youth

research has been 'employed to respond to moral panics, legitimate political agendas or contain public controversy'; as a result 'much youth research has tended to rehearse, or even amplify, constructs of youth that are present in other cultural spheres such as politics and the media'. This enables the media and general public to construct explanations of youth based on the 'spectacular lives' of a problematic minority. These contribute 'to a subtle yet pervasive popular discourse about the lives of young people today' that have 'real consequences' (Cieslik, 2003:4-5). In other words, such representations have discursive effects.

Stereotyping was considered in chapter eight. Following Hall (2003c) and Pickering (2001) stereotyping was initially understood as a strategy of othering, a differentiating mechanism. But stereotypes and the ability to attribute them to others are about power; this power circulates. All of us understand (at least some) stereotypes, and similarly we can categorize individuals under their umbrella, we need little more than an individual's appearance to do this. To stereotype another is to arrogate value to oneself. Further, those negatively stereotyped by one group may also employ that stereotype in the placing/othering of another, and thereby gain a (fragile) status for themselves. However, the ability to stereotype effectively is hierarchically determined; one can only effectively stereotype those with less power than oneself.

In this sense the question of accuracy becomes less important, it does not matter whether the content is true or false: what matters are the effects. Such effects were considered and shown to be damaging for individual subjectivities. But more than that, they were seen to necessitate a response/reaction from those being

stereotyped. As such, I argued that stereotyping is a form of modern power: a disciplinary mechanism. Modern power relies on the individual being free 'with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behaviour are available' (Foucault, 2002b, p342). Stereotyping serves to condone or condemn these possibilities, but it does not absolutely forbid any. In this way appearance and behaviours come to be understood as agentic: to be a 'chav' is understood to be an active choice. Freedom is a precondition within modern power: as Foucault (2002b:340) argued, modern power 'does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions'.

Moreover, this research has exposed the central dilemma of order and power identified by Pickering (2001); stereotyping is a disciplinary mechanism which represents the power to impose order. Circulating power enables us to attribute value and status to others in ways that make them appear as agentic, chosen statuses, rather than simply natural and fixed, as Foucault (2002b, p340) argued:

A power relationship ... can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that the 'other' (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognised and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions may open up.

It is in this way that problems of deprivation and poverty come to be understood as their fault not ours and people become 'their own explanation' (Squires and Stephen 2005:7).

## Findings

In the field of youth studies there is general agreement that the news media represent young people negatively. However, this contention has been based largely upon thematic or event-oriented data – and sometimes on selective illustrative quotes. Here this contention has been empirically tested; a wealth of both quantitative and qualitative evidence presented in support. Newspapers have been shown to represent young people in negative ways. Moreover, numerous findings have been produced in this research; these are detailed in the conclusion to the analytical chapters. Rather than repeat these, here I will reflect upon the discourse positions taken by The Daily Mail, The Daily Mirror, and The Guardian in relation to those youth deemed problematic. It is my contention that despite numerous, obvious stylistic and presentational differences there was remarkable discursive accord. In this respect, youth were rarely understood in simplistic essentialist ways (i.e. born evil/innocent); rather the discourses employed were more sociological so to speak. In the first half of 2005 problem youth were understood as a product and symptom of a problematic social class.

Moreover, two levels of newspaper reporting can be identified in this research. Firstly, reporting at the level of reaction to events. At this level the newspapers frequently utilized simplistic, rather predictable oppositional language and sensational headlines, the imagery produced through metaphor, adjective and dynamic modality dichotomised young people in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (or more precisely ‘our young people’ and ‘theirs’). Secondly, there was an interpretative level of reporting. Here, rather than simply describe, journalists

sought to contextualize and explain events; at this level the discourses employed to explain youth came to the fore. However, it was difficult to discern an exclusive youth discourse strand. Rather, the semblance of a discourse on youth was constituted via an entanglement of discourse strands akin to the 'discursive milling mass' identified by Jäger (2005:35), but a number of coherent strands could be identified. The discourses of adolescence and intelligence were consistently called upon but two strands dominated, those of family and social class (community). In effect, problem behaviours were given a 'learned' quality; understood as 'class' enculturation, inculcation or contamination.

In The Daily Mail this class was revealed to be working-class. The Daily Mail explicitly constructed working-class people as lacking and opposed to the 'qualities' assumed to be possessed by the middle-class. Such 'qualities' were presented as the basis of civilization: 'Sobriety, sexual restraint, hard work and abiding by the law' presented as 'vital for civilising the masses' (may25mail3). Those conforming to this criterion were normalized; included in the category of citizen: 'us'. Yet in this construction 'middle-class' was also given a learned quality; presented as achieved and not a privilege of birth. Therefore those failing to attain, or perceived to deviate from, middle-class standards could be condemned, constructed as non-citizens; excluded into the category of 'them'.

The Daily Mirror dichotomised the working-class into the reputable/disreputable; deserving/undeserving; criminal/law abiding. As a result The Daily Mirror repeatedly represented problematic youth as a 'lunatic fringe'. Although potential structural causes were often referenced these were rarely expanded upon, possibly

because The Daily Mirror could also identify many decent, respectable working-class families. Therefore, the 'fight against poverty' on behalf of the deserving poor was to be accompanied by discipline for the undeserving: 'anti social behaviour orders, fixed penalty notices and parenting contracts - all designed to protect the law-abiding' (jan28mirror1). In Daily Mirror narratives the respectable working-class was celebrated and encouraged; the 'underclass' ('the vicious minority, the nasty little bastards who end up with Asbos', May13mirror4) condemned. Here problem youth were the outcome of irresponsible parents.

The Guardian was less venomous in descriptions and interpretations; the presence of many articles by guest columnists resulted in diverse positions being taken. Nevertheless, the problem was still framed in class terms. Government claims makers represented 'Yobs' and teen mothers as a consequence of inadequate parenting; for left wing academics they were the victims of aggressive individualism. This problematic class was not condemned however, but constructed as 'vulnerable'; represented as in need of support. An explanatory discourse of education dominated in The Guardian wherein those young people deemed problematic were consistently constructed as lacking educational aspiration; as having limited 'employability'; as ignorant to the effects of ASB, teenage pregnancy and so on. As such, The Guardian consistently called upon a cycle of cultural deprivation thesis. The dominant cure proposed was more and better education (presumably delivered by their readers).

Moreover, the discursive entanglement that circulated around those young people deemed problematic by The Daily Mail, The Daily Mirror and The Guardian bore

remarkable similarity to the discursive entanglement of underclass. As Haylett (2001:358) has observed, the discourse of underclass merges notions of ‘familial disorder and dysfunction; of dangerous masculinities and dependent femininities, of antisocial behaviour; of moral and ecological decay’. This was evident in all three newspapers; the language used and the interpretations presented functioned as differentiating mechanisms; it was not youth per se that were being negatively represented but a particular social class of youth.

So what are the effects of making this true? Once a causal relationship is configured between problematic youthful behaviours and the culture of particular families and communities then further interventions into this realm are inevitable. Moreover, if the problem is conceived as a lack of middle-class qualities then such interventions will seek to coerce, enforce, and inculcate such qualities. Interventions will be designed to encourage practices that are frequently at odds with the material realities of disadvantaged people’s lives. Such interventions could be seen within the timeframe of this research: the announcement of Tony Blair’s agenda for respect and Surestart being consistently referenced as a ‘cure’ for ASB. Since then we have seen the continued expansion of parenting contracts/orders and Family intervention Projects<sup>2</sup>. As Beverley Hughes, stated:

We know that the best form of cure is prevention. We can spot early warning signs in young people and families where things are going wrong – poor parenting, lessons skipped, and complaints about behaviour. To change, rather than just contain, we need tough action on the underlying problems alongside

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.respect.gov.uk/members/default.aspx?id=5982> for detailed evidence of the effects of making the discourse true.

tough enforcement. Intervening early and requiring young people and their parents to address the causes as well as the behaviour itself (March, 2008<sup>3</sup>).

Moreover, resultant policy interventions ‘cohere under the guise of a responsibilisation strategy’, a governing or policing of family life and is manifested in attempts to ‘discipline parents and hold them ever more criminally responsible for the offending behaviour of their young’ (Squires and Stephen, 2005:4-5). In Jack Straw’s words (BBC News 01/06/08) policy interventions will seek to impose a ‘moral imperative towards parents’.

The rhetorical means of representation employed by the three newspapers constructed stereotypes (discursive figures) based upon ‘abstract visibilities’. These enabled blame for circumstance to be apportioned to the victims of social and material inequality, and the role of those who benefit from such inequality to be denied (Haylett, 2001). If they are poor then it is their fault because they are not middle-class and young people come to be conceived as victims of their families. Consequently, in 2005, as in the 1830s, it is the perceived backwardness and immorality of the poor working-class (understood as uncultured/uncivilized/immoral) who are blamed for society’s ills. Within this the poor working-class ‘are represented as having nothing to offer; their culture is not worth having; they only represent burden’ (Skeggs 2004:94). As The Daily Mirror put it: ‘The middle-class get degrees. The working-class get jobs. And the underclass get a baby as soon as they can’ (may30mirror2).

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3 Minister for Children, Young People and Families <http://www.respect.gov.uk/members/news/article.aspx?id=12118&ContextId=7530>

# Appendix One: The Guardian

Owned by the Scott Trust the Guardian Media Group (GMG) Publishes:

## National

Guardian  
Observer  
GuardianUnlimited

## GMG Regional

### MEN Media (Manchester)

Accrington Observer	Prestwich Advertiser
Free Daily Metro	Rochdale Observer
Glossop Advertiser	Salford Advertiser
Heywood Advertiser	South Manchester Reporter
Macclesfield Express	Stockport Express
Manchester Evening News	Tameside Advertiser
Metro News	The Asian News
Middleton Guardian	The Rossendale Freepress
Nema Advertiser	The Wilmslow Express
Oldham Advertiser	TV Station Channel M
Postings Plus	

## **Surrey & Berkshire Media**

Aldershot News and Mail	Get Wokingham
Byfleet News and Mail	Molesey News and Mail
Camberly News and Mail	Sandhurst News
Cobham News and Mail	Surrey Advertiser
Esher News and Mail	Surry Hants Star
Farnborough News and Mail	Walton and Hersham News and Mail
Fleet News and Mail	Weybridge News and Mail
Get Bracknell	Woking News and Mail
Get Reading	

## **Radio**

### Smooth Radio:

London, East and West Midlands, North West England, Glasgow (North East Autumn 2007).

### Real Radio Digital:

South and West Wales, South and West Yorkshire, Central Scotland

### Century Digital:

North west and North East England

Rock Digital: Renfrewshire, Glasgow and Dunbartonshire (Greater Manchester 2008)

## **Trader Media Group**

Auto Trader

Bike Trader etc

## **Property Services**

Vebra.com

Thinkproperty.com

## **Other interests:**

Fish4: Along with three other regional newspaper publishers, GMG has a quarter share in Fish4, the leading online classified business.

Metro (Manchester): GMG Regional Media is the co-publisher with Associated Newspapers of the free daily Metro title in Manchester.

Seven Publishing: GMG owns 35.5% of Seven Publishing, which produces consumer magazines such as delicious, Sainsbury's magazine and puzzle titles.

Trafford Park Printers: Jointly owned with the Telegraph Media Group, Trafford Park prints the Guardian, Observer, Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph.

**Paper Purchase and Management:** Also jointly owned with the Telegraph Media Group, Paper Purchase and Management provides newsprint and magazine paper to the Guardian, Observer, Manchester Evening News, Auto Trader, Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph.

**MXR and Digital News Network:** GMG Radio has a quarter share in MXR, a holder of regional digital multiplex licences, and a 22% share in Digital News Network, a provider of news services.

<http://www.gmgplc.co.uk/Ourbusinesses/tabid/128/Default.aspx>

## **Appendix Two: Daily Mail and General Trust plc.**

**ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS** is a major national newspaper publisher which is also responsible for Teletext and for Associated Northcliffe Digital.

Teletext provides commercial teletext services on all the ITV channels, Channel 4 and analogue five and operates Teletextholidays.co.uk, a leading travel website.

Associated Northcliffe Digital reaches an estimated 25% of all UK internet users in the automotive, jobs, property, dating and personal finance online advertising markets.

### **Principle Brands:**

Daily Mail

The Mail on Sunday

Evening Standard

Metro

London Lite

Loot

Teletext

Allegran

Carsource

Find a Property

Jobsite

Primelocation

Simply Switch

This is London

This is Money

**NORTHCLIFFE MEDIA** Ltd is one of the largest regional publishing groups in the UK. Operating from 17 publishing centres, Northcliffe publishes over 100 publications in the UK including 18 daily titles, 29 paid-for weeklies and over 60 free weekly newspapers.

**Principle Brands:**

Evening Post (Bristol)

Derby Evening Telegraph

Essex Chronicle

Hull Daily Mail

Leicester Mercury

Nottingham Evening Post

The Sentinel (Stoke-on-Trent)

South Wales Evening Post

West Briton (Cornwall)

Western Gazette (Somerset)

Kisalfold (Gyor, Hungary)

**DMG INFORMATION** is the Group's information publishing division, providing business-to-business information to the property, insurance, financial, geo-spatial, chemical information and energy trading markets. It also provides graduate and educational recruitment information and services. The US accounts for the majority of revenues with the UK, France, Germany, Japan, India and Australia representing the other significant geographic markets.

**Principle Brands:**

Risk Management Solutions

Environmental Data Resources

Landmark Information Group

Property Portfolio & Research

Trepp

Lewtan Technologies

Sanborn

Genscape

Hobsons

Dolphin

**EUROMONEY INSTITUTIONAL INVESTOR** is a leading international business-to-business media group, focused primarily on the international finance sector. It publishes more than 100 magazines, newsletters and journals.

It also runs an extensive portfolio of conferences, seminars and training courses and is a leading provider of electronic information and data covering international

finance and emerging markets. On 5th October, 2006, Euromoney completed the acquisition of Metal Bulletin plc for £230 million, its largest acquisition to date.

**Principle Brands:**

Euromoney

Institutional Investor

ISI Emerging Markets

Petroleum Economist

Euroweek

Asiamoney

Latin Finance

Metal Bulletin

BCA

**DMG WORLD MEDIA** is a leading international exhibition and publishing company that produces more than 300 trade exhibitions, consumer shows and fairs. The company also publishes 45 related magazines, directories and market reports.

DMG world media's operation includes more than 30 offices across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, the United Arab Emirates, China, Australia, New Zealand, India and Singapore; and additional exhibitions in countries such as Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Morocco, Egypt, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil, Venezuela, Bahrain, Mexico, Czech Republic, Spain, South Korea and Vietnam.

**Principle Brands:**

Daily Mail Ideal Home Show (UK)

Index and Big 5 (Dubai)

Global Petroleum Show (Canada)

California Gift Show (US)

Surf Expo (US)

Palm Beach Classic (US)

Gastech (Abu Dhabi 2006)

Ad:tech (US, UK, Asia)

**DMG RADIO AUSTRALIA** holds ten radio licences, including the national Nova FM network of stations in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth and the Vega FM stations in Sydney and Melbourne.

**Principle Brands:**

Nova 969 (Sydney)

Nova 100 (Melbourne)

Nova 1069 (Brisbane)

Nova 919 (Adelaide)

Nova 937 (Perth – Joint venture)

Vega 953 (Sydney)

Vega 915 (Melbourne)

Five AA (Adelaide)

Brisbane 97.3 (Joint venture)

Star 1045 (Central Coast) <http://www.dmgmt.co.uk/aboutdmgmt/groupoverview/>

## **Appendix Three: Trinity Mirror**

### **Nationals Division:**

MGN Ltd

Daily Mirror

Sunday Mirror

The People

Daily Mirror Ulster edition

Irish Daily Mirror

Scottish Daily Mirror

Scottish Sunday Mirror

The Scottish People

[www.mirror.co.uk](http://www.mirror.co.uk)

[www.sundaymirror.co.uk](http://www.sundaymirror.co.uk)

[www.people.co.uk](http://www.people.co.uk)

### **Scottish Daily Record and Sunday Mail Ltd**

Daily Record

Sunday Mail

The Glaswegian

Metro Scotland

[www.dailyrecord.co.uk](http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk)

[www.sundaymail.co.uk](http://www.sundaymail.co.uk)

## **First Press Publishing Ltd**

The One Directory

Celtic View

I Do

Rangers News

Scottish Rugby

Rangers Monthly

## **Insider Publications Ltd**

Scottish Business Insider

## **Sports Division**

Racing Post and Raceform Ltd

## **Regionals Division:**

## **Birmingham Post and Mail Ltd**

Birmingham Post

Birmingham Evening Mail

Sunday Mercury

Sports Argus

Metro Midlands

## **Coventry newspapers Ltd**

Coventry Evening Telegraph

Midweek Pink

Hinckley Times

Bedworth Echo

Atherstone Tribune

Coventry Citizen

Warwick Times

Kenilworth Citizen

Royal Leamington Spa Times

Hinckley Herald & Journal

Nuneaton Weekly Tribune

## **Midland Weekly Media Ltd**

### **NWM East of England**

Brackley & Towcester Post

Corby Herald & Post

Kettering Herald & Post

Market Harborough Herald & Post

Northampton Herald & Post

Peterborough Herald & Post

Stamford Herald & Post

Wellingborough & Rushden Herald & Post

Solihull & Warwickshire Guardian

## **NWM East Midlands**

Loughborough Echo

Long Eaton Advertiser/Sandiacre & Stapleford News

NuNews

Burton Trader

Coalville & Ashby Echo Series

Long Eaton Trader

Loughborough Trader EXtra

Derby Trader

Ilkeston & Ripley Trader

## **NWM North**

Sutton Coldfield News

Cannock, Burntwood Chase Post

Tamworth Times

Willenhall, Wednesbury & Darlaston AdNews

Wolverhampton Ad News

Stafford Post

Lichfield & Rugely Post

Walsall Observer

## **NWM Solihull**

Solihull Guardian

Solihull News

Solihull Times

**NcjMedia Ltd**

The Journal

Evening Chronicle

Sunday Sun

The Pink

Ad-Mag

Jobs North East

Metro North East

Find a Job

Newcastle Herald & Post

Gateshead Herald & Post

South Tyne Herald & Post

North Tyne Herald & Post

Northumberland Herald & Post

Chronicle Specials

Golf North East

Exclusive

Culture

**Gazette Media Company**

Evening Gazette

Ad Mags

Jobs North East

Teesside Herald & Post

South Durham Herald Post

Middlesbrough Herald & Post

East Cleveland Herald & Post

Darlington Herald & Post

North Yorkshire Herald & Post

Stockton & Billingham Herald & Post

Golf North East

North East Exclusive

Culture

Remember When

**Trinity Mirror North West & North Wales Ltd**

**Trinity Mirror Merseyside**

Liverpool Echo

Liverpool Daily Post

Southport Visiter

Formby Times

Crosby Herald

Ormskirk Advertiser

Skelmersdale Advertiser

Jobs North West

Quids In

Midweek Visiter Series

Village Visiter

Midweek Advertiser

Birkenhead News

Bromborough & Bebington News  
Heswall News  
Hoyle News & West Kirby News  
Wallasey News  
Neston News  
South Wirral News  
South Liverpool Mersey Mart  
Anfield Liverpool Star  
Huyton & Roby Star  
Maghull & Aintree Star  
West Derby & Tuebrook Mersey Mart  
Bootle Times

**Trinity Mirror Cheshire**

Chester Chronicle  
Crewe Chronicle  
Ellesmere Port Pioneer  
Northwich Chronicle  
Runcorn, Widnes Weekly News  
Whitchurch Herald  
Northwich & Herald Post  
South Wirral News  
BuySell  
Chester Mail  
Northwich Mail

Crewe Mail

Runcorn & Widnes Herald & Post

**Trinity Mirror North Wales**

Daily Post - Welsh Edition

North Wales Weekly News

Abergele & St Asaph Visitor

Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald (South)

Just Jobs

Vale Advertiser

Wreham Mail

Bangor & Anglesey Mail

Rhyl & Prestatyn Visitor

Holyhead & Anglesey Mail

**Trinity Mirror Huddersfield**

Huddersfield Daily Examiner

Huddersfield Express & Chronicle Series

Huddersfield Weekly News

**Scottish and Universal Newspapers Ltd:**

**S&UN Ayrshire & Strathclyde**

Paisley Daily Express

Ayrshire Post

Kilmarnock Standard

Irvine Herald

The Lennox

Clyde Weekly News

Ayrshire & Coatbridge World

North Ayrshire World

**S&UN Central Tayside**

Blairgowrie Advertiser

Perth Shopper

Perthshire Advertiser (Fri)

Perthshire Advertiser (Tue)

Stirling Observer (Fri)

Stirling Observer (Wed)

Strathearn Herald

**S&UN - Dumfries & Galloway**

Dumfries & Galloway Standard (Fri)

Dumfries & Galloway Standard (Wed)

Dumfries & Galloway Today

The Galloway News

## **S&UN - Lanarkshire & Lothian**

Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser

Airdrie & Coatbridge World

East Kilbride News

East Kilbride World

Hamilton Advertiser

Hamilton World

The Reformer

Wishaw Press

Wishaw World

## **Trinity Mirror Southern Ltd:**

### **North Surrey & London Newspapers**

Surrey Herald & Staines News

Hounslow Borough Chronicle

Fulham Chronicle Series

Kingston Informer

Richmond & Twickenham Informer

Hounslow & Chiswick Informer Series

Walton & Weybridge Informer

Woking Informer

Staines Informer

Staines Leader

Hounslow Informer Series

Kensington Informer Series

Skyport Heathrow

Skyport Gatwick

Skyport Stanstead

### **The Wharf**

The Wharf

### **West London & Bucks**

Ealing Gazette

Uxbridge Gazette

Harrow Observer

Buckinghamshire Advertiser & Examiner Series

Brent & Wembley Leader

Harrow Leader

Harrow Informer

Ealing Leader

Ealing Informer

Uxbridge & Hillingdon Leader

Uxbridge & Ruislip Informer

### **Western Mail and Echo Ltd**

Western Mail

South Wales Echo

Wales On Sunday

Cardiff Post

Glamorgan Gazette

Cynon Valley Leader

Gwent Gazette

Merthyr Express

Pontypridd & Llantrisant Observer

Neath & Port Talbot Guardian Series

Rhondda Leader

Bridgend Post

Barry Post

WM

Business in Wales

Commercial Property Wales

**Manufacturing division:**

Trinity Mirror Printing: Blantyre, Cardiff, Liverpool, Midlands, Newcastle, Oldham, Saltire, Teeside, Watford.

In addition The Daily Mirror operates numerous Digital Media

<http://www.trinitymirror.com/group/structure/>

## **Appendix Four: News Corporation Holdings.**

### **Newspapers:**

#### **United States**

New York Post

#### **United Kingdom**

News International

News of the World

The Sun

The Sunday Times

The Times

#### **Australia**

Daily Telegraph

Fiji Times

Gold Coast Bulletin

Herald Sun

Newsphotos

Newspix

Newstext

NT News

Post-Courier

Sunday Herald Sun

Sunday Mail  
Sunday Tasmanian  
Sunday Territorian  
Sunday Times  
The Advertiser  
The Australian  
The Courier-Mail  
The Mercury  
The Sunday Telegraph  
Weekly Times

**Magazines:**

InsideOut  
donna hay  
SmartSource  
The Weekly Standard  
TV Guide (partial)

**Film:**

20th Century Fox  
Fox Searchlight Pictures  
Fox Television Studios  
Blue Sky Studios

## Television Stations:

BSkyB	DBS & Cable
DirecTV	Fox Broadcasting Company
Fox College Sports	Fox Movie Channel
Fox News Channel	Fox Soccer Channel
Fox Television Stations	FOXTEL
FSN Florida	FSN New England (50%)
FSN Ohio	FUEL
FX	KCOP - Los Angeles
KDFI - Dallas	KDFW - Dallas
KDVR - Denver	KMSP - Minneapolis
KRIV - Houston	KSAZ - Phoenix
KSTU - Salt Lake City	KTBC - Austin
KTTV - Los Angeles	KTVI - St. Louis
KTXH - Houston	KUTP - Phoenix
National Advertising	National Geographic
Partners	Channel
Sky Italia	SPEED Channel
Star	Stats, Inc.
WAGA - Atlanta	WBRC - Birmingham
WDAF - Kansas City	WDCA - Washington D.C.
WFLD - Chicago	WFTC - Minneapolis
WFXT - Boston	WGHP - Greensboro
WHBQ - Memphis	WITI - Milwaukee

WJBK - Detroit	WJW - Cleveland
WNYW - New York City	WOFL - Orlando
WOGX - Ocala	WPWR - Chicago
WRBW - Orlando	WTTG - Washington D.C.
WTVT - Tampa	WTXF - Philadelphia
WUTB - Baltimore	WWOR - New York City
Fox Sports Net	

### **Book Publishers:**

HarperMorrow Publishers	Harper Design International
HarperMorrow	HarperEntertainment
General Books Group	HarperLargePrint
Access	HarperResource
Amistad	HarperSanFrancisco
Caedmon	HarperTorch
Avon	Perennial
Ecco	PerfectBound
Eos	Quill
Fourth Estate	Rayo
HarperAudio	ReganBooks
HarperBusiness	William Morrow
HarperCollins	William Morrow Cookbooks

**Children's Books Group:**

Avon

Greenwillow Books

Joanna Cotler Books

Eos

Laura Geringer Books

HarperAudio

HarperCollins Children's Books

HarperFestival

HarperTempest

Katherine Tegen Books

Trophy

Zondervan

HarperCollins UK

HarperCollins Canada

HarperCollins Australia

**Other:**

Los Angeles Kings (NHL, 40% option)

Los Angeles Lakers (NBA, 9.8% option)

Staples Center (40% owned by Fox/Liberty)

News Interactive

Fox Sports Radio Network

Sky Radio Denmark

Sky Radio Germany

Broadsystem

Classic FM

Festival Records

Fox Interactive

IGN Entertainment

Mushroom Records

MySpace.com

National Rugby League

NDS

News Outdoor

Nursery World

Scout Media

## **Appendix Five: Selected ‘Sensational’ Yob headlines:**

The interesting thing about this list of headlines is that they practically mirror Cohen’s (2005) thesis; succinctly suggesting the melodrama within the article, highlighting the increasing sensitisation/ amplification and alluding to a series of impact events, they symbolize perpetrators and victims, hint at causation/ orientation, invoke public opinion and illustrate the control culture’s response. They demonstrate a chronological; processual moral panic.

- Yob uk; 1 in 4 teenage boys claims they've done robbery, burglary, assault or (Jan26mirror1)
- Louts Who Ruin Britain (Jan26mirror2)
- a night out in yob uk; orgy of boozing and brawling (Jan31mirror4)
- It Is Adults Who Have Made Teenagers' Lives A Misery: Declarations Of War On Yob Culture Won't Solve This Mushrooming Crisis (Feb03guard2)
- Law favours yobs, says teacher on gun charge (Feb04mail3)
- They spat, swore and greeted minister with two-fingered salutes (feb17mail5)
- blair: parents to blame for lawless yobs (feb17mirror3)

- gang of savages (feb20mirror1)
- Asboom; More Yobs To Be Named And Shamed (March02mirror2)
- Gangs Plague The Genteel Streets Of Bath (Mar02guard6)
- call this justice?; admired teacher driven to fire air pistol at yobs is jailed (mar30mirror2)
- Howard pledges to put fear into the hearts of hooligans as he backs air gun teacher (Apr01mail8)
- fire yob is caged; youth sparked blaze riot (Apr13mirror2)
- queen asbo; meet Kerry Mclaughlin ..she's a foul-mouthed violent teenage tearaway (may03Mirror2)
- Dying In The Street, Another Victim Of The Drink-Fuelled Violence That Scars Britain (May04mail2)
- Save Us From The Chavalanche: Is It Illiberal To Talk About Yob Culture And Discipline? Asbolutely Not! (May13guard01)
- headline: the historic 3rd term: war on fear; blair in vow to create new society of respect (may13mirror1)
- Voice Of The Daily Mirror: Clobber The Yobs (May13mirror2)
- Teachers warn of violent return to era of teen gangs (may14mail3)

- Make yobs dress like a chain gang demands minister  
(may16mail1)
- reclaim our streets: chain gang shame for teenage yobs;  
uniform plan to hit thugs (may16mirror1)
- reclaim our streets: dad fights for life after gang attack; he  
suffers head injuries after yobs beat him up in alley  
(may17mirror2)
- The Feral Gangs Who Rule Our Streets (May18mail1)
- reclaim our streets: nail these feral yobs; 5 days later he  
was left for dead.. police plea over dad assault  
(may18mirror3)
- Snapshots of a moral wasteland (may19mail3)
- When will our politicians wake up to the fact it's they who  
have done more than anyone to create this culture of yobbery?  
(may19mail5)
- The trials of living with the 'feral youths' of Salford: In a  
week when yob culture has come to the fore, the Guardian  
visits a fear-ridden community where gang violence seems out  
of control (may21guard1)
- Depressing evidence of the rising tide of hooliganism  
(may21guard2)

- Help us, pleads wife in 'feral yobs' attack (may21mail3)
- A crisis in this age of disrespect (may21mail5)
- Yobs wreck 60 graves in orgy of destruction (may22mail3)
- sick yobs killed my husband .. then celebrated as hearse took him to funeral (may23mirror3)
- Robberies up 27pc on capital's streets of fear (may26mail1)
- laughing as they set me on fire; how sick thrills of baby-faced yobs nearly ruined one man's life (may27mirror8)
- Boy arrested over attack that led to 'yobs' debate (june02guard3)
- Yob gang victim wakes from coma (June02mail2)
- teen held as yob attack dad comes out of coma; he wakes on his birthday (June02mirror3)
- are the middle class to blame for yob britain? (june04mail4)
- Taming yobs is simple Mr Blair, just give them a sporting chance (june6mail6)
- How do you punish vandals wrecking a golf club? Give them free lessons, of course (june08mail5)

- yobbo goes loco; 'train chicken' is new phone craze (june09mirror4)
- Town puts 9pm curfew on under-16s in war on yobs (junellmail2)
- 'hoodies' rampage on train (junel2mirror4)
- happy slappers rape girl of 11 (junel8mail1)
- Blacklist Britain (june20mail3)
- yob curfew rights row (june27mirror2)
- killed by hoodies; gentle dad who 'wouldn't hurt a fly' dies chasing off egg-throwing (june28mirror2)
- Asbos, Lout Britain's New Badge Of Honour (June30mail3)

## Appendix Six: Selected examples of ‘symbolization’:

- The 4ft 10in tearaway ... arrived at court in a hooded top, smiling and looking unworried. (jan07maill)
- The teenage tearaway, dressed in a Nike track-suit, (feb17mirror1)
- the shell-suited scum performing like eejits in front of the cameras. (feb20mirror1)
- Their numbers swelled until it was not uncommon to see 30 young people hanging around, many hooded and with scarves over their faces. They terrorised residents and businesses, smashing windows and burgling shops. (mar02guard6)
- "It was like attack of the chavs. All these hooligans dressed in tracksuits and baseball caps vandalised anything in sight." (mar16mirror1)
- The yobs are thought to be from three different gangs, and are identifiable by their clothes and distinctive hairstyles. (mar26mirror4)
- COPS were last night hunting a Burberry-clad ned who shot a bus driver as he waited at a stop. [...] Last night, police were appealing for information on the boys, who were both wearing tracksuits. The shooter also wore a Burberry baseball cap. (apr02mirror2)

- 'Wearing her trademark tracksuit' (may03mirror2)
- Bluewater shopping centre decided it was time to face the Muzak. They have banned the wearing of hooded tops and baseball caps anywhere inside their private retail park. (may13guard1)
- Mr Prescott said he had found the encounter alarming. "I think the fact you go around with these hats and these covers . . . I mean, it is a uniform, in a sense. It is intimidating and I rather welcome what they have done there at Bluewater." (may13guard3)
- Many of these thugs have adopted the uniform of hooded top and baseball cap. So just seeing youths dressed like that can frighten decent people. (may13mirror2)
- THEY are the uniform of thugs and muggers and the sight of youths kitted out in them strikes fear in law-abiding citizens. Hooded tops and baseball caps have been adopted by cowardly yobs up and down the land to hide their faces from CCTV cameras while they commit crime or terrorise victims unable to identify them. (may13mirror3)
- It is true that hoods and caps provide anonymity for those up to no good. They shield faces and make it impossible for victims to recognise their attackers. What's more, they are the prime weapon against what we are told will ultimately protect us: CCTV. (may15mail2)

- Yet it is difficult to dismiss the hoodie as a mere passing teenage fad, like bondage trousers or platform boots. It is designed to intimidate. It is built to conceal identity. And we all understand the signal it sends out - let us do what we like and don't you dare say a word. [...] Whatever label you stick on it, we all know the feeling of seeing a bunch of kids, hooded or not, swearing too loudly, dropping their fast-food trash and carrying themselves with a mob-handed belligerence that dares you to say something. (may16mirror3)
- hooded youths ... 'Huge groups of them loiter around the streets from early evening. If you ask them what they are doing you get a mouthful.' Penny Wiseman, 32, said: 'It's young guys in hooded tops that are the problem, drinking and smoking weed and walking the streets like they own the place.(may17mail2)
- He wore a dark baseball cap and a dark hooded jacket of a shiny material. The second, also white, is about 17. He was 5ft 9in to 5ft 10in, and wore a similar jacket but with a duller black finish and blue jeans. The third is a white girl aged 15 to 16 with dark hair. She wore a tight, short brown leather crocodile skin skirt with brown spots and a dark suede-effect jacket. (may17mirror2)
- There had been an altercation with two teenage youths and a girl all wearing the hooded tops recently banned by a major shopping centre in an alleyway near his terrace home. (may18mail1)

- "They've all got the same uniform and we've barred loads because of the way they look. They wear hooded tops with Schott written on the back. (may21guard1)
- gangs of youngsters wearing 'hoodies' the hooded tops used to conceal the wearers' identity which have been banned by some shopping centres. (may21mail1)
- 'attacked by hooded youths' (may21mail3)
- At ... Crown Court yesterday, Prescott, dressed in a blue Adidas hooded-top over an oversized white T- shirt, (june03mail1)
- They were wearing tracksuits and baseball caps. [...] One, who asked not to be named, said: 'They gather most nights causing trouble, drinking. There's nothing else for them to do. They all wear caps or hoods. (june07mail3)
- The ban follows growing concern in many communities across the country at gangs of youths, many wearing hoodies, intimidating law-abiding citizens. (Junellmail2)
- Gangs of kids with hooded tops are a huge bane on the lives of local residents. (June20mail3)
- This week, DHL announced that it was happy to deliver to Baghdad but not to certain inner-city areas of Britain, including this district of east London, blighted as it is by poverty, yob culture and, of course, that great 21st-century curse - hoodies. (june21guard3)

## **Appendix Seven: Selected Headlines on Youth and Sex**

- Anger Over Cash For Youth Group Offering Children Secret Abortions (Jan28mail4)
- The Real Little Britain (feb03mail1)
- Just Say No To Sex, Drugs And Boozing, Tories Will Tell Teens (Feb17mail1)
- Shame Of Britain's 1,000 Abortions For 14-Year-Olds (Feb20mail2)
- 1,000 Abortions In A Year On Girls Of 14 (Feb21mail2)
- 1,000 Underage Abortions. 1,000 Damaged Lives. And 1,000 Reasons Labour Should Be Ashamed (Feb21mail4)
- We Need To Teach Our Teens Not To Get Pregnant; Cutting Abortions Isn't The Answer. (Feb21mirror1)
- The Relentless Rise In Teenage Pregnancies (Feb25mail1)
- Alarm Over Teen Mums (Feb25mirror1)
- What's Love Got To Do With It? (Mar11mail3)
- 'Teenage Pregnancy Provokes Such Extreme Reactions' (Mar19mail5)

- Is This Really The Truth About Girls And Teenage Sex?  
(Mar24mail2)
- Quarter Of Girls Having Regular Sex By Age Of 14 (Mar24mail3)
- Teen Sex Poll Shock (Mar24mirror1)
- Tragedy Of Lost Teens (Mar27mirror2)
- The Truth About Teen Sex (Apr18mail1)
- Schoolgirls Put Topless Pictures On The Internet (Apr21mail2)
- Group Sex Is New Ill Afflicting Pupils: School Nurses Warn  
Parents Over Fad For 'Daisy-Chaining' (Apr28guard1)
- A Generation Of Pupils 'Pressured Into Having Sex' (Apr28mail1)
- Wearing A Thong At Eight ..Having Group Sex At 14; Kids Pay Price  
Of Our Sexual Society (Apr28mirror2)
- 'I'm Going To Go Off With Him Tonight': Reports Of Group Sex, Or  
'Daisy-Chaining', Among Schoolchildren Have Turned The Spotlight  
Once Again On The Sexual Habits Of Teenagers. (Apr29guard2)
- One In Three Pupils Can Get Birth Control On Demand (Apr30mail3)
- I'm A Daisy-Chainer: We Did It In A Rush Without A Condom.. Then  
Girls Swapped Around; (May01mirror1)
- The Shame Less Generation (May05mail4)

- The Girls Aged Ten Prescribed The Pill (May09mail1)
- Don't Panic: The News That Young Girls Are Being Prescribed The Pill Is Not Necessarily Cause For Alarm (May10guard9)
- Choked By Bitter Pill Of Child Sex (May10mirror6)
- Mother's Anti-Pill Crusade (May16mail2)
- The Baby Factory (May23mail7)
- These Three Sisters All Had Babies In Their Teens. Each Year They Get Benefits Of £31,000. So Who Does Their Mum Blame? Their School (May23mirror1)
- She's To Blame; Absent Dad Blames Mum For Teenagers' Pregnancies (May24mirror6)
- I Let My Daughter Have Sex At 11, Admits The 'Baby Factory' Mother (May25mail2)
- What This Family Tells Us About Britain Today (May25mail3)
- Sex Policies Fail Our Children (May25mail6)
- Teen Abortion Rates Reach Record Levels (May25mail7)
- These Girls' Babies Are The Real Victims (May25mirror1)

- Appeal To Parents On Teenage Births: We Need Help To Contain Problem Says Minister (May26guard1)
- Bags, Babies And The End Of Civilisation (May26guard3)
- Jade, 15, In Csa Dad Row (May26mirror1)
- Sex Education Demand After Rise In Teenage Pregnancies (May27guard5)
- Schoolgirl Baby Boom (May27mail1)
- Why Can't We Just Teach The Word No? (May27mail3)
- Baby Plea To Parents (May27mirror1)
- Keeping Mum (May27mirror2)
- Talk About Sex With Your Kids - Help Cut Teen Pregnancies; Minister's Plea As Figures Rise For Under-16s (May27mirror4)
- Miriam Stoppard On Why Parents Should Get Over Embarrassment And Lead Children Through Minefield Of Emotions And Questions (May27mirror5)
- Sex Lessons At Home: Cutting Teenage Pregnancies (May28guard2)
- Shouldn't We Jail The Baby Factory Mum? (May28mail1)
- Give Bad Mum Benefit Of Doubt (May28mirror3)

- Teen Mums... I Blame Parents Too (May29mirror5)
- Teen Mums Stuck In Rut (May29mirror)
- What Next In Britain's Baby Factory? A Granny Of 24 (May29mail3)
- Why We Still Despise The Poor: Endpiece: Natasha And Her Sisters Should Arouse Sympathy, Not Resentment (May30guard1)
- Snooper Squad: New Guidelines Obliging Professionals To Pry Into The Sex Lives Of Teenagers Will Do More Harm Than Good (May31guard1)
- The Doctor Will Not See You Now: Survey Shows Children Struggling To Access Sexual Health Services (June01guard3)
- Wearing A Thong Can Make You Ill (June01mail2)
- Clean Up Reality Tv For Sake Of Our Kids (June01mirror2)
- Sex Education Demand After Rise In Teenage Pregnancies (June03guard1)
- School Guide That Says You Can Be Ready For Sex At 13 (June10mail3)
- Teen Sex Leaflet Row (June10mirror1)
- Why Lessons In Love Should Begin At Home (June20mail7)

- Fury As Wh Smith Sells Young Girls Playboy Products (June25mail1)

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