

AN INTRODUCTION TO

LEISURE STUDIES

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

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GROWING UP AND GETTING OUT

THIS CHAPTER

- Analyses moral panics and adult fear of 'youth'
- Outlines major social theories in relation to mass media, normality and deviance
- Introduces key concepts of generational analysis and of generational time or epoch
- Explains key ideas in relation to feminism, black cultural studies and queer theory in respect of understanding youth and youth subcultures.

MORAL PANICS AND THE GENERATIONAL FEAR OF YOUTH

A good point at which to begin making sense of young people and leisure is to revisit the ideas of Stanley Cohen, writing in the early 1970s, and in particular his concepts of moral panics and folk devils. Drawing on the work of American symbolic interactionists and in particular on labelling perspectives on deviance, he highlighted the role of mass media in defining and stigmatizing categories of youth. The focus of academic attention was less on the behaviour of young people themselves but rather upon the responses of parents and authority figures towards young people. In so doing, there was evidence of an orchestration of moral outrage and social reaction against troublesome and disorderly youth. At that time newspapers and television journalists were key agents, or moral entrepreneurs, in agenda setting and framing explanations of youth behaviour. In an interesting and now sadly neglected book, *Law and Order News*, Steve Chibnall (1977) argued that Britain in the late 1960s and

70s witnessed the creation of a ‘violent society’ wherein youthful rebellion was fused with growing fears about crime and industrial disorder. Chibnall interviewed crime reporters and characterized core values which informed their view and understanding of crime and society.

5.1 Law and order news

Steve Chibnall’s *Law and Order News* (1977) argued that ‘newsworthy’ crime stories were driven by six key values.

- **Dramatization** – making a crisis out of a drama.
- **Titillation** – teasing the reader with the darker side of leisure.
- **Sensationalization** – ‘hyping’, ‘sexing up’ salacious aspects of stories.
- **Personalization** – when a social phenomenon is identified with a specific (vilified) individual. For example, in the mid-1980s the famous miners’ strike in England was strongly associated with the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers, Arthur Scargill. More recently, global terrorism was reframed as a battle between the US President and the al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.
- **Novelty** – ‘new’ angles are worked and reworked on ‘old’ stories (e.g. sightings of Elvis Presley, of the Loch Ness monster or of Madeleine McCann).
- **Simplification** – complex issues, e.g. drugs, street robberies, AIDS, paedophilia, banking fraud, etc., can be explained away as the work of a single ‘bad apple’. For instance, Sir Jimmy Savile was depicted as a cunning and evil predator on young people, whereas subsequent revelations suggest that TV personalities in the past were comfortable about initiating sex with juveniles – male and female.

These key values have shaped the writing and the rewriting of news stories – of deviance or the sudden death of a celebrity figure. In such instances journalists use a standard recipe for framing and reworking stories. See, for example, the death and legacy of Princess Diana, Gary Speed or of Amy Winehouse ... or for that matter, any other youthful media personality, male or female who dies suddenly, perhaps by their own hand. What exactly happened? Were they mentally depressed or struggling with failing relationships or careers? Were alcohol and drugs involved? If not, why not? Who were the witnesses and key stakeholders at the time? What do other celebrities say or ‘tweet’ about the tragedy? How have television, publishing media, film and ‘the establishment’ dealt with sudden death? And so forth?

In a later work, Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (1981) mapped out complex and selective processes as journalists in the mass media manufacture ‘news’

and newsworthy stories. News narratives simplify, trivialize, personalize and dramatize so that stories become morality tales where the good are rewarded, the weak are saved and evil is duly exposed and punished. This missionary narrative is most clearly expressed in how the media frame and capture drug use, particularly among young people. Jock Young (1974) argues that mass media present a consensual view of society, a shared view of reality which supports the status quo, but one which carries a twin and contradictory system of values – *formal* work values and *subterranean* leisure values. Formal values are related to modern employment and industry and this can spill over so that one works hard to realize oneself in leisure. But as Tony Blackshaw (2010) argues, leisure also offers a critical space in which individuals can exercise their ‘leisure imaginations’. C. Wright Mills (1970) has captured this with a shrewd metaphor of people selling their souls to capitalism during the working week and buying back pieces of themselves at the weekend through relaxation and leisure. Individuals must produce in order to consume and consume in order to produce. Hedonism is closely tied to a compelling ethos of hard work, industry and productivity, that is, ‘working hard and playing hard’. Pleasure can therefore only be purchased legitimately through the credit card of work and work provides the income for people to explore leisure choices.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, leisure and pleasure must be earned; they are a reward for working hard. So ‘normal’ people work hard, live in happy nuclear families, belong to close-knit communities and have a mundane or relaxed concept of religious experience. Extremists are labelled as radical Muslims, Jehovah’s Witnesses, feminists, gays, anarchists or communists. Mainstream ideologies address the individual as just an ordinary subject getting on with his/her life in a taken-for-granted world of ‘common sense’. These ideologies speak to the ‘hard-working families’ so beloved by contemporary politicians. Within that message normality is straightforwardly equated with middle-class values, whiteness and masculinity. Activities such as drug taking subvert both the dominant work ethic and labour productivity; for example, people in the 1960s were encouraged to ‘drop out’, to experiment and ‘turn on’ with drugs such as cannabis and ‘mind-expanding’ drugs such as LSD, which were superseded in the 1970s and 80s by ‘rave’ drugs such as ecstasy, amphetamines and speed. From the media’s consensual point of view, such drug taking is morally wrong, especially amongst the workless such as students, black minorities, the unemployed and welfare dependents in inner-city neighbourhoods. Indeed, drug use becomes racialized and drugs problems and policy initiatives centre on largely ‘black’ inner cities, while turning a blind eye to high levels of alcohol abuse, tobacco and prescription addictions, among other problems in society. Vulnerable groups may drift into soft drug use, but this will inevitably lead to hard drug use and state welfare and drug dependency. From the mass media’s standpoint no one chooses to take drugs, to be a drug user in a recreation or leisure context, so individuals must have been tricked or coerced into using drugs by ‘drug pushers’. The model for drug use

clearly distinguishes between the 'drug user' and the 'drug pusher', although Young's research in Notting Hill (1974) argued that people usually moved easily between the two roles – supplying drugs to networks of friends when they had supplies and buying from others when they did not. From the media's standpoint, drug taking must be deviant, unhealthy and unpleasurable. By the same token, sex leads to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis, LSD to madness and paranoia, whereas cannabis or 'pot' leads to dependency and, further down the line, inexorably to heroin addiction. Consequently, there has been much political debate and media concern during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries when successive UK Labour Home Secretaries, Jack Straw, David Blunkett and Charles Clarke, approved a change in the designation of particular drugs, for example when cannabis was reclassified from a Class B drug to a Class C drug. Possession of cannabis for personal use was no longer seen by police as an arrestable offence as front-line officers and press officers acknowledged that drug use and abuse was a complex problem and police priorities must lie elsewhere. Nevertheless, the mediatized version of the world of drugs is populated by four types of people: (1) the *sick* (who can't help it); (2) the *innocent* (who are corrupted); (3) the *wicked* (who are corrupt); and (4) the *normals* (who must be praised and rewarded). From this moral standpoint, the media prescribe a clear policy on what must be done to solve the 'problem', 'crisis' or 'epidemic'. What makes Young's argument especially interesting is that he suggests that, for complex occupational reasons, police are susceptible to media stereotypes and police arrests and policy interventions 'amplify' the drugs problem. Policing reduces supplies of drugs and such actions lead to a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' in that criminal gangs, happy to meet the shortfall, gradually move in to sell both soft and hard drugs in local communities.

So, one major unintended consequence of police actions and interventions can be to generate or at least contribute to the very crime waves special patrols have been constituted to eradicate. There is madness in the method. The relationship between primary deviance and secondary deviance (i.e. between undetected and often normalized deviant behaviour and that which appears in official crime statistics and crime surveys) is a complicated field much debated by politicians, policy makers and academics alike. Some writers demand a stance of 'radical non-intervention' in policy (see Schur, 1973), suggesting that deviance is best left alone as its cure is often more damaging than its cause. So, troublesome youths become even more damaged by spells of incarceration in youth jails, subsequent release and unemployment, and become transformed into hardened criminals, or, at least, are much more likely to commit further crimes. Even the language used to describe troublesome youth must be deployed with due care and attention. Some commentators suggest the word 'gang' should not be used to describe the behaviour of anti-social youth as it serves to sour adult–youth relations further and cloud most appropriate interventions to help juvenile delinquents. Indeed, research found that young people, although deep in trouble with law and order agencies, rejected the word 'gang' as it signified a level of criminality

that they felt did not accurately describe their own behaviour. For some, decriminalization is a realistic policy demand as intervention perversely only serves to amplify deviant behaviour and criminality.

As a result (see Figure 5.1), young people provide a potentially rich reservoir of potential stories for media to tell. Philip Abrams (1982) has argued that historical sociology has approached youth through two major lines of inquiry which he has framed as the *barbarian question* and the *Dracula question*. The barbarian question asks how savage infants become ‘normalized’, socialized into the culture of society. Secondly, the Dracula question asks how children become deviants. Parental fears of the next generation allude to both barbarian and Dracula questions and, when things go wrong, parents are keen to lay the blame at someone’s door.

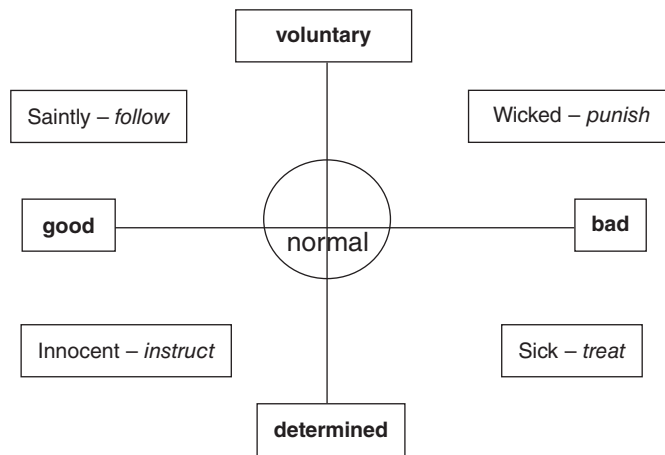


Figure 5.1 Drugs and the mass media

As Chas Critcher (2003) has argued, moral panics often rub against fault lines of class, race, gender and generation. In the 1960s youths were the devils themselves, as mods and rockers, hippies, punks and football hooligans. By the 1990s the media’s gaze had refocused on youth as victims of devils in relation to alcopop sales, child abuse and the predatory behaviour of paedophiles. More recently, mass media have reasserted their proclivity to define young people as the problem.

There is, apparently, a new generation of young ‘folk devils’ who live unhealthy lifestyles – they eat fast foods, they drink too much alcohol, they smoke, they take recreational drugs, they have unprotected sex, and stay glued to television, the Internet and video games. Consequently, young people are often accused of slipping into a life of excess and this appears at an increasingly younger age, as newspapers bemoan the fact that 9–12 year olds have started to adopt consumption patterns that were previously attributed to and

associated with ‘teenagers’, while, in their turn, ‘tweenies’ are now mini-adults with mobile phones, bank accounts and a penchant for shopping. However, when it comes to adopting healthy adult lifestyles, young people resist physical activity such as playing sport, working out through fitness and exercise regimes, cycling to school or even taking part in any kind of outdoor recreational activities and adventure, which are generally seen as ‘boring’. Health educationalists are understandably pessimistic about the prospects for this cohort of teenagers, presently sustained by poor diets, having weak cooking skills, choosing passive leisure interests and exhibiting physical exercise patterns which are inadequate to secure any long-term health benefits.

Mass media have a crucial role in setting political agendas that define youth behaviour as throwing up (metaphorically and literally) problems that demand and even ‘cry out’ for policy solutions. Moral panics emerge among older generations when deeply held core values are threatened. There is immediacy to each social issue that demands attention.

5.2 A brief history of moral panics

Here are some examples of ‘moral panics’ that have worried adults and troubled mass media over the years.

What core values are threatened in each case?

What policy responses or solutions were suggested to deal with the problem?

- **1950s** Rock and Roll dancing (‘jiving’) and damage to cinemas during the showing of films featuring rock ‘n’ roll singers; Teddy boys and Saturday night disorder
- **1960s** Easter-time fights between teenage gangs of ‘Mods’ and ‘Rockers’ at Brighton and other seaside resorts
- **1970s** Peace Movement/Flower Power protests; hippie music and ‘alternative/travelling’ lifestyles
- **1980s** Crowd violence at football matches; football hooliganism; racism and ‘race riots’ in deprived inner cities
- **1990s** ‘Clubbing’: city-centre and street-corner ‘binge’ drinking; ‘ecstasy’ and recreational drug use; alcopops and youth street life
- **2000s** Internet pornography; gun crime, shooting and gang culture; child obesity and ‘poor’ eating habits
- **2010s** Child sexual abuse, ‘grooming’ and paedophilia

Heated debates about underage alcohol abuse among teenagers and ‘binge drinking’ among young adults, particularly students, provide clear examples of

contemporary media outrage, exactly at a time when the government in the UK has liberalized licensing laws. It seems that all the lessons from nation states elsewhere, such as Ireland, are not so much ignored but rather are cast as myopic or irrelevant. The real costs and benefits in health and public disorder of 24-hour licensing seem distorted or suppressed by powerful interests from the brewing and entertainment industries, eagerly supported by local chambers of commerce, local government and even police authorities. The government knows best in so far as it can point to the need to liberalize drinking times and simultaneously showcase legislative measures to deal with particular problems should they arise. Consequently, in 2003 the 'New' Labour government introduced Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) to give police powers to disperse youth groups and deal with troublesome behaviours in residential neighbourhoods, inner-city communities and city centres. Certain public spaces can be designated alcohol-free zones and there are neighbourhood wardens and community support police to administer on the spot fines to miscreants. These policy issues are complex and policy outcomes can often fly in the face of common sense and media-orchestrated panic. Certainly, with the introduction of new UK licensing laws, many city-centre areas have surprisingly witnessed a decrease in arrests, violence and disorder, but other districts have experienced a distinct rise in night-time A & E hospital admissions. Public health professionals lobby the government and supermarkets to introduce a minimum cost threshold for a single unit of alcohol to discourage alcohol consumption, but the present coalition UK government has resisted taking this measure.

5.3 Alcohol and young people

What does 'drinking sensibly' mean to you?

What measure constitutes a 'unit of alcohol'?

What are the recommended weekly levels of alcohol consumption for adult men and for women?

What do health professionals define as 'binge drinking'?

How much is alcohol estimated to cost the National Health Service in any year?

What percentage of UK Accident and Emergency patients are there because of alcohol-related difficulties incurred over the weekend?

By the age of 16 what proportion of teenagers have three or more binge drinking sessions per month?

How many units of alcohol are older people (say, those over 60 years of age) recommended to drink in an average week?

As one would expect, social scientists and leisure scholars have cast a critical light over the claims of both government and mass media about the changing nature of youth, physical activity and their leisure lifestyles. To particularize this expectation, first, one would expect social scientific research, at the very least, to be able to contextualize the issues and moral panics that absorb the mass media, and to provide historical commentary and social analysis of contemporary youth and leisure networks. Second, one would expect some detailed empirical research and data in order to ground generalized claims about modern youth leisure lifestyles and highlight the diversity of youth experiences and identities in what postmodernists claim as these 'new times'. Third, one expects some semblance of value freedom to the extent of recognizing the need to engage with the diversity of ideological traditions and policy positions in relation to youth policy and practices.

Thus, to take a leading example of a writer who embraces these three objectives, through detailed historical analysis of newspapers, Geoffrey Pearson's book *Hooligan* (1983) examined the social construction of the 'law and order' myth. In Pearson's view, sustained debates about young people and 'law and order' reflect tensions that exist and persist between generations. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were recurrent waves of nostalgia breaking every thirty years or so, as older generations voiced respectable concerns about the waywardness of next or new generations. Thinking about youth has historically been problem-centred and has subsequently focused on youth as a challenge for policy, demanding adequate education, management and control. Class relations were central to Pearson's overview, as middle-class media, especially newspapers, created myths about social cohesion and law and order in past communities and past times, while roundly denouncing contemporary working-class youth as 'hooligans'.

Particular fear and despair has always centred on the urban street life of young men and their apparent membership of gangs – especially in relation to violence, drug abuse and criminality. Girls have been defined as presenting less of a problem in relation to law and order. Troubles with girls have historically been less visible, confined to the private rather than the public sphere; for example, moral panics have related to teenage pregnancies and eating disorders. Pearson humorously and lucidly reconstructs the history of respectable fears about hooligans down the ages. He discovered a remarkably continuity – a history of crime and violence, of class struggle and of nostalgia, with each generation successively bemoaning the decline of 'the British-way-of-life'. As each older generation was fearfully criticizing its affluent, violent and barbarian youth, it looked back some twenty or thirty years to the tranquil times of 'law and order', when respect for the family maintained the traditional way of life. Yet each generation suffered 'law-and-order' crises: of the Teddy boys of the 1950s, the Edwardian hooligans of the early 1900s, the young garrotters in the 1860s, the artful Chartist dodgers and unruly apprentices of the nineteenth century, and so on. The demand for 'law-and-order' and 'short sharp shocks' to be administered to the young were signs of weakness as they were ample

testimony to the failure of society to induce consent in the next generation, especially during the transition from school to work and employment. Pearson suggests that moral panics are generated to resist democratic movements in industrial society – for instance, Chartism in the 1840s, the Reform Bill in the 1860s, ‘socialist agitation’ in the 1890s, and so on. He concludes ‘The inescapable reality of the social production of the most poor and dispossessed is the material foundation to these hooligan continuities’ (Pearson, 1983: 236). In his final chapter Pearson demystifies the nature of crime statistics and points to the historical blindness of the ‘law-and-order’ myth to what actually happened (which is more terrifying than the myth allows).

YOUTH, GENERATION AND LIFESTYLES

This section explores the concepts of age cohorts and youthfulness, in order to provide an understanding of some aspects of current leisure lifestyles. Each generation grows up in, experiences and makes sense of its own historical setting or context, which, in turn, is shaped by distinctive economic, political, social and cultural formations. Yet, as Pearson (1983) has argued, each generation periodically voices essentially identical fears about its young people. There is a recurring moral panic about youth that amplifies worries about their physical fitness, moral degeneration and a possible social breakdown of ‘the British way of life’. Current media anxieties over childhood obesity, fast foods, eating disorders and unhealthy lifestyles are simply the latest chapters in this long history of concern.

It is useful therefore to adopt some kind of historical perspective, as outlined by writers such as Pearson and the late Philip Abrams (1982). To understand present youth leisure lifestyles one needs to explore the changing collective experiences of generational cohorts and how these are expressed over a lifetime. This requires some Durkheimian analysis of the ‘conscience collective’, that social solidarity which crystallizes at distinctive historical junctures. Durkheim’s work (1982) on deviance stresses the functions of social rules and rituals, the effervescence and celebration of shared experience and memories. Peer pressure and shared historical experience are crucial contexts and resources for individuals growing up and growing old together, producing a distinctive ‘spirit’ or *zeitgeist* for every age. Each generation inherits both material and cultural resources from the previous generation and in modernity each generation must endeavour to win some cultural space from its parents and from the past.

HYSTERICAL SOCIOLOGY AND HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

Hysterical sociology is often one of anxiety, nostalgia and social control. It is part of mainstream social reaction when unsettling changes appear on the horizon. Nevertheless, whether driven by media hysteria or more detached academics,

much theorizing has focused upon the predicament of working-class youth and their relationship to wider society and to law and order. One Marxist account of youth relations found its clearest expression in the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, under the aegis of Stuart Hall in the 1970s (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). A succession of authors sought to make sense of what Bernice Martin (1981) termed the 'expressive' cultural revolution of the 1960s and the spectacular subcultural styles of mods, rockers and hippies in both the UK and USA. Brake (1980) has argued that such research suggests a partial and distorted view of youth, a celebration of masculinity and one to be found primarily within the white English working class. This concentration reflects not only the biographies of male white researchers in the 1970s but the central Marxian 'problematic' of class structuration and working-class resistance to middle-class cultural hegemony.

The doyen of the CCCS, Phil Cohen (1975), argued that youth subcultural styles were not only based in material class conditions but were also a reaction and response to parental cultural styles as well as dominant ideologies. Ostentatiously grounded in leisure, youth subcultures provided 'magical solutions' to the problems and contradictions of growing up in the class-divided society of the 1960s. These solutions were class based, mediated by distinctive commodities, mass entertainment and popular culture. The precise focus of subcultural concern varied with lifestyle, sexual relations, political radicalism, drug use, deviance and criminality. Brake (1980) identified three main strands in 1960s youth culture: the bohemian (those concerned with alternative lifestyles); the delinquent (those organized around identity-giving deviance, such as football hooliganism); and the political (those engaged in political critique and resistance – protesting against the 'poll tax' (in 1990), perhaps, or environmental pollution, or nuclear power or excessive air travel). The subsequent racialization of inner-city 'problem youth' was fully explored and theorized in Hall et al.'s (1978) definitive work on the amplification of black street crime in *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. This groundbreaking work synthesized discourses about moral panics, labelling perspectives on deviance and demonization, with an empirical case study of media, policing and criminal court outcomes.

Not all were convinced that class relations were central to understanding youth and the experience of adolescence. Class has been problematized further by gender divisions and not least by race and ethnic identity. Other writers developed black cultural studies and radical feminist approaches to understanding youth within the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (see, for example, *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1976) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (CCCS, 1982)).

YOUTH STUDIES: LEARNING TO GROW UP

The problems of growing up male and working class and living under capitalism were probably best explored by Paul Willis in his widely-cited

Learning to Labour (1977). The book focused on white working-class 'lads' and their resistance to the middle-class ideology of education and schooling; in the research this ideology is encoded and symbolized by 'the lobes', or school conformists. The lads who occupied centre stage in the book shared an 'anti-school' culture that rejected schooling, exuded masculinity and embraced a factory-floor culture of aggression, sexism, solidarity and the celebration of hard physical labour power. The lobes were pro-school, were located in higher GCSE streams, valued paper qualifications, careers advice and 'girlie' paper work. The 1980s saw Willis (1988), drawn into the local policy implications of youth unemployment and the 'new vocationalism'. He coined the phrase 'the frozen transitions of youth' to describe the social condition of youth unemployment in Wolverhampton. For Willis the three major institutions of industrial Britain had lost their rationale and direction – family, school and work no longer functioned. These three structures, that traditionally processed the life stages of children from 0 to 5 at home, from 5 to 16 at school and from 16 onwards at work, functioning as an escalator carrying young people to work, to an adult wage and into consumer society, had simply broken down.

In a more positive vein, Willis (1990) articulated ideas about the changing nature of youth and youth studies in *Common Culture*, a book that revisited issues of human agency, culture, class and consumption. Willis' concept of 'grounded aesthetics' heralded a postmodern argument and twist, in that commodities were now not so much functional objects but rather were of symbolic significance. Young people creatively used commodities, as documented in his earlier book about motor bikers (Willis, 1978). Applying Wittgenstein's dictum that meaning is use, young people had diluted and subverted capitalist commodities, thereby producing their own symbolic universe, for example punk rock and street fashion, etc., a much weaker form of class 'resistance' than earlier suggested by the CCCS (see Hall and Jefferson, 1976).

This symbolic creative capacity of younger generations to win cultural space from those older than themselves was the hallmark of Dick Hebdige's (1979) influential analysis of punk style, although his analysis was grounded in the 1970s rather than the 1960s. Spectacular subcultures, in Hebdige's view, fabricated a distinctive style of their own, a form of resistance via bricolage. Mods, Rockers, Hippies, Punks, all managed to knit together specific forms of language, music, dress sense, dance and place to constitute a meaningful whole, a distinctive style. Translated into Anthony Cohen's (1985) cultural anthropology, they had created their own imagined 'symbolic community', mapped out by symbolic boundaries with insiders and outsiders. As Barker (2000: 169) puts it, 'punk was not simply responding to the crisis of British decline manifested in joblessness, poverty and changing moral standards, but *dramatized it*'. Such ambivalence about symbolic boundaries was developed in Hebdige's later work, *Hiding in the Light* (Hebdige, 1988). Teenagers want to be noticed but certainly not recognized or supervised by a parental generation.

MY GENERATION: THE WHO?

One of the central themes of this chapter is to explore the historical context in which generational identities are forged. The generational cohort of post-war 'baby boomers' became teenagers amid the growing affluence and consumerism of the UK in 1960s. In sharp contrast, their parents' formative teenage years had been spent in the 1930s and 40s, in times of austerity, deprivation and poverty. So the 1940s and 50s adult generations developed the political will to lay the institutional foundations of the welfare state for their children. Their social reformist legacy was funded both by social insurance and progressive taxation policies, which resulted in the expansion of educational opportunities, pensions and health care. If the 1940s generation were Aesop's proverbial ants, the 1960s teenager generation embraced the grasshopper lifestyle. If we stretch the metaphor horribly, as we shall see later, the grasshopper teenagers of the 1960s became parents in their turn and produced a 1980s and 1990s youth generation of butterflies, who have to survive the risks of a more precarious environment.

Much ink has been spilt about the 1960s, but most writers agree that the times were not so much revolutionary as assuredly radical – they saw the emergence of student power, shifting sexual and racial power relations and, not least, media and cultural revolutions around music and consumption. For the purposes of this chapter, it is useful to adopt the concept of 'liminality' – that is, a state of transition or disorientation. The culture of the 1960s could be so described, because that period witnessed a generation of youth that challenged and redrew cultural boundaries, that pushed cultural norms, rituals and rules to their limits.

Bernice Martin (1981) has explored the concept of liminality fully, by drawing on the cultural anthropology of Mary Douglas (1970), with her key concepts of group (how clearly defined an individual's social position is as inside or outside a bounded social group) and grid (how clearly defined an individual's social role is within networks of social privileges, claims and obligations), to understand the 'expressive' cultural revolution of the 1960s and its particular impact on staid 'respectable' working-class culture. The iconoclastic rock group The Who expressed this aggressive invasive style in their clothes, lyrics, loud electric sounds, 'live' concerts with finales in which guitars and drum sets were smashed up, and in their films and rock operas such as *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia*. For example, in 'The Kids are Alright' and the iconoclastic 'My Generation' Pete Townshend, the doyen of the 'Mods', challenged established authority figures for '*putting us down*', and suggested to parents '*Why don't you all fffff... fade away and don't try and dig what we all say?*'

Youth in the 1960s had the collective experience of shaping and being shaped by liminal processes in affluent times. Importantly this youth cohort has carried that existential propensity with them into later life. Traditional life stages and family cycles have been undermined by subversion and challenged by rejection. The 1960s teenage generation became rebellious parents in the 1970s, restless middle-aged divorcees in the 1980s/90s and atavistic born-again pensioners after the turn of the millennium. Sustained by the feminist movement, many

have set about challenging marriage, assumptions about child care, and conventional sexuality and gender roles. As one consequence, the constraints of 1950s respectable working-class culture have been diluted. Flexibility in work patterns has changed the sexual division of labour. Most importantly, white working-class culture had to come to terms with issues of race and ethnicity, embodied in what Sivanandan (1990) terms the (often migrant or imported) 'reserve army of labour'. This flexible stream of labour power has been sucked into an expanding UK economy to solve skill shortages and to take on poorly paid jobs and working conditions rejected by mainstream labour. Consequently, it has less power in terms of trade-union organization and citizenship and this is reflected in poorer pay, blocked job opportunities and insecurity of employment. When recession hits, migrant workers are usually the first to experience unemployment and deteriorating conditions of work and pay. Media and mainstream opinion affirm the relative powerlessness of migrant labour by conveniently turning a blind eye to changing patterns of employment in tourism and hospitality, the construction industry, domestic service and public transport. It is a minor inconvenience if the latest wave of East European economic migrants display poor English language skills, yet righteous moral outrage surfaces when routine exploitation makes national news, as with the deaths of 21 Chinese cockle pickers in Morecombe in 2004 or periodic exposés of sex tourism and prostitution in London.

In stark contrast to Pete Townshend's wish 'hope I die before I get old', the 1960s cohort refused to move gracefully into middle and old age in the manner of their parents. They have carried their rebellious edge forward, their thirst and taste for liminality, their deconstruction of stereotypes, as they seek to rewrite traditional boundaries of middle age and explore longevity, becoming that oxymoron, the 'young old'.

The central argument proposed here is the importance of experiential continuities in history and in generation. This position, incidentally, directly contradicts that adopted by other philosophers. For example, Merleau-Ponty's (1964) *Sense and Non-Sense* posits 'the liquidation of the self' into several role players; at different stages of our lives we are different persons that 'accidentally' inhabit the same body. Different selves get woven together retrospectively into a 'false biographical unity' (cited in Featherstone, 1995: 60).

GRASSHOPPERS, ANTS AND BUTTERFLIES

The 1960s post-war teenage generation had grown up in affluence and was restless to explore new tastes, new tourist destinations, new consumption styles and, later on, new patterns of early retirement. By the 1980s this generation of post-war baby boomers had rejected the fiscal disciplines of social reformism and its growing burden of welfare spending. Politically an important segment of this generation opted for the New Right discourse of choice and consumerism and settled for a less expensive and less intrusive

residual state. While they themselves had grown up in a world of free dental, nursing and health care, final-salary, inflation-proof pensions and publicly funded education, they were not prepared to make similar collective financial provision for the next generation. They had further benefited as property owners from rising house prices, and, according to Hutton (1995), the top 40% of the population were wealthy from the one-off windfalls of 1980s privatizations. They had therefore both the cultural and economic capital to be interested in postmodernity and engage with 'new times' as they took on the Internet, mobile phones, globalized TV, fads in diet and lifestyles, along with a restlessness manifested in make-overs, moving house, and the acquisition of second holiday homes in the UK or abroad.

In the world of leisure and sports studies, figurational sociology makes much of the functional interdependence and growing democratization of social and cultural networks. Divisions of class, gender and race are held to become more egalitarian and the distance between generations becomes less pronounced. Rather than 'dancing in the light', 1980s and 90s teenagers find themselves dancing in the shadows of their parents. Forty and 50-year-olds are now buying more music albums than teenagers and determining chart success. Equally, videos seem to be an antiquated waste of money whereas DVDs are perceived as investments. Stated simply, middle-aged groups now have the material and cultural capital along with the demographic weight to be leisure trendsetters and market heavyweights. Their tastes in clothes, music, holidays, and so on, provide an important backdrop to the choices available for young people growing up in the 2000s. Traditional icons of youthful rebellion and style are now subverted and consumed by the middle-aged. Take, for example, Willis' favourite, powerful motorbikes; driving one of these now carries dangerous consequences in increasing road accidents for the elderly. Gender and sexual stereotypes also face scrutiny. Critics are challenging the gay press's preoccupation with male youth or advertising's disregard for older role models in placing products.

There is therefore some irony in the fact that the political New Right – led in the UK by Margaret Thatcher – found so much fault with the permissive revolution of the 'swinging 60s'. This 'grass/shopper' approach to recreational drugs and consumption undermines serious work, so valued by past generations of parents and grandparents. The satiric assault on tradition – the subversive interest in liminality, in progressive education, in alternative lifestyles and sexual identities, in the deconstructing of British identity, in alternatives to the institution of marriage, while turning a blind eye to the changing nature of communities and to spiralling rates of crime ... all are now blamed on the baby-boomer children of the 60s. Yet in the decades of adulthood and middle age, this same (now parent) generation has also presided over the election of three Conservative governments and New Labour neo-liberalism. These governments consistently supported New Right ideas of what Hall and Jacques (1983) term 'authoritarian populism' which set its face against the expansion of public expenditure and welfare rights. Likewise, politicians like Mrs Thatcher championed personal liberty and an opposition

to state interference – a stance which many see as conflicting with an opposition to, for example, the use of recreational drugs.

This more individualized ‘grasshopper’-like approach, of enjoying the abundance of the present (provided essentially by the ant-like endeavour of their parents), together with a marked collective reluctance to invest long term in material infrastructure for following generations, has been highlighted most by environmentalist criticisms. Green thinking (whether of light or more radical dark green hue) has pointed out that grasshopper lifestyles are generationally unsustainable. Whether it is a question of mobility, lifestyle, landscape or biodiversity, things should change and change both globally and locally. Yet there is no sign that the 1960s teenage generation are prepared to abandon their cars, holiday homes, cheap mass tourism by airplane or consumerist lifestyles.

This hyperactive 1960s cohort was simply not ready to settle down into existing conventional patterns of class, gender or ‘race’. Post-colonial patterns of immigration provided new and different historical challenges in the 1960s from those faced earlier in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All in all, the old institutional solutions conceived by past generations – the vision of self, life course, family and community, of work and of religion, simply seemed no longer appropriate. Sexual revolution in the form of widely available contraception and more carefree attitudes to sex challenged gender power relations, and feminism raised questions about patriarchal processes in public and private spheres. The next generation of 1980s and 1990s ‘butterflies’ in some ways became less important. They were suspended or delayed or reduced by smaller family size, as the large demographic bulge of the baby boom chronologically grew older. But socially and culturally, as we have seen, this was resisted. In some ways the 1960s cohort were reluctant parents – in the sense that they put their demands for self-expression and identity alongside the needs of their children rather than subsuming themselves in their traditional roles as parents. It was not so much that the next generation of children was the future; but that they as the parent generation were reluctant to be sidelined and felt they had a crucial role to play.

This reluctance of the 1960s ‘baby-boomer’ generation to act their chronological age is pervasive. Media commentators discovered that old people, the ‘bus pass’ generation, were in denial, as marketeers identified a new generation of ‘OAP youth’; vox pop surveys suggest that 55–64-year-olds feel that they are no older than 40, whereas those over 60 feel they have a brain age of 46, grannies want to dress like their grandchildren, and pensioner membership rates at gyms continue to expand. It is the middle aged and elderly who have accepted the message about exercise and healthy lifestyles. This ageing population has resulted in the usual policy problem of young people being overshadowed by policy concerns of the old – who will look after us in our old age? Who will pay for our pensions? Who will pay for expanding respite and long-term residential care? Such tensions impose pressure on key institutions such as the NHS. What should NHS priorities be over the next decades as generational cohorts have different interests? Should the NHS prioritize spending on paediatric research into obesity, IVF treatments or diagnostic approaches to Alzheimer’s disease?

GENERATION X: THATCHER'S CHILDREN

Youth studies, therefore, benefit from paying closer attention to age cohorts and historical contexts and processes. Conflicts between generations are reworked on different material and cultural battlegrounds, orchestrated by shifts in commercial investment, labour markets and public policies. The post-war generation of 'baby-boomers' grew up as teenagers protected by the welfare state of the 1950s and 60s, enjoyed full employment in middle age and have taken retirement on relatively generous state and occupational pensions. Their children, and particularly their grandchildren, will not share this collective provision. Indeed, the 1960s generation of 'grasshoppers' has, as we have already observed, spawned a 1980s/1990s generation of 'butterflies'. Writers have used a variety of terms to try to capture this generational shift: Thatcher's children, the X generation, the 'cool' generation, and so on. But all labels fail to capture the plight of this next generation of young people who are growing up, to use Beck's term, in a 'risk society'. Awaiting them is a general distrust of politics, public policy and the collective solutions of the past. For them the only certainty is that life is growing more uncertain and unpredictable.

Researchers working in the Institute of Popular Culture at Manchester Metropolitan University closely documented growing trends of individualism and consumerism in the 1990s. There is a tinge of nostalgia as Steve Redhead (1993, 1997), a founder member of the centre, surveys the fabrication of 1980s rave culture in contrast to the expressive authenticity of 1960s sub-cultural styles. He and many others (see e.g. O'Connor and Wynne, 1996) argue that 'authenticity' in youth cultures is less possible now that cultural industries have permeated youth forms and are crucial resources in, for example, the production of garage/house music. There is also a critique from Sarah Thornton (1995) and Jim McGuigan (2002) to the effect that cultural resistance is everywhere and what one has now are markers of distinction and taste. Sarah Thornton (1995) stresses the centrality of the media in the construction and classifications of tastes.

The butterfly generation who were growing up as teenagers in the 1980s and 1990s are now in many cases depressed and mentally 'stressed out' about their lives. Experts are keen to point to a thousand reasons for children and young people to be cheerless in the noughties. They are simply self-indulgent, left too much to their own devices, growing up in self-organizing cellular families, eating fast foods, left in front of their own TV, with no shared family meals and an absence of clear timetables and bedtimes. It therefore should come as no surprise that as teenagers they live their lives solely in the present, as short-run hedonists. Recent surveys document young Britons having the highest rates for hard drinking and unprotected underage sex. When faced with self-funding in higher education and flexible credit arrangements, why plan and save for the future? What chance of lifelong careers and property ownership? Why then worry about deteriorating state support and the disappearance of final salary occupational pension schemes, when so many are

being encouraged to be warehoused in university student culture, in 24-hour licensed cities, where active weekend lifestyles are essentially drinking to get drunk, and with young women just as eagerly embracing ever higher rates of smoking and binge drinking?

BLACK YOUTH

As Benedict Anderson (1991) argues, nation states are best understood as ‘imagined communities’ which share landscape, language and history, with mass media as key institutions drawing symbolic boundaries to delineate ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. According to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983), European nation states historically created distinctive ‘invented traditions’ in the nineteenth century and these, by their very nature, exclude foreigners. As a consequence, politicians, media and interest groups can draw selectively on such nationalist traditions to celebrate ‘belonging’, conversely marking out for special attention those who do not belong or confirm to nationalist values and behaviours.

5.4 Nation states and identities

(See Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*.)

Nation States in Europe (see e.g. UK, France, Germany, Italy).

During the period 1850–1914 ‘Metropolitan’ elites set up invented traditions to bind people in a nation state, often based in the capital city, for example London, Paris, Berlin, Rome and to unify regional differences, for example between North and South, West and East.

State institutions of nationhood and identity:

- military – e.g. marches, displays, ceremonies, parades
- monarchy – rituals, procedures, appearances
- government – public parks, statues, squares, expositions, fairs, ceremonial events
- education – national schooling and curricula, physical education
- sport – stadia, spectacle, international competitions and the Olympics
- leisure – national pastimes, festivals, ethnic and folk traditions

What sorts of things/events/dates do **you** consider to be typically ‘English’?

What sorts of things would tourists/foreigners define as central to ‘English’ culture? And what of ‘Scottish’, ‘Welsh’ and ‘Irish’ culture?

In the post-war period, there have been periodic moral panics about 'race relations', leaving black youths culturally defined as the subordinate 'Other'. In a sense, primarily because of skin colour, they are perceived as aliens who can never be 'one of us'. In the words of post-colonial theory (see Aitchison, 2000; Spivak, 2006), they are the 'subaltern other' whose voices have been silenced. 'White' mainstream culture ignores the material inequalities and discriminatory practices that shape the lives of each new immigrant population. Indeed, Stuart Hall (1992) argues that we define ourselves by stressing what we are not. One cannot understand one's own culture without contrasting it to the 'Other'. As Paul Gilroy (1987) suggests that 'There ain't no black in the Union Jack', and one must acknowledge a 'double consciousness' in that black people are both inside and outside white culture. Yet Bhikhu Parekh (2000) opened up a debate about what exactly it meant to be 'British' at the beginning of the millennium with a report that argued that any versions of Britishness that ignored the presence of diverse black and Asian communities were racist. One outcome is that black and Asian youth look towards the black diaspora – taking inspiration from US black music such as blues, soul, rap and garage, and black radicalism such as Rastafarianism or Islamic fundamentalism. Linda Colley (1992) has argued that the 'English' are not Catholic, are free from the tyranny of absolute monarchy and are white and civilized. Within conservative ideology, foreigners do not share the same instincts, do not belong to our 'tribe', they can never be part of our blood, families, kinship or community. However, this view hardly impeded the imperial projects of European nation states that set out to 'civilize' the rest of the world, while appropriating, controlling or administering their scarce resources. It is hardly surprising that patterns of migration to the UK have drawn upon colonial roots and routes to recruit black Afro-Caribbeans, Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis to mop up the unskilled work of an increasingly affluent UK economy during the post-war period. The waves of immigration, and subsequent tensions between host nations and local communities also find their expression between first, second and third generations (Sivanandan, 1990). The current moral panic about black youth gun and drugs crime and murder, as well as the supposed isolation and extremism of Islamic youth in Britain, worries both white and black parent generations. Hence, it should come as no surprise that all politicians, especially members of UKIP, are keen to reassert some form of British culture on the UK population, but such aspirations are diluted by the forces of globalization and, not least, the Iraq war. During the 2000s, asylum seekers are feared and economic migrants, with the enlargement of the EU in 2005, are stereotyped and stigmatized.

CONCLUSION

Postmodern analysis implies that individuals can choose to be youthful and engage in distinctive exercise regimes and make active leisure choices. This

chapter has argued that it is essential to take a generational perspective emphasizing the historical, material and cultural contexts of each generation and how such spaces and identities are negotiated and constructed between different generations. Postmodern analysis celebrates the diversity of individual experience and choice in relation to work, family and leisure lifestyles. Such analysis demands that traditional collective experiences of class, gender and race in the UK are deconstructed and hence that more attention is paid to the individual. Indeed, Giddens suggests that one major feature of postmodernity is that we are all forced to choose, whether it be work, intimate relationships, leisure, diet or exercise regimes. However, an equally rich tradition is to be found in using historical sociology and generational continuities of time. Figure 5.2 provides a starting point to think about the significance of age cohorts marching through history at different speeds and at different times (see overleaf).

However, there is one final caveat – the need to acknowledge problems of aggregation and naïve stereotyping of generational cohorts. Similar debates have arisen about interpreting the north–south divide when seeking to account for broad changes in UK Census data. The UK government’s response to claims of high regional variations is to highlight differences within regions which are said to be more pronounced than inter-regional difference. Indeed, there are still important resilient continuities of class, gender and racial division. These, along with the inter-generational and intra-generational differences described here, continue to drive to historical processes and outcomes.