

# Free essay about moral panic

[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

\n \t

1. [Introduction](#) \n \t
2. [Concern about Underage Drinking As a Moral Panic](#) \n \t
3. [Underage Drinking and Antisocial Behavior](#) \n \t
4. [Underage Drinking and Health Problems](#) \n \t
5. [Underage Drinking and High Risk Sex Behavior](#) \n \t
6. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
7. [Reference List](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

## Introduction

In the recent past, the trend in human social behavior and temperament has been a critical determining factor of the course of many global systems. The influence of human social behavior to the global systems is unlimited.

Elements of social behavior have an effect to the world economy, consumer preferences, politics, religion, education, health, nutrition and a myriad of other utterly significant global structures. The media plays a critical role in engineering the moral response to a given event . The perception and understanding of global social systems is currently greatly dependent on the output of the media. One social element that is of great importance to molding the world's systems is moral panic. An example of a social element whose understanding and perception has been greatly influenced by moral panic is underage drinking. The public concern about underage drinking is purely moral panic.

Moral panic is defined as a process that results to an entity, a practice, a condition or a behavior becomes branded as an intimidation, a threat and a deviation to the social values and securities . This unfair branding is projected after false, exaggerated and biased labeling. The behaviors are universally branded as discordant based on their non-compliance to the known and accepted social grading parameters . The victimized themes and entities are subject to blind social stereotyping by the mass media. These public perceptions are engineered by individuals such as religious leaders, political leaders, popular celebrities and media personalities of influence. These entities are socially accepted and endorsed as moral gatekeepers . Their opinion on the matters of interest in their jurisdiction is treated with respect and seriousness. Most people regard their opinion as the final and socially sound judgment .

The moral values gatekeepers hold the rein to social inclination and royalty. When any issue arises and social confusion on the moral standing of the issue exists, these social gatekeepers come into play. They analyze any emergent issue with respect to the effect of the issue to their interests . A diagnosis and ways of dealing or coping with the issue is generated by these social moral guardians. This opinion is mostly propagated by the mass media and made into popular opinion. The media is also used as a tool to hush any dissenting voices that may exist in the society. The effect of the moral panic is usually the disappearance of a social behavior, discrediting of the behavior by the general public, anger, anxiety, fear or the disappearance of the behavior from the face of the earth .

The use of moral panic by the moral guardians to protect their interests is

rampant today. Most of these selfish people use their influence and the power of the mass media to sway the public voice, the economy and religious values to their preference . Any emergent behavior or issue that is seen as a threat to their moral standing is attacked and labeled as a moral disgrace. Many revolutionary ideas and entities fall victims of moral panic by receiving negative publicity and become unable to rise against the tides of popular culture. They are therefore dismissed or labeled as moral poison hence they receive unwarranted public attention and concern .

### **Concern about Underage Drinking As a Moral Panic**

Underage drinking has been a great concern to the administration as a potential risk to the security, law and order . There have also been unlimited public concerns on the effects of the drinking trends to the health of the partakers. Underage drinking is particularly a concern in the urban areas where most of the young men and women start drinking at a young age. Underage drinking in this case refers to the consumption of alcoholic products by people of age less than eighteen years . In some jurisdictions, underage drinking refers to the use of alcoholic products by people under the age of twenty one years .

The moral panic and immense public concern on underage drinking has been propagated mostly by the mass media, the religious institutions and the biased opinions in the academic realm. The issue of underage drinking has been partly exaggerated and misrepresented . The public attention and concern that has been accorded to underage drinking can be attributed to the failure of those involved to differentiate excessive drinking from the regular forms of responsible drinking patterns .

Alcohol forms part of the global day to day life. Countless malls, shops and supermarkets are endorsed by the legal system to sell alcohol. This in turn creates a lot of revenue to the global economy . Almost half of the global alcohol consumption is by the young people. Most young people drink as a way of indulging in the leisure space in the society and to spend their free time . They also drink as a way of meeting new social acquaintances and extending their social networks. The drinking patterns in the young people are such that most of the drinking activities are during the weekends with friends rather than during the week alone .

### **Underage Drinking and Antisocial Behavior**

One of the main concerns about underage drinking is the antisocial behavior that is associated with alcohol use. There is social moral panic propagated by the mass media about how the young people behave in public when intoxicated with alcohol. Most of the young people allegedly drink in groups . Therefore the magnitude of the antisocial behavior and rowdiness is magnified. The moral panic is as a concern of the alleged risks that the drunken young people pose to others around them. There is massive coverage and attention in the media concerning the young people drinking patterns. Most weekend newspaper editions are always splashed with headlines outlining the involvement of the young people in binge drinking . Most media accounts report the drinking behavior of the young people to have gone out of hand. As a result of this negative media portrayal, the public regards underage drinking as a social problem and this causes social panic .

However, the effect of alcohol to the behavior of a drunken person is

essentially not dependent on the age of the subject. Scientific findings show that alcohol drinking has the effect of reducing the inhibitions of a person when sober. This means that they are more relaxed and they can engage in activities that they could otherwise not be involved in if they were sober. Still, it is important to note that the reduction in inhibition is present across all age groups. The only factor that influences the extent of reduction in inhibition is the level of intoxication. Therefore, the behavior of a person under the influence of alcohol will be uniform across all ages for particular levels of intoxication .

There are reports of older people being involved in bar brawls following an episode of binge drinking. In addition to this there have been cases of sexual harassment, rape and destruction of property by older people under the influence of alcohol . Domestic violence, misconduct at the workplace and public indecency are also common with older people who are drunk.

However there is less media attention accorded to such cases compared to the coverage given to cases of misconduct of the young people. In many cases, the antisocial behavior of the older people is associated with emotional instability and rarely to alcohol intoxication. Young people also engage in antisocial behavior as a result of emotional instability and parental neglect . Therefore the antisocial behavior in young people cannot always be attributed to underage drinking only. However, young people always take the blame and this elicits unwarranted concern in the general public. The antisocial behavior becomes synonymous with underage drinking and this misrepresents the young people who drink responsibly and with moderation .

## **Underage Drinking and Health Problems**

Underage drinking is purported to cause health complications to young people. These include alcohol related brain damage that causes learning and memory functions of the young person. Alcohol also causes liver diseases like liver cirrhosis and gall stones . Alcohol drinking might also cause dependency in the young people. In addition to this, in the presence of other emotional conditions such as stress and depression, alcohol use can aggravate to suicide. Other health complications that are associated with alcohol use are mouth cancer and gastrointestinal tract complications . Scientific findings show that these health complications are real especially following long periods of alcohol use . However, one fact that is clear is that the health complications that result from alcohol use exist across all age groups. This falsifies the notion that is propagated by the media and a portion of the academic community to cause moral panic that alleges that these health problems are caused by underage drinking . What is more surprising is that some of these problems, for example, liver cirrhosis are exclusively associated with prolonged alcohol use over the life of a person. This shows that they can rarely be a consequence of underage drinking and the whoopla is merely meant to cause moral panic .

The idea that underage drinking causes illness was meant by the administrators and the religious leaders to curb underage drinking . The allegation that underage drinking is responsible for health complications instilled fear and gave the issue of underage drinking a lot of unwarranted attention and public concern. The idea propagated here is that there is a normal way to undertake drinking and any deviation and non-conformance

to it causes illnesses and health complications. This is misleading because scientific evidence shows that the health complications arising from alcohol affect people of all ages. As a matter of fact, this affects any efforts by the public health department to sensitize the public on the health effects of alcohol. This is because the public perception is that only underage drinking causes health complications. This shows that the public concern about underage drinking is merely a moral panic orchestrated by a few moral guardians.

## **Underage Drinking and High Risk Sex Behavior**

Underage drinking is linked with high risk sexual behavior. In the United States of America only, most new HIV infections are among the young people as a result of the high risk sexual behavior. This includes having multiple sexual partners and having unprotected sex. This causes cases of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Most of the marketing strategies used by the alcoholic products manufacturers the association of alcohol use with sexual prowess and success.

However, the synonymous association of underage drinking risky sexual behavior is erroneous. It is orchestrated to cause moral panic by giving underage drinking unwarranted public concern. Not all young people who drink alcoholic products engage in risky sexual behaviors. A majority of young people are responsible and they respond positively to reasonable guidance. In addition to this, risky sexual behavior is not exclusive to young people only. Married men have been reported to engage in risky sexual behaviors with multiple sexual partners when under the intoxication of alcohol. Older people have also been reported in cases of rape, pedophilia



and prostitution both when sober and when under the influence of alcohol . This shows that projection of underage drinking as the sole cause of risky sexual behavior is misrepresenting and false. It is projected by the popular mass media and religious leaders to cause moral panic by giving underage drinking unwarranted public concern .

## **Conclusion**

This paper concludes that the issue of underage drinking has been falsely represented by the mainstream mass media, the political administration and the religious leadership. The propaganda is projected to portray underage drinking as non-conformance to the existing social order and accepted morals. Underage drinking is portrayed as an activity in which the young people cannot be responsible in. All evils that are caused by different factors are all attributed to drinking. Complications and behaviors which are not exclusively due to underage drinking are falsely attributed to underage drinking ignoring their real root cause. As a result of the false representation by the media, the government agencies and religious leaders cause a lot of public concern and attention. Therefore, underage drinking is simply moral panic.

## **Reference List**

Alcohol Concern, 2004. Young people's drinking. Factsheet 1. Alcohol Concern, pp. 3-12.

Altheide, D. L., 2009. Moral panic: From sociological concept to public discourse. *Crime, Media, Culture*, V(i), pp. 1-22.

Brian K., P. K., 1997. *Drinking with Design: Alcopops, Alcohol and Youth*. pp.

27-30.

Christine Griffin, W. M. A. B.-H. L. W., 2008. Binge Drinking as Calculated Hedonism. *International Journal of Drugs Policy*, I(1), pp. 1-30.

Harnett, T. H. K., 2000. Alcohol in transition: towards a model of young men's drinkingstyles. *Journal of Youth Studies*, III(1), pp. 60-79.

Johanna D., B. P. D.. M. P. H.. R. I. B. P. D.. M. P. H., 2008. Prevention of Underage Drinking. Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, pp. 1-21.

Krinsky, C., 2005. Introduction: The Moral Panic Concept. *Ashgate Companion to REsearch*, I(3), pp. 1-14.

M. Holt, C. T., 2008. Pleasure and drugs. *International Journal of Drugs Policy*, X(5), pp. 359-66.