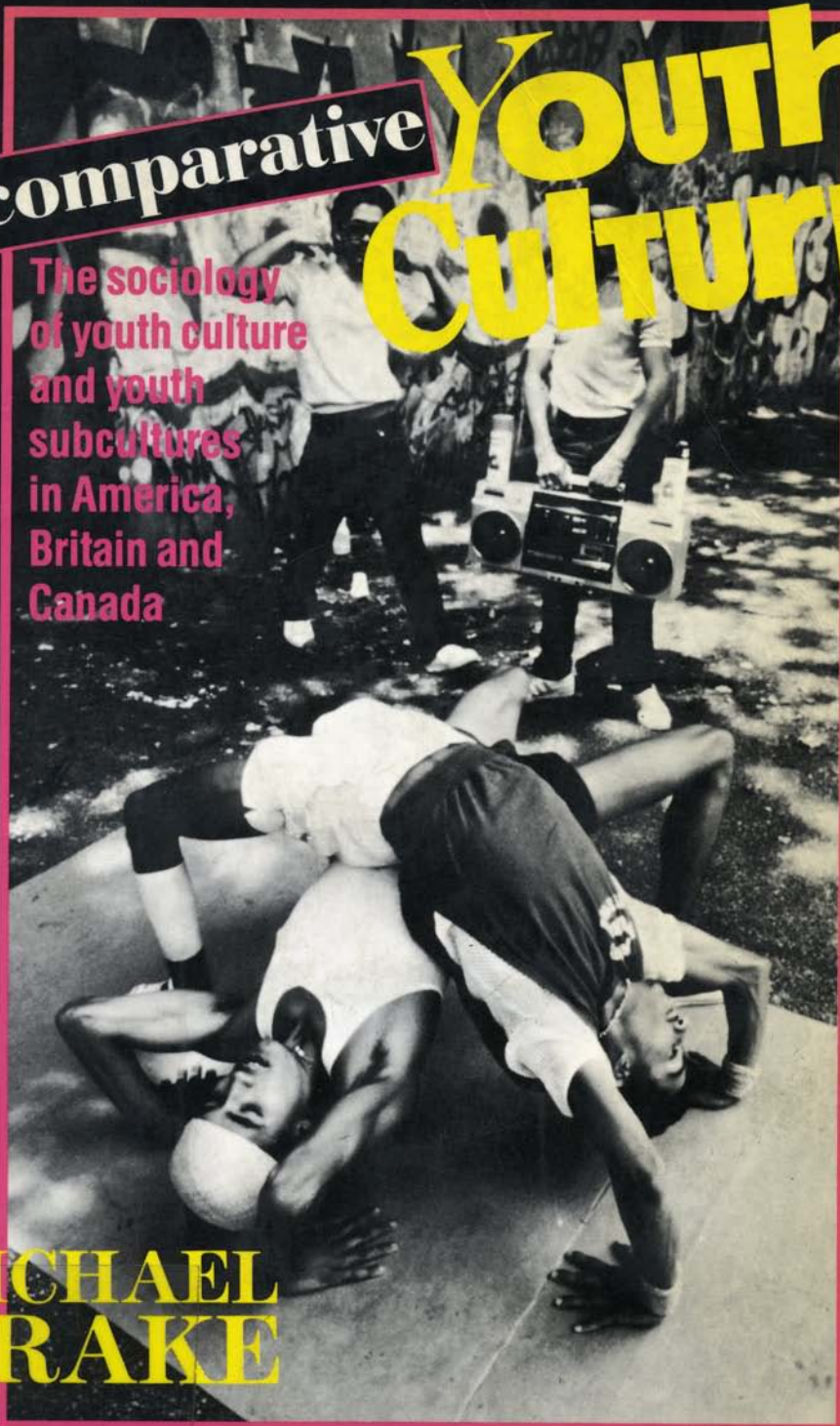


comparative

Youth Culture

The sociology
of youth culture
and youth
subcultures
in America,
Britain and
Canada



**MICHAEL
BRAKE**

ture and which bring it into conflict with the larger society, a subculture can be designated as a 'contraculture'. Yinger wants to differentiate as a contraculture the emergent norms of a group in a conflict situation, retaining subculture to describe more traditional forms of subsocieties which have developed particular local norms (e.g. the subculture of the American Southlands). Empirically, no study seems to suggest that there is a pure contraculture, except perhaps in a political subcultural context (such as the Black Panthers). Although oppositional norms may be developed in direct contrast to respectable norms, a subculture which exists in direct conflict with the prevailing society cannot survive for long. There are politically militant elements of subcultures among minority groups, gay people and feminists, but their success and continuation depends on a series of strategies which involve avoiding direct confrontation, but often waging systematic, cultural, guerilla raids on the dominant morality. A struggle develops over what is and what is not permitted. This illustrates Erikson's (1966) suggestion that deviancy has the function of boundary definition maintenance for what is and what is not permitted in a society.

Subcultures and style

It has been argued above that structural conditions, especially persistent, structural contradictions, often experienced as class problems, are a basic generating force for subcultures. Cultural traditions, particularly those generated by social class, may interact with the apparent middle-class consensus and, when assisted by neighbourhood traditions and specific historic circumstances, act in shaping the cultural form of a subculture. One cultural form common in a subculture is its 'style'. Cohen (1965), in an interesting article which raises the question of the relationship of social structure to social interaction, notes that an important aspect of a reference group such as a distinct subcultural group is the symbolic use of a style.

An actor learns that the behaviour signifying membership in a particular role includes the kinds of clothes he wears, his posture, his gait, his likes and dislikes, what he talks about and the opinion he expresses. (Cohen, 1965, p. 1)

Several important indicators are raised by style. It expresses a degree of commitment to the subculture, and it indicates membership of a specific subculture which by its very appearance disregards or attacks dominant values. Style I shall define as consisting of three main elements:

- a 'Image', appearance composed of costume, accessories such as hair-style, jewellery and artefacts.
- b 'Demeanour', made up of expression, gait and posture. Roughly this is what the actors wear and how they wear it.
- c 'Argot', a special vocabulary and how it is delivered.

An important aspect of style is the differentiation of work and leisure. Thompson (1969) has suggested that the values of leisure have been traditionally feared by employers because they present a counterthesis to work - in order to preserve industrial discipline, as for example the work habit, working schedules, the commencement of the working day, all of which were paced and planned by the worker in the traditional crafts. Work and leisure were strictly separated, so that leisure became channelled into acceptable by-products of the work ethic. Holidays involving hedonistic carousal were seen as an anarchistic attack on work discipline, and the values of austerity, thrift and production were emphasised. One off-spin of mass production and consumption is the creation of a semi-mythical, popular elite, promoted by the mass media and advertising, which the purchase of clothing and artefacts brings within reach of the average consumer. In this situation Burns (1967), drawing on the work of Italian sociologists Pizzorno (1959) and Alberoni (1964), suggests there is an attachment to this mythical elite by the imitation of style and clothing to an identity which stands outside traditional class definitions. The working-class girl imitating cultural heroines such as Marilyn Monroe feels she is part of a specific 'classless' group of other girls who look like Monroe. This can obviously be extended into subcultures which have definite imagery and style. Indeed, style is usually a predominant defining feature of youthful subcultures. The precious gains of working life, money and leisure become invested in dramaturgical statements about self-image, which attempt to define an identity outside that ascribed class, education and occupational role, particularly when the latter is of low status.

A parallel may be drawn between the use of style and fashion in subcultures by considering certain forms of analysis in linguistic theory. It has been argued that there is a general science of signs - semiology (Saussure, 1960). Language is the most sophisticated form of semiology but gesture, music and images can all be analysed. Saussure's work has been fruitfully used by the Birmingham School who have also drawn upon Barthes whose work is also extended into popular culture. For Barthes, 'myth is a type of speech', and he attempts to uncover the hidden sets of rules and conventions that produce meanings peculiar to powerful groups in society which are then rendered universal and 'given' for society in

general. The ideological core of these meanings has been exposed to the rhetoric of common sense and turned into myth in Barthes' (1972) exposition of semiotics. There are two systems in Barthes' analysis, for example, he sees a photograph in a French journal of a black soldier saluting the French flag, firstly as a gesture of loyalty, and secondly symbolising France as a great empire under whose flag all her sons serve without colour discrimination. The latter system suggests a meaning derived from the bourgeois and distorted myth of France's egalitarianism. Saussure (1960) differentiates between a systemised set of linguistic conventions called 'langue' (language) and 'parole' - the selection and actualisation of language - speech. Hjelmslev (1959) elaborates this further by distinguishing between the formal standard usage of language and its regional use. The formal set of syntax becomes transformed by social usage. We can also see that subcultural use of fashion is a rhetorical usage of formalised styles, a sort of slang or argot of the 'standard English' of fashion. Style ceases to be merely informative or taxonomic (pointing to a cultural system which indicates membership of class or subculture), and becomes open to interpretation of what it means both subjectively for the actor, and objectively in its statement about the actor's relationship to his world. A hermeneutic interpretation is possible in Ricoeur's (1972) sense of the meaning of cultural documents, in this case style. Style, then, is used for a variety of meanings. It indicates which symbolic group one belongs to, it demarcates that group from the mainstream, and it makes an appeal to an identity outside that of a class-ascribed one. It is learned in social interaction with significant subcultural others, and its performance requires what theatre actors call 'presence', the ability to wear costume and to use voice to project an image with sincerity. Indeed, this form of performance skill may well be tested out by other subcultural members.

Willener (1970) has shown that in certain changing social circumstances actors can transform, invent and juxtapose imagery to create new cultural styles. The symbolism of appearance has been illustrated in the subculture by Willis (1970):

The dress ... was not primarily a functional exigency of riding a motor cycle. It was more crucially a symbolic extension of the motorbike and amplification of the qualities inherent within the motorbike ...

The complexities of the use of costume have been well analysed by Carter (1967):

The nature of our apparel is very complex. Clothes are so many things at once. Our social shells, the system of signals

with which we broadcast our intentions, are often the projection of our fantasy selves ... clothes are our weapons, our challenges, our visible insults ...

We may use clothing to challenge dominant norms, but we also make statements about our environment.

For we think dress expresses ourselves, but in fact it expresses our environment, and like advertising, pop music, pulp fiction and second feature films, it does so at a subliminal, emotionally charged non-intellectual, instinctual level. (*Ibid.*)

Style also indicates a life style, and as such has an appeal to subterranean values which combine to make a visual challenge at both a structural and an existential level.

and in the Neanderthal way, the Hell's Angels are obeying Camus' law - that the dandy is always a rebel, that he challenges society because he challenges mortality. The motor cycle gangs challenge society because they challenge mortality face to face, doing 100 m.p.h. on the California freeway in Levis and swastikas, no crash helmets and a wide-awake hat, only a veneer between the man and his death ... (*Ibid.*)

Briefly, then, style at a subcultural level acts as a form of argot, drawing upon costume and artefacts from a mainstream fashion context and translating these into its own rhetoric. The difference between conventional costume and imagery is deliberate. American street talk in the black ghetto has taken the language of the dominant white culture, altered its rhythm by introducing African pitch and tempo, and confused the outsider by a complex set of metaphors drawn from the black subcultures. In many ways this is what subcultural style has done. Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts (1976) illustrate this:

Thus the 'Teddy Boy' expropriation of an upper class style of dress 'covers' the gap between largely manual unskilled near-lumpen real careers and life-chances, and the 'all-dressed-up-and-nowhere-to-go' experience of Saturday evening. Thus in the expropriation and fetishisation of consumption and style itself, the 'Mods' cover the gap between the never-ending-weekend and Monday's resumption of boring dead-end work.

Objects and artefacts (both of a symbolic and a concrete form) have been reordered and placed in new contexts so as to communicate fresh acts of meaning. This is called 'bricolage' by Clarke (1976b) drawing upon the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss. Where there is a reassemblage of styles into a new subcultural style, as with

nostalgic revivals such as the Teddy boys, the assemblage must not look as though it is carrying the same message as the previously existing one. A new style is created by appropriating objects from an existing market of artefacts and using them in a form of collage, which recreates group identity, and promotes mutual recognition for members. There is also, as Willis (1972) suggests, a fit or 'homology' between objects, the meaning of these and behaviour. There is, he argues, a homology between intense activism, physicality, externalisation, a taboo on introspection, a love of speed and early rock music in such groups as motorbike boys (or bikers). There is a homology between structurelessness, introspection and loose group affiliation and progressive West Coast rock music in hippies. This is near to the concept of focal concerns, but extends the analysis into the cultural elements of the subculture and its style. The analysis is now extended below the conscious level to consider the meaning of the symbolism. This approach offers a valuable extension to more traditional empirical findings which will be discussed later.

Subcultures, social reality and identity

It has been suggested that subcultures offer, on the one hand, solutions of a 'magical' (that is they appear to be solutions rather than are) rather than of a real nature to inherent contradictions in the socio-economic system experienced at some level by the actor. With youthful subcultures this is perceived and responded to by the actor as a generational problem. On the other hand, the style of the subculture allows an expression of identity through a deliberate projection of a self-image, which claims an identity 'magically' freed from class and occupation. The subjectivistic perception and interpretation of structural problems is personalised, and is limited by the parochial locale of the actor's social class position. In addition, these problems are further mediated by the community in which the actor lives. Thus, for the actor, there is an apparent range of voluntaristic selections of subcultures to choose from. Entrance to the subculture, as we shall see from the empirical evidence, is, however, limited by opportunities related to class and education. Empirically, clusters of subcultural groups are found in specific locations of the social class structure, with a common experience in terms of background, class, education and neighbourhood. The degree of articulation of subcultural life style, and commitment to it varies considerably.

The relation of subcultures and age is important, because adolescence, and the period of transition between school and work,

and work and marriage is important in terms of secondary socialisation. Berger and Luckman (1966, p.77) have suggested that patterns of behaviour are legitimised and habitualised in socialisation through what they see as a basic confidence trick of cultural relativism:

In primary socialisation there is not a problem of identification. There is no choice of significant others. Society presents the candidate for socialisation with a predefined set of significant others whom he must accept with no possibility of opting for another arrangement. *Hic Rhodus - hic salta...* The child does not internalise the world of his significant others as one of many possible worlds. He internalises it as the world, the only existent and conceivable world, the world tout court. ...

Children, then, perceive the world without any idea of the plethora of alternative social realities present, and internalise attitudes mediated to them from emotionally charged social interaction with their parents, or similar significant others. Social institutions are seen as part of a symbolic totality which Berger and Luckman call the 'symbolic universe'. Everything in the world makes sense in relation to the hegemonic apparatus; the received world is experienced as the only world. It is used as a paradigm of experiential explanation which assumes that the symbolic universe is social reality whose subjective features become transformed into objective reality. This is the way we resist chaos in perception and cognition, and impose some form of order upon the world. Central to this stemming from hegemony is an idea about how things are and how they should be. But, argue Berger and Luckman, because the universe is not tidy, apparent anomalies and contradictions have to be avoided. One of the functions of culture, the anthropologist Mary Douglas (1970, p.102) reminds us, is to categorise the symbolic universe into publicly recognised patterns:

Culture in the sense of the public, standardised values of a community, mediates the experience of individuals. It provides in advance some basic categories, a positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered. And above all, it has authority, since each is induced to assent because of the assent of others. But its public character makes its characters more rigid.

Consequently, Douglas, M. (1972) argues that an anomaly is relegated to the categories of good or evil, and may therefore be rejected, ignored, abhorred, venerated or respected. This is why morality as Douglas, J.D. (1972) notes, has an object-like charac-

teristic in Western society which makes the rules of morality seem apparently independent of free choice. They contain essential properties which make them necessary to all individuals, who attribute to them some form of eternal, universal absolutism. They become perceived as part of social reality, unproblematic and absolute. This is why Scott (1972) argues that deviancy has a dissident side; it challenges the clarity of the symbolic universe. Deviants are seen either as outsiders, recognised as having left the communal, symbolic universe, or else, as with immigrants, they are ascribed to as outsiders who participate in another symbolic universe which originated in a different culture. This group, as Berger and Luckman (1966, p.91) remind us, 'raise the question of power, since each symbolic universe must now deal with the problem of whose definition of reality will be made to stick'.

A subculture, then, may give an ideology and a form to deviancy which threatens the apparent consensus of the symbolic universe. The subculture makes sense to the potential recruit because of this challenge to the symbolic universe, and the would-be subcultural member identifies with the subculture. The recruit uses the values and imagery of the subculture to alter his own self-image. Glaser (1966) calls this differential identification.

The image of behaviour as role-playing, borrowed from the theatre, presents people as directing their actions on the basis of their conceptions of how others see them. The choice of another from whose perspective we view our own behaviour is the process of identification. It may be with immediate others, or with distant and perhaps abstractly generalised others of our reference groups. ... Acceptance by the group with which one identifies oneself and conceptions of persecution by other groups are among the most common and the least intellectual bases for rationalisation by criminals. ...

Actors, then, attracted by subcultural reference groups, select those within the parameters set by the social structure which contain an attractive self-image, and an apparent solution to structural problems. In this way actors enter into subcultural interpretations of the dominant hegemony, which presents them with a different perspective of social reality, or sometimes a different social reality. As such they are important agents of secondary socialisation. They introduce the values of the world outside work and school.

We have noted that the symbolic universe is not only a concrete form of social reality, but also a moral paradigm. Subcultures which confront or threaten the symbolic universe mean that the moral paradigm used to explain social reality has to be developed and adapted to deal with any anomaly. Subcultures tend to be

deviant anomalies within the symbolic universe. They usually accept its definition of reality, but nevertheless are anomalies within it.

The development of an analytical framework for the study of subcultures

Becker (1963) has suggested that a fruitful way of considering deviancy is by the means of a 'moral career', by a processual analysis. He argues:

All causes do not operate at the same time, and we need a model which takes into account the fact that patterns of behaviour develop in orderly sequence . . . we must deal with a sequence of steps, of changes in the individual's behaviour and perspectives in order to understand the phenomenon. (Becker, 1963, p. 23)

This is obviously useful to the study of subcultures. However, Lemert (1951) indicates that we need to use this model in a wider context. We need to consider the following points:

- 1 nature of the deviation, which includes information on the ways in which the deviant and the non-deviant differ, the subculture's relationship to the larger society, and the patterns of interaction within the subculture.
- 2 Societal reaction to the deviant. This involves the general reaction of public opinion to the deviant, and in particular the reaction of the mass media. This means also considering the effects of these on the subculture. Is it accepted, rejected or stigmatised?
- 3 The natural history of the deviant, including his socialisation and the reaction of significant others to his subculturalisation. This means recording crisis points in the deviant career, such as changes in self-concept.
- 4 Social participation of the deviant, including his occupational status and income, and the effects on these that deviancy has.

Any theoretical framework needs to consider the process of becoming a member of a subculture, as well as the relationship the subculture has with society and the complex social and cultural relationships the two have. Cultural symbols are important, as Denzin (1970, p.93) notes: 'Central to understanding behaviour is the range and variety of symbols and symbolic meanings shared, communicated and manipulated by interacting selves in shared

situations.' De la Mater (1968) suggests that a study of deviance also needs to consider the genesis of a deviant role or actor and how that is maintained, the reasons why an actor engages in the deviant role, and the maintenance of an actor's commitment to a deviant act. This introduces several social psychological processes. Taylor *et al.* (1973) indicate that a theory of deviance needs to consider both structural and social psychological levels. Such a theory needs to consider the wider origins and determinants of deviance found in wider societal conflicts, as well as immediate origins of a particular deviance. Only against this background can the nature and setting of particular deviant actions be considered. It is also necessary to consider the immediate and wider origins of societal reaction, and the effect this has on the individual's commitment and actions within the subculture. Bearing in mind De la Mater's and Lemert's suggestions, and applying the critique of Taylor *et al.*, the following analysis is suggested for considering subcultures:

- 1 The nature of the subculture
 - a The historical development of a subculture and its relationship to the structural problems of the wider socio-economic structure needs to be analysed.
 - b The style and imagery of the subculture need a hermeneutic perspective which considers the meaning these may have for potential recruits. The problems 'solved' by the subculture are important at this point.
- 2 Societal reaction to the subculture. An analysis is needed of mass media mediation of the nature of the subculture. The immediate effects of this in terms of significant others is necessary, as well as wide societal reaction in terms of moral entrepreneurs and public and official guardians of moral order.
- 3 A natural history of the moral career of the subcultural member needs to be constructed, in particular paying attention to Glaser and Strauss's (1971) 'status passage'. That is, that any moral career needs to be considered in sequences or stages, which have contingencies and problems affecting the actor.

Glaser and Strauss suggest several properties affecting status passage, such as how central it is to the actors. The degree of association and identification is important because subcultural attachment may be part time or full time. Where it is the former it is important to socialise its young urban work force adequately. The young have to be socialised into sets of values involving their place in the work force, the encouragement of

an early family, marital life to assist in the reproduction of that work force, and conventional political and moral outlooks concerning the world and their place in it. If this does not occur, then the young work force is not programmed into regular work habits, with values suitable to strictly separated schedules of work and leisure. The young have to be bound into society first by values, and then by the responsibilities of maintaining dependants, and finally by financial commitment which means that the situation can take care of itself. One reason why the majority of people in a work force are docile is that whilst ultimately they may not have a great deal to gain by the prevailing social, economic structure, they have invested in it to the degree that they may have a great deal to lose if there is a sudden disruption of that system. This helps us to understand why the majority of young people pass through adolescence without any particularly long-term, overtly deviant behaviour. They have invested a considerable part of themselves in the prevailing system, and as such to deviate overtly or to oppose it strongly would be of no advantage to them in terms of their immediate situation.

Young (1973) has argued that: 'Deviant behaviour . . . is a meaningful attempt to solve the problems faced by a group or isolated individual – it is not a meaningless pathology.' The same argument can be made for collective deviant behaviour in the form of subcultures. In a complex society one needs to know how other non-subcultural elements of an actor's life are dealt with. Important variables therefore are entrance into, and exit from, the subculture, participation in, and commitment to, it and the effects of societal reaction at the individual level. The social visibility and the deviant or respectable nature of the subculture has a distinct effect upon self-image. Negative reactions from a public source can lead to a series of effects such as legal restriction to stigma, depending on the degree of negative societal reaction.

- 4 The social organisation of the subculture. This involves two levels: the subculture's relation to the structure, and the effects this has on the social interaction within the subculture. The values, norms, symbols, imagery and behaviour of the subculture need to be considered in terms of their organisation.
- 5 The persistence of discontinuance of the subculture. The subculture is unlikely to remain unaltered, and the altering boundaries of the subculture as well as its changing form need to be considered. One interesting element is the way in which

subcultures may continue thematic focal concerns, yet reconstruct imagery so that the contemporary subculture addresses new interpretations of perennial problems, but with a totally different style which reflects specific problems of a particular generation.

Youth becomes a social problem – the development of subcultures as a concept in delinquency, and the rise of youth culture

One problem facing complex industrial societies is how different forms of cultural plurality can coexist. A plurality of culture does not mean that various cultural groups have equal access to political power or to imposing their cultural patterns on society. The rise of interest of subcultures in the United States, can be traced to the fact that, historically, the United States was faced with the problem of an immigrant labour force. Disparate groups from different ethnic origins, speaking different languages, with different cultural backgrounds were not conducive to the development of a common class-consciousness. The ruling American elite, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, attempted to impose their own culture. The immigrants, wishing to find a new identity in a new country, were happy to absorb much of this culture, but as successive generations came up against structural contradictions, the Americanisation of low status groups failed. The way in which this process failed among the descendants of African slaves in the ghettos is discussed by Valentine (1968), and the development of African culture in America, in particular in jazz, is discussed by Keill (1966), Hannerz (1969) and Jones (1971). The exogenous immigrant subcultures certainly helped to make the pluralism of the United States one of the most complex in the world, and this had an effect on the development of endogenous subcultures. Subcultures call into question the adequacy of the dominant cultural ideology. For example, what does the 'British way of life' offer to a black unemployed teenager, born in South London, whose experience of the country he was born in is framed in overt and covert racism? Youth itself, then, is not a problem, although certain of its subcultures may be seen as a threat. There are problems for youth, however, created for example by the conscription of the majority of them into the lower strata of a meritocratic educational system which then trains them for occupations which are meaningless, poorly paid and uncreative.

The young are subject to the impact of occupational, educational and economic changes at particular times in history. These are experienced not only in class terms but also in generational terms. For these reasons, most subcultures of a distinctly deviant nature

have been working-class, youthful subcultures. This is the group most vulnerable to economic changes. These changes amplify contradictions in the structure which are experienced not only in class terms but also in generational terms. What may be in fact a traditional problem of class is experienced differently by the new generation. These differences may be small or large, but each generation has to work them through against the cultural background of its own generational peer group and its particular received subculture. Cohen, P. (1972, p. 7) suggests that

You can distinguish three levels in the analysis of subcultures: one is the historical . . . which isolates the specific problematic of a particular class fraction, secondly the sub-systems, and the actual transformations they undergo from one subcultural 'moment' to another . . . thirdly . . . the way the subculture is actually lived out by those who are its bearers and supports.

The solution offered by the subculture is necessarily 'imaginary', argues Cohen. It is an ideological attempt to solve 'magically' real relations which cannot be otherwise solved. The particular time in a young person's life that a subculture has an impact is also notable. It occurs in the period between, or near to, the end of the school career, usually at a point when education is perceived as meaningless in terms of a young person's work prospects, and lasts until marriage. Working-class subcultures in particular infuse into the bleak world of the working-class adolescent a period of intense emotion, colour and excitement during the brief respite between school and the insecurities of the early days of working and settling down into marriage and adulthood. It is left to the personal life of marriage to provide the emotional element of adult life after the brief encounter of a peer group subculture. For the middle class the subculture may last longer, because subcultures for them are often, as Berger, B. (1963b) comments, 'youthful' in the sense that they are the domain of the young in outlook rather than merely the chronologically young.

It is proposed to consider the growth of subcultures in terms of their traditions. Matza (1962) suggested that youth is a time of rebelliousness, and that three particular forms that are attractive to youth are delinquency, radicalism and bohemianism. These modes of rebellion also accentuate subterranean values Matza (1961) suggests. However, he fails to differentiate important intra-group differences in these traditions. In the next chapter we will consider subcultures in terms of the following traditions and themes. The study of youth can be subdivided into four main areas.

1 Respectable youth

Obviously, youthful rebellion is relative and, as Berger (1963b) suggests, most young people manage to pass through life without being involved in any teenage culture, or at least those aspects of it seen as deviant. They may be involved in fashions, but not necessarily life styles. This group is seen by deviant subcultures as a negative reference group, the conformists, or straight youth.

2 Delinquent youth

Barnard (1961) has pointed out the important fact that teenagers reflected the class cultures of their parents, and that class pervaded all aspects of the teenage world in terms of its cultural elements. E.A. Smith (1962) also stressed this in his study of American youth culture. Delinquent subcultures studied have tended to be working class, usually affecting young adolescent males. Males have usually been involved with illegal activities such as theft or violence or vandalism, and females with sexual misbehaviour which has been used by courts to take them under legal protection orders. The bulk of empirical studies are concerned with this group.

3 Cultural rebels

This group tends to be involved in subcultures in the fringes of the bohemian tradition. They are on the periphery of the literary-artistic world, being adherents to it rather than artists. They tend to be middle class, and where young subcultures are involved they tend to have middle-class educations.

4 Politically militant youth

This group is in the radical tradition of politics. The scope of politics may be vast, from environmental and community politics to direct militant action. They may be factions of political groups or a broad mass movement like the peace movements of the 1950s. They may be ethnic groups, such as the Young Lords or the Black Panthers, broad-based civil rights movements, issue-oriented groups such as the anti-Vietnam war groups, pacifists, student groups, political factions or environmentalists.

These traditions may of course overlap, especially in terms of

their tactics and cultural traditions. However, it is proposed to examine these traditions in detail.

To summarise, it is argued that the study of subcultures is useful in the field of collective deviance and that subcultures provide particular functions for the young.

- 1 They offer a solution, albeit at a 'magical' level, to certain structural problems created by the internal contradictions of a socio-economic structure, which are collectively experienced. The problems are often class problems experienced generationally.
- 2 They offer a culture, from which can be selected certain cultural elements such as style, values, ideologies and life style. These can be used to develop an achieved identity outside the ascribed identity offered by work, home or school.
- 3 As such, an alternative form of social reality is experienced, rooted in a class culture, but mediated by neighbourhood, or else a symbolic community transmitted through the mass media.
- 4 Subcultures offer, through their expressive elements, a meaningful way of life during leisure, which has been removed from the instrumental world of work.
- 5 Subcultures offer to the individual solutions to certain existential dilemmas. Particularly, this involves the bricolage of youthful style to construct an identity outside work or school. This is particularly employed by young males for reasons I will discuss later, and therefore subcultures have tended to be masculinist subcultures, especially working-class subcultures.

Adolescence and early adulthood is a period for reshaping values and ideas and exploring one's relationship to the world, and is therefore an important source of secondary socialisation. The young can explore, within the parameters of their immediate class situation, certain elements of achieved versus ascribed identity.

Analyses of youth culture and subcultures can be summarised by dividing them into generational and structural explanations. The first analysis is concerned with the continuity/discontinuity of inter-generational values, and the second with the relationship of youth to social class, the mode of production and its consequent social relations. The generational explanation has focused on age as a specific factor, and is basically concerned with functionalist and neo-functionalist explanations about socialisation. As Woods (1977) suggests, generational theories are summed up in the structural-functional models of Eisenstadt and Parsons, and the

generation unit model of Mannheim. Society is formed of inter-related subsystems, and the educational system prepares actors for a place in the economic system, which reflects the stratification system, which in turn participates in the political system. Inter-generational conflict (the 'generation gap') is a socialisation dysfunction, resulting from weak integration between society and age groups. Age is the basis of social and cultural characteristics of actors. Youth, especially adolescence, is a preparatory stage for an adulthood based on the division of labour. In pre-literate societies adolescence is replaced by rites which mark the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood, but in industrial societies the transition is complicated. Youth is not central to the economy and has become isolated as a dependent, economic liability. Youth for Eisenstadt (1956, p. 28) is a 'transitory phase between the world of childhood and the adult world'. Youth groups in the structural-functionalist model appear at moments of 'disintegrating' with a 'reintegrating' function. They do not seek to change society, but to re-enter it. Parsons (1942) has also taken a similar view towards youth culture, seeing it as particular to American society, with an emphasis of a possible dysfunctional nature on having a good time, emphasising 'its recalcitrance to the pressure of adult expectations and discipline'. Mannheim (1952) prefers a generation unit; within a youthful generation are groups which 'work up the material of their common experience in different specific ways' (Mannheim, 1952, p. 304). The collective experience of specific historical moments is more intense during rapid social change. The more rapid the change, the greater the gap between generational sets of consciousness, but for Mannheim, youthful response contains positive and creative qualities. In this sense Mannheim allows for more impact on social change than traditional structural-functionalists. It has also been argued that disadvantaged youth (working-class) is not anti the prevailing social order, but seeks a place within it, whilst middle-class groups actually seek social change (Woods, 1977), and that therefore the Mannheimian perspective has been more useful because it allows for a structural context. A functionalist approach seems to have been implicitly followed by official youth programmes which have appeared in times of crisis. These are not only the Scouts and similar voluntary organisations, but also state schemes, such as the Mobilisation for Youth in the United States, and job creation and youth training schemes in Europe. This latter type of scheme has multiplied as youth unemployment has increased, 'creating jobs for those who would otherwise be unemployed', emphasising jobs 'of value to the community', or subsidising employers to find low paid temporary work for youth.

Elements of Mannheim's historico-political moment and generational experiences are present in class-based explanations. This traces back subcultures and youth cultures to the relation between the class 'parent culture', hegemony and contradictions in the socio-economic structure. This involves a material as well as an ideological dimension. These issues are discussed later, and involve community and the local economic system, class-based cultures and values, and traditional class problems experienced generationally at particular historical moments. Youth is conceptualised as a particular generational response to a wider class problem involved with structural elements such as housing, employment, future prospects and wages. As we shall also see, these problems have other dimensions for subordinate groups which are in addition to class and age, such as sex and colour. These have a potential across class lines, but any collective solution will ultimately be complicated by class.

Not all subcultures are concerned with age, obviously. For the young, however (and of course not all the young are involved in subcultures), subcultures assist them in dealing with both structural and individual problems. Some of them, especially in working-class youth subcultures, are transient solutions to specific problems. Others are of a more enduring nature leading to social change. Subcultures address themselves to structural problems, and implicitly contain a critique of society, admittedly often inarticulate and tangential. This has been explained away, especially in neo-functional models, as the problems of a transitional phase in adolescence.

The concept of a 'transitional phase' in adolescence is often employed as a palliative for society's functional problems of recruiting and integrating youth and adult worlds; if it is merely 'a stage they're going through', then adults frankly need not confront the problems their behaviour raises, because after all, 'they'll grow out of it'.

as Berger (1963a, p. 407) notes. If, however, some of them are not going to grow out of it but develop a pride in what they are, feeling little in common with the laws of a society they feel alienated from, then there is a serious problem for that society. Subcultures offer something to working-class youth that middle-class youth sought in the university. This is a moratorium, a temporal and geographical space, which can be used to test out questions about their world and their relationship to it. Identities and ideas can be experimented with, and possibilities for social change considered. Subcultures are rebellious, and usually no more than this. But they do contain the seeds of a more radical dissent which could erupt into an action threatening society. It is this which moral entrepre-

neurs sense. Where this rebellion has a moral edge to it, it threatens the hegemony of the state. The reaction to this is a cry for law and order, and as long as this rebellion can be reduced to a social problem, or an adolescent phase, then it can be successfully excluded from adult society.

Conclusion

Subcultures have been seen to possess not only their own cultural elements, but often a historical response to their subcultural fashions. Each generation attempts to resolve collectively experienced structural problems, and time has passed sufficiently that through mass media records, youth is able to respond to its own subcultural history. Youth experience gaps between what is happening and what they have been led to believe should happen. Murdock (1974, p. 213) sums this up well:

Subcultures are the meaning system and modes of expression developed by groups in particular parts of the social structure in the course of their collective attempts to come to terms with the contradictions of their shared social situation. More particularly subcultures represent the accumulated meanings and means of expression through which groups in subordinate structural positions have attempted to negotiate or oppose the dominant meaning system. They therefore provide a pool of available symbolic resources which particular individuals or groups can draw on in their attempt to make sense of their own specific situation and construct a viable identity.

In addition to this the strong sense of identification youth has with its peers, neighbourhood, immediate circle of kin, community and locality acts as a divisive force against other groups. Given this it is not hard to explain the respectable youth cohorts. They are those who perceive that they have an investment in the present social structure, and who are then materially reinforced in this investment by work, marriage, dependants and possession of a small amount of property, adopt a conservative stance and an identification with respectability. Conventionality, rebellion or a rejection of some form of respectability (usually a different interpretation of specific aspects of respectability rather than a wholesale rejection of it) is related to the actual age group of young people combined with their class position. Those who have realistically seen school as not related to their future life in routinised labour have different attitudes to those who see a link between education and their future careers. Work is responded to with enthusiasm at first, then

disillusionment, usually followed by subcultural work adaptations which help the worker to deal with the work situation. Similar changes can be noted in those who are unattached from emotional relationships, as distinct from those who are engaged, newly married and so forth. These relationships also reflect an investment in society as it is. The transition from school to work, from unattachment to commitment in emotional relationships, from work as peripheral to work as central to existence, and the influence all these have on identity are important in understanding the social relations young people have to production. The reality of violence which runs through young, working-class, male culture needs to be understood not just as the response to brutalising circumstances, but both as a role and an identity in a masculine career structure, and a muffled and semi-articulate form of communication. These all reflect different relations at different 'moments' to the social structure. Close attention needs to be paid to groups of young people at different stages and at different ages. A start has been made with the links traced between girls and the culture of femininity at school, work and at home, and with connections between shop-floor culture and school-resisting culture among adolescent working-class males along the lines of Willis (1977).

Class inequalities are mediated through subcultures, and the degree of oppression involved is not just simply a matter of life chances, the possession of goods and opportunity systems, as suggested in the Weberian and Mertonian models. Materially we can separate young people, but we need also to observe their class location and their social relations to production. For example, materially students, can be separated from other groups of young people. Numerically they are relatively small. Their income is hard to assess, because it is based on grants, loans and parental assistance but it seems much less than the average wage for a comparative working age group. Their cultural capital is considerably higher, and their opportunity to experiment with ideas and life styles, their moratorium from wage labour all place them in a unique and privileged position. The values of certification from higher education fluctuate according to the market, but nevertheless even with graduate unemployment, the embourgeoisement of minor professions such as social work, administration and nursing still give students a favourable weighting towards employment. They may not receive the jobs they have come to expect so easily but they still have a relative advantage over the rest of the population.

Finally, it must be emphasised that two major forms of response in youthful subcultures are either rebelliousness or coolness. Whilst both celebrate masculinity, the former can take the form of cultural

rebellion, violence, delinquency or criminal activities, whilst the latter manifests itself in various forms of detachment or disaffiliation distancing the actor from his surroundings. The archetype of this is the cool cat of the late 1950s. Both are responses to collectively experienced problems, usually involving deviant ways of achievement, found among rebellious working-class or disaffiliated middle-class youth. In this sense marginality is a feature in youth culture, as the Schwendingers (see Chapter 2) have suggested. The emphasis on masculinity usually reinforces sex roles in youth culture, but not always in a traditional manner. Youth culture has been male dominated and predominantly heterosexual, thus celebrating masculinity and excluding girls to the periphery. We shall examine some of these themes in detail in the following chapters.