CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES

The University of Birmingham, P.O. Box 363, Birmingham B15 2TT

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FADS AND FASHIONS

by

Charles Critcher et al.

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# Fads and Fashions

A Preliminary Survey

Report to Sports Council/SSRC Working Party
on Recreation Research

by

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C O N T E N T S

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

An essential prerequisite to even a modest survey of contemporary fads and fashions is the consideration of potential theoretical orientations. Some kind of framework is necessary to enable selection of the range, depth and interrelationship of the questions to be asked about particular fads and fashions. We have chosen four possible perspectives: theories of mass society and its culture; conceptualizations of the nature of collective behaviour; approaches which relate leisure to other key sociological variables and those analyses which stress the role of culture in the creation of shared and symbolic meanings.

Mass society theory, itself a fashion of American sociology in the late fifties and early sixties (see for example Olson 1963), has roots in both the preoccupation with the decline of 'community' amongst nineteenth century European sociologists and the more specific concerns of the Chicago school between the wars to analyse the dynamics of city life. 'Mass' here is not a synonym for numerical or geographic aggregation, but a description of the predominant form of social relationship. At the same time that changes in the social structure - expanding educational opportunity, social mobility and economic advancement - remove traditional sources of cultural identity, such as class, status or region, the population is besieged by the selective and powerful images of the mass media. The resulting instability of behaviour reflects the ambiguous cultural messages of such a 'mass' society.

For the most part, the specific kinds of cultural analysis engendered by this perspective proved superficial and fragmented, not unlike its underlying theory. Though readers about both the media (Rosenberg and White 1957) and leisure (Larrabee and Meyersohn 1958) appeared, the approach was generally subjective and unsystematic. One of the most suggestive discussions remains that of Louis Wirth a member of the Chicago School. In an essay entitled 'Urbanism as a Way of Life' written in 1938 (Wirth 1964) he paid considerable attention to urban recreation. The urbanite has little incentive or inclination to generate his/her individual or group forms of leisure autonomy and is content to be catered for by the institutions of commercialized leisure. The experience of anomic second-hand relationships and the routinized and

monotonous nature of city life predispose the urban-dweller to forms of escapism and vicarious excitement. The rise of specatorism and the preoccupation with the spectacular are explored, in Wirth's terms, by the suggestibility induced by urban life and the existence of organisations with no other rationale than commercial exploitation. There are many objections to be made to this line of argument: its lack of historical perspective, confusion of structural and psychological factors, naive and unsubstantiated model of mass suggestibility. Yet - and the qualification is an important one - it does provide at least traces of a theoretical perspective and more than occasional insights into particular phenomena. It does draw attention to cultural openness or ambiguity as an essential precursor to instability and to the interests vested in the institutionalized promotion of cultural images. The society may not be so mass, its population not so suggestible and the media not quite as powerful as mass society theory would have us believe, but their revelation of the importance of such factors is in itself valuable.

Mass society theory is primarily a sociological perspective referring only implicitly to psychological factors. Psychology itself does, however, contain a theme which has potential for understanding of fads and fashions: the analyses of collective behaviour. One discussion of this topic (Brown 1965) notes that collective behaviour was for a time removed from the agenda of social psychology because it was not amenable to empiricist methods of analysis. Despite this, there is established a considerable literature on the subject ranging from the nineteenth-century speculations of LeBon to the formalized theory of the Parsonian School in the work of Smelser. Brown argues that fads and fashions are part of the 'restless shuffling of symbols' consequent upon the decline of fixed cultural codes. That much he shares with mass society theory. However he is much more interested in the internal dynamics of fads (which he defines as mad exaggerations of intrinsic worth), as a form of collective behaviour. Though concerned more with riots and violence, his characterization of collective behaviour has wider application. Of particular interest for our purposes is the emphasis placed on the 'anarchic' nature of such behaviour, it remains non-institutionalized, ungoverned by social norms. Fads and fashions may not be quite as extreme as this argument suggests, but their occasional 'irrationality' is explicable through their role as challenges to the normative order. Rarely confrontational, they are nevertheless a form of symbolic dissent, a seeking after alternative codes and rules or their complete absence, where 'anything goes'.

According to Brown, which groups will indulge in such behaviour cannot be predicted on the basis of their structural position; this is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. More important are the modes of communication which exist between the potential participants, the role of individuals or events as 'triggers' for the rest, and the potential participants calculation of the losses and gains to be made from participating. All these questions can be applied to the case of fads and fashions in an effort to analyse the dynamic relationships which underly their introduction and distribution.

Different kinds of relationships are explored by our third perspective, what might be called the 'pluralistic' or 'variables' approach to the understanding of leisure (Parker 1972, 1976; Smith Parker and Smith 1973). Leisure is systematically related to a number of historical structural and cultural variables. Historically leisure has been a key demand of the organised labour movement, less grudgingly conceded as its potential for commercial exploitation became clear. Structurally it is constrained by such factors as the individual's experience of work spending power and family circumstances. Each of these also contributes to the establishment of cultural norms among groups sharing the same life experiences, an influence which cuts across any simple notion of a free market in leisure as well as across the attempts of religious and educational institutions to impose moral or cultural standards. In this analysis age, sex, class and family emerge as crucial determinants of leisure, together with the provision of leisure opportunities by State, voluntary and commercial organisations.

It is difficult to summarize this approach without making it appear more static than it actually is. There is, for example, considerable emphasis placed upon the significance and variability of the meaning of leisure activities. They express human values but not in a necessarily consistent or predictable way. A particular activity may appear to have certain specifiable meanings but there is no guarantee that these are as important to the participant as they may seem to the observer. The same activity undertaken by different people may have different meanings dependant upon the experiences and expectations brought to it. The argument constitues an important warning against presupposing either that the motivations and experiences of the individual can be derived from the inherent properties of the activity, or that the meaning of the activity can be read off from what is known about the predispositions of other people of similar social economic or cultural status to the participant.

The problems of such a pluralistic approach to leisure is that there is never any way of relatively weighing the different factors involved. They are all endlessly related to each other in a shifting and variegated cycle. Neither are we convinced that the range of cultural meanings is quite as individually variable as this approach suggests. Still, some guidelines are evident for a study of fads and fashions particularly the need to relate the phenomena to the structural and cultural influences of society, as mediated through the experiences of individuals and groups.

Each of the three approaches so far discussed tends towards a reduction of human autonomy in its analysis of leisure. Individual or group actions are explicable in terms of mass suggestibility, the psychology of crowd behaviour or the interplay of sociological variables. The restoration of the creativity of human agency has been a primary task of the fourth approach, that of cultural studies. Culture (Williams 1961) rather than leisure is the starting point. A whole range of political familial and recreational activities are 'read for values' initially in a way which owed much to literary criticism (Hoggart 1958) but which has now been elaborated and even extended to social history (Thompson 1963). Culture is essentially the creation of meanings: symbols and institutions which serve this purpose are initiated or appropriated as expressions of group indentity. Culture is also inseparable from class; as a 'whole way of life', in Williams phrase, it gives expression to the sense of shared experience which constitutes class consciousness. The creation of culture is not a free-floating experience; it is constrained by the more general structuring of class relationships. What matters from this perspective is the set of cultural values embodied in any activity and their interaction with the culture of the class as a whole, not just its leisure activities. There are problems with this still relatively immature theory: a lack of proper historical sense, a residual subjectivity of method, an unease as to the restructuring of class by the factors of sex, youth and race, and, despite much genuflection towards the political and economic arenas, a narrow focus upon leisure and recreational aspects. For fads and fashions its potential may be threefold. Firstly it stresses that fads and fashions as an element of culture will be meaningful activities, human creations. Secondly it suggests that the values incorporated into the activity will relate to other aspects of the participant groups culture at the level of symbolic meaning. Thirdly, in its adherence to a model which allows for both relatively autonomous human activities and their determination by social influences, it potentially provides a means of analysis which is both dynamic and historically specific. When it comes to the cultural interpretation of fads and fashions this perspective has much to offer.

## DEFINING THE FIELD

We have tried to examine four established approaches to the study of leisure and popular culture to assess how far their general theoretical frameworks can be made applicable to the study of fads and fashions. They have provided a number of possible lines of enquiry to pursue, identified by extending what is generally a discussion about mainstream leisure activities to the more 'marginal' case of fads and fashions. As yet, however we have not defined the nature of this marginality and it seems important, before proceeding any farther, to make some attempt to define the field.

Definition is not easy: linguistically and conceptually a 'fad' is rather different from a 'fashion'. The first suggests ephemerality and instability (not least psychologically, hence the synonym 'craze'), while the second suggests a more stable pattern of change within the canons of conventional taste. The looseness and contradiction of the joint category is evident from the range of possible topics with which we were at first presented. For example, bingo and skateboarding are different in their commercial bases, the age and sex of the groups for which they are designed and the durability of their appeal. That both may not fit into any category established by leisure research may be a reason for putting them together, but it is difficult to transform a miscellaneous category into an adequate social scientific concept.

We have therefore considered how far fads and fashions might be differentiated from 'mainstream' leisure by the institutional and historical processes which underly them. Fads and fashions often appear as innovations within the framework of established leisure industries. From the most manifest examples of clothes and records to less obvious ones, such as hairstyles and alcoholic drinks, there is evidence of the permanent institutionalization of a series of temporary fads and fashions. One particular style or form may need to be understood as an inherent part of this general process.

The process is also open to historical analysis. The increased leisure time and spending power emergent amongst some social groups between the wars opened up new markets, especially women and children, for the 'new' leisure industries. The media - newspapers and magazines, films and later television - provided the means by which trend-setters could spread their messages (film stars seem to have been particularly influential) and manufactures advertise the goods which enable others to follow suit.

This may seem obvious. But such an historical and institutional account may help us to realise that however extraordinary this or that fad or fashion may appear, it may be quite a normal part of established commercial practice. At the same time, it should not be thought that the commercial promotion of fads and fashions is a straight forward process. It may be possible to obtain an immediate experimental 'try-anything-once' consumer response, but the object or activity will not keep its attraction unless it expresses meanings valued by its public.

A fad or fashion, then, needs to be situated historically and institutionally and the interchange between commercial promotion and consumer response examined. An area of study which has examined those questions and therefore seems a relevant one to consider is that of youth culture.

THE CASE OF YOUTH CULTURE

In post-war Britain youth has become the key example used when fashion and changing taste have been discussed because it has been within youth culture, that the most visible and dramatic changes of taste and style - the dress music and dance especially - appear to have taken place (Hall and Jefferson 1976, Mungham and Pearson 1976). It is possible to identify youth sub-cultures well before the war but the expansion of the consumer power of young people has allowed their cultural volatility to take a new dimension. Yet youth culture is not homogeneous; it remains differentiated by class, sex and race, which structure the availability and appropriations of a particular style.

Style, here, plays the role of a social and symbolic expression of a social position of the involved group. It is a statement of and about identity. The discrete meaning of a particular object or activity may be radically redefined by being resituated within a whole style, of which commercially provided elements may be only a part. The style may



be openly oppositional, implicitly subversive or, in its reproduction of sexual and racial subordination, ultimately conservative. Similar ambiguity is evident in its relationship to commercial provision; youth culture may lead or follow attempts to establish marketable commodities.

The question of this mass commercial provision can best be represented as involving a double movement of diffusion and defusion. By diffusion we mean the generalising of the style across a broad range of potential customers, including those who do not necessarily share any of the social locations and cultural predispositions of the original grouping. But this generalising also necessarily involves an element of defusion; the object or activity loses, as it must to appeal to a wider audience, the cultural meanings which originally gave it resonance.

This crude and reductive summary of aspects of youth culture serves to exemplify the complexities (not least methodological and conceptual) which arise when theoretical approaches are tested against emperical data. A fad or fashion within youth culture may be subject to a range of determinants, carry a number of contradictory meanings and have variously commercial or autonomously cultural roots. That each particular phenomenon needs to be understood in its own individual complexity, yet can potentially reveal consistent processes and inter-relationships, is not the least consideration which the study of fads and fashions can derive from existing analyses of youth culture.

THE ROLE OF THE CASE STUDIES

Early in our deliberations it became obvious that the theoretically and empirically undeveloped state of the field required more than substantive review: we would have to make some original contribution ourselves. We therefore decided to undertake a selection of case studies. These were selected on a number of criteria: those which incorporated a range of age, sex and class groups, one or two suggested by the funding body and felt subjectively to be significant and some falling within the research interests and competence of those available to do the work. This resulted in six studies: bingo, discotheques, Kung-Fu, pool, skate-boarding and squash. The constraints were considerable and in most cases we could do little more than raid the Sports Council's files, dig out a few crucial texts and scour established leisure texts for references. Our approach to each was informed by the kinds of theoretical considerations

elucidated in this introduction. To make the studies comparable we identified a number of aspects each should consider. These were the history of the activity; such statistics and other 'hard' data as were available; the trends trajectories and determinants evident from its development; a descriptive account of the basic constituents of the phenomenon and an attempt to assess its cultural significance and meaning. The choice of case studies and their format may seem somewhat arbitrary but we felt they were a fair compromise between the theoretically desirable and the empirically viable. Some sacrifice of flexibility was felt to be necessary in the cause of standardization. This established a number of thematic concerns common to all the case studies which form the basis of the overview with which our conclusion begins.



## THE CASE STUDIES

### CASE STUDY 1 : BINGO

#### HISTORY

Bingo is a form of gambling, a lottery played as a game. The term 'lottery' applies to the distribution of prizes by chance and nothing but chance, that is, by doing something which is equivalent to drawing lots. Known variously as lotto, housey-housey, keno or bingo, the game was first played in Italy in the fifteenth century. Taken up as a parlour game in Britain and America in the nineteenth century, its real expansion came with its adoption as one of the few approved forms of gambling in the British armed forces at the beginning of this century.

Gambling in Britain is conducted on the basis of the Betting and Gaming Act 1960, subsequently partly amended by the Betting and Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 and the Gaming Act 1968. The rapid growth of commercial bingo clubs followed the passage of the 1960 Act, and was directly related to the decline of the cinema and the increase in Television ownership. It is important that women who were a large part of the cinema audience in the post-war years now became the bingo fans. Cinemas which had originally been built to accommodate the new 'movie-craze' were often converted into bingo halls. By converting the establishments into clubs, though in practice opening them to all comers and confining the profits to participation changes to which bingo lends itself, the game could be promoted commercially while keeping within the law which had been framed with members clubs in mind. The first commercial bingo hall was opened in 1961, at the Carlton Rooms, Maida Vale, by Mecca, who set out specifically to cater for women. Despite sustained attacks by outraged moralists bingo rapidly grew in popularity throughout the sixties.

#### STATISTICS

At the end of 1976 the number of licensed bingo clubs was 1,634, spread throughout the country. About a quarter of these were owned by four large organisations, EMI, Mecca, Ladbrokes and Rank and at the other end of the scale, there were 463 clubs run by individual proprietors with only one licence each. (Licences are granted by the Gaming Board of Great Britain). Virtually all premises were converted cinemas or other buildings, and seating capacity varies from under 500 to over 2,000.

Clubs are represented by two trading associations. The British Bingo Association and the National Association of Licenced Bingo and Social Clubs. The Gaming Board of Great Britain Report 1977, reports that during the past 3 years i.e. 1973-76, the number of licenced bingo clubs has declined from the levelling out figure of about 1,800 to 1,740. They also note that major organisations have tended to sell off less profitable clubs to smaller operators, who are able to run them at a reasonable profit with less overheads. 1974 was the peak year for clubs the total for England, Wales and Scotland being 1,820. The Gaming Board Annual report for 1976 stated that during the course of that year more than 5.5 million people played bingo with some degree of regularity. Of these, about 4 million played at least once a month and many of them more frequently. Not all played at licenced clubs, bingo sessions are also played at Working Men's clubs and elsewhere. According to the Royal Commission on Gambling, throughout this country bingo has become one of the most popular of all pastimes, largely displacing cinema and far outstripping spectator attendances at sporting events. The law requires that in bingo played otherwise than as amusements with prizes, all stakes must be returned in winnings except for the deduction of excise duty which is now 5%. Revenue from these games is gained from admission or participation charges which vary from 15p-25p and participation charges varying from 10p-20p per book. The amount spent, of course, depends on how many games the participant takes part in and also how many books are handled in each game. There are also interval games and these are played for prizes which are usually vouchers or coupons which can be collected and exchanged for goods, usually sweets, tobacco, groceries or cosmetics, tights etc. Men spend more than women but the average outlay is remarkably consistent at around £2.71. Of this only 88p is 'real' expenditure as the rest is recouped as winnings.

TRENDS TRAJECTORIES AND DETERMINANTS

The factors which have already determined the development peak of the game are those inherent in the industry's growth which was largely determined by the commercial outlay on the game during the 1960's. It is generally felt that bingo has passed its peak but that it will continue to be a vast industry and leisure activity. Basically the changes which the industry sees are in the form of improving the facilities at their existing bingo premises rather than expanding into new clubs. The improvement of refreshments, seating and other provisions may widen bingo's appeal as well as increasing profitable sidelines. The predominant ownership of



bingo halls by the large leisure conglomerates (Mecca, Granada, Top Rank, Ladbroke's etc.) ensures that there will be no lack of capital investment, though as elsewhere they will pull out quickly once profits start to fall, in which case bingo will revert to the small scale entrepreneurs who first began it. The 'market' is largely that of married women and in the absence of alternatives bingo is likely to maintain its hold. There is certainly evidence of commercial organisations seeking to meet the leisure needs of this group in a sensitive and unusual way.

DESCRIPTION

Bingo is a lottery played as a game. Each player receives from his/her stake a set of numbers which s/he has not chosen. These are marked off against numbers selected at random and announced by a caller and the winner is the person who can first substantiate a claim to have marked off all those, or a particular section of those, in the set s/he has been given. The length of each game varies from one to three minutes and is governed by the number of players, how many numbers are included in the section and what proportion of these have to be marked off to claim a prize.

Bingo is played predominantly by the working class and although sometimes played by couples, it remains mainly an activity of middle-aged women. The short duration of sessions (two hours) and their location in mid-afternoon or early evening reflect the leisure availability of this group. Possibly the game too reflects their cultural interests: relatively unskilled with everyone with an equal chance, firmly structured yet framed by an atmosphere of sociability, competitive but unaggressive. It also has a continuity; if you didn't win tonight, there's always 'next time'.

CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

The essence of bingo is that it is one of the few socially and culturally acceptable leisure activities for working-class women. As a 'night out for the girls' it seems importantly to meet with the approval of husbands, who presumably feel that it is safe for their women to go to a place where - unlike pubs or night clubs - they are unlikely to meet other men. Bingo is thus structured by male definitions of what is acceptable to them as leisure for their women and the removal of this constraint might cause bingo to lose some of its appeal.

However, sexuality is present in 'Bingo' despite its appearance. The women who play bingo often see both the manager and the bingo caller in a personal manner. In fact, the companies see their manager as needing one of three possible images - grandson, son or father. The women playing bingo treat the management as 'friends', knitting baby clothes when the manager's wife may be pregnant, and telling their own problems to the manager. The domestic and cultural values of femininity are taken over into the leisure activity and become part of the way that women experience their leisure. Coupled with the 'confident' - friend nature of the manager, is the sexual fantasy image which is sometimes attributed to the bingo caller. The professionalisation of the bingo caller, who takes pride in his slick speech is similar to the radio disc jockey whose quick and easy patter is part of his 'act'. There is also a connection between these two characters in terms of their both being seen as sexual fantasy figures in the lives of the women who are denied the 'cultural' and actual freedom or space within which they may have the opportunity to meet other men.

Bingo has been seen as a mindless passive activity which women follow with no apparent creativity or personal development, unlike the great male participatory sports and leisure activities. However, there is within bingo the possibility and evidence of, the creation of cultural forms which are added to the basic activity by the women themselves. There is little possibility of the management varying the game and they rely on the creation of diversions and 'entertainments' by the participants. Even the 'trouble-maker' complaining about the running of the game, is used to advantage by the management, who do not have to be 'repressive or harsh' about the treatment of offenders because the other members of the audience will be censoring the behaviour of any deviants. Incidents are turned into entertainments to add to the routines of the game, and provide interesting diversions. Although bingo is seen as a form of gambling, and strictly controlled by gambling legislation it does not readily appear to be seen by the participants as betting but rather as a form of recreation. The purchase of the bingo books is also the buying of an opportunity for pleasure and not analogous to the betting on horse racing or football pools which are the other major forms of working class gambling.

FURTHER RESEARCH

An important consideration here would be the extent to which bingo is framed by cultural definitions of women's leisure as mediated through



the approval of their menfolk. To know what extent bingo is enjoyed for its own sake, or simply because it is one of the only possibilities open to married women, would tell us much about the reasons for the game's popularity and have implications for our understanding of female leisure as a whole.

The most appropriate research methods would be participant observation in bingo clubs and further interviews with the women and men who go to these clubs to see the role which bingo and other leisure activities play in their lives. It would also be necessary to do specific case studies and larger institutional research into the provision, profitability and institutional determinations on the available leisure provision. It is important that further research is carried out in this field because the neglected area of leisure for working class women is clearly represented and available in this massive leisure activity.

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CASE STUDY 2 : DISCO

HISTORY

Dance, as a regular, organised and specialist leisure activity, has been a central part of British popular culture since the First World War. The innovation of discotheques over the last fifteen years shows both continuities and breaks with previously established forms. There have been dance crazes before, often linked to new musical forms: the Charleston and jazz, the twist or jive and rock and roll, more recently pogo and punk. However, going to disco and listening to disco music doesn't prescribe the nature of the dance. You don't do the disco. The disco is apparently equivalent to the dance hall as the venue for whatever form of dancing is fashionable. But, as we hope to show below, the disco contains and defines music and dance in a more active and enveloping way than the traditional dance hall or 'palais'.

The form of the discotheque, like the name, is French in origin. It was in part the unavailability and/or expense of leading groups and bands for live musical performances which prompted the switch to records in the late sixties. But it also related to more general trends in the development of youth culture. Music penetrated all aspects of this life style, an integral part of the newly structured sites of consumption such as boutiques, bistros and hairdressers. Clothing assumed increasing importance as a form of self-expressivity, as did 'free form' kinds of dancing.

The dissemination, though not necessarily the instigation, of new kinds of styles in music, clothing and dance became the primary, though not exclusive, province of the mass media - films, records, radio and specialist magazines. The influence of black culture was central; black performers displayed to white audiences not only their music but how to dance to it.

Black American music, European youth culture and multi-national media institutions interacted in complex ways to produce the discotheque. Yet, though a cultural innovation, it maintained traditional social functions. The disco 'discourse' has adopted the traditional working class image of the Saturday night out, bestowing on it new, more glamorous and upmarket connotations, yet has retained the implicit



underlying contrast between boring, routine work and the expressive, exciting weekend. Disco's apparent originality, especially its music, should not blind us to the retention and recovery of older continuities.

STATISTICS AND RELATED DATA

Detailed statistical information is difficult to track down for two specific reasons. First the disco 'explosion' is recent and as yet more or less undocumented; second the very nature of disco itself, at least in the form it has taken until very recently, hinders easy analysis. Mobile discoes and clubs are elusive, very much one-man businesses and often short-lived. Further, the kinds of local non-profit-making discotheques organised by schools, youth clubs or private individuals defy statistical or economic analysis. Even the economic basis of more organised forms remains partially obscured, since profits stem more from sales of food and drink than from entrance charges.

But of the potential profitability of disco there can be no doubt. Between 1971 and 1974 the estimated annual (UK) turnover of the discotheque business rose from 45 to 52 million pounds. In roughly the same period production of single records increased almost forty per cent from 53 to 72 million per annum. The film 'Saturday Night Fever' (1978) demonstrated the interrelated profitability of disco, film and records. The real long-term profit came less from the film itself than from the soundtrack, which grossed a quarter of a billion dollars in America alone. Providing the model for a whole new discotheque style had become a massively profitable business.

In Britain too, the prospect of such profit invited capital investment from leisure conglomerates. Corporations like EMI and the Rank Organisation came progressively to extend their ownership from cinema chains and record companies to discotheques, a process achieved by buying out smaller firms and instituting specific internal sections to exploit the discotheque market. Disco's success, then, must be seen in terms of this role as a kind of youth cultural 'crucible' where admission costs are merely one surface manifestation of the greater but more hidden returns.

TRENDS TRAJECTORIES AND DETERMINANTS

Discos could not exist without a number of factors. The most obvious are the spending power of young consumers (not only for entrance fees but for clothes); the technology of sound and lighting systems; the mass production of records. But these composite elements are less important as determinants of disco than its ability to fuse different aspects of youth culture and reproduce the relationships between cultural expressivity and economic profitability which underpin it.

In terms of its economic history, disco emerged on the fringe of the leisure market, being for along time the monopoly of small-scale entrepreneurs. While the massive capital investment in disco by the leisure conglomerates may ensure their future economic dominance, they clearly were not responsible for, and did not anticipate, its original growth.

Declining profitability is always possible in such a notoriously unpredictable corner of the leisure market as that occupied by youth culture. While its future cannot be assured, it has a number of factors in its favour. It is relatively cheap for both the entrepreneur and the consumer. It offers a site for the display of clothing and dance, the cultural importance of which seems unlikely to fade, whilst incorporating the equally durable influence of music. It offers an opportunity of members of the opposite sex to meet each other freed from overrigorous codes and conventions about sexual initiatives. It seems, in short, that disco is in the process of becoming an institutionalized part of contemporary youth culture. The fading of its popularity would represent less the inevitable decline of a passing fad than a radical change in the cultural formations of young people.

DESCRIPTION

Disco is one of the most popular forms of recreation today. It embraces both ends of the young leisure market, since entrances fees vary from as little as a pound to three pounds or more. The audience for discos consists predominantly of young people in their teens and early twenties. In its most commercialized - and expensive - forms it appeals to white-collar groups but less affluent groups, such as ethnic minorities and school children (mainly girls), have their own less sophisticated variations.



A disco is generally small - more like a night club than a dance hall - and much depends on the atmosphere, at once intimate and uninhibited. The music is pre-recorded and loud enough to make normal conversation virtually impossible, especially as the music is continuous. There are generally facilities for eating and drinking, important, as we have seen, for overall profit. But for the participant it is the display of style in dress and dancing which is crucial; decor, music and lighting are designed to this effect. The emphasis is very much on 'doing your own thing' within the guidelines laid down by immediate notions of style. This structured flexibility extends to patterns of sexual interaction. No one has to wait to ask or be asked to dance; groups of one or both sexes, or individuals alone, are free to dance as they wish. Though often perceived as morally dangerous there is little evidence to support this interpretation of the disco; overt forms of sexual affection are strictly discouraged, as are any signs of aggression.

CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

Discos vary in the sophistication of technological equipment, the cost of entrance fee and refreshments, the lavishness of decor and the social composition of the audience. The common objective of enjoyment is thus achieved in subtly different ways, according to the particular combination of these factors. There are, however, a number of constants which characterize the culture of the disco floor.

By far the most general and essential feature is disco music. Constantly developing its root form of sixties 'soul' music, the loud insistent bass line invites, even compels, physical response. The continuity of the music and its danceability are the responsibilities of the disc jockey, who has to fulfill the expectations of the audience and judge the acceptability of new 'sounds'.

Without music, the fundamental cultural meaning of disco would be lost. But disco also functions right across the sociological board, as a forum display and style; it is the location, par excellence, for the expression of high fashion, the 'latest' in clothes. Freed from the sartorial restrictions of work, the disco dancer can display his/her 'real' self, admire the style of fellow dancers and swap ideas for next weeks outfit. The display is both individual and sexual. Again continuity and innovation are apparent. Disco is one of the main avenues to the formation of sexual/emotion relationships, for finding a boy or girlfriend. Yet

also it signifies a kind of sexual independence and self-sufficiency. That a 'partner' of the opposite sex is not required in order to dance suggests that sexual interaction may be anticipated but not regarded as essential. This self-sufficiency, especially significant for women, and girls, is lyrically expressed in much disco music.

Music and dance, clothes and sexuality, together constitute the style of the disco and its social codes. It is at once economically controlled by the institutions of the mass media and leisure conglomerates, yet has a relatively autonomous cultural expressivity of its own. To what extent this is an inherent tension only further investigation could demonstrate.

FURTHER RESEARCH

It is patently obvious that disco is massively under-researched, as a result of which our analysis has had to be skeletal. The kind of research which is necessary might include the following:

1) reconstructing the history of the disco, both its specific chronological evolution and its relationship to concomitant cultural trends;

2) surveying the institutional and economic bases of the whole spectrum of discotheque forms and their relationship to other leisure structures, especially the mass media;

3) comparing the social and ethnic composition of different kinds of discos and their location within existing leisure subcultures;

4) tracing the instigation, dissemination and dissolution of styles of music, dance and clothing;

5) observing the informal and formal structures of social and cultural control within the disco, especially with regard to social mores.



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CASE STUDY 3 : KUNG FU/KARATE

HISTORY

The Japanese martial arts, the most important of which are either recent introductions (Karate introduced into Japan in 1923) or systemizations (Judo from 1882), seem to have provided an important symbol of national identity in Japan during a period of cultural change and, in turn, to be seen as bearers of Japanese culture when they were systematically exported to the West. A form of Jiujitsu was introduced into Britain around 1889, Judo from 1918, and Karate in the late 1950's and early 1960's. A 'soft' style of the Chinese art of Kung Fu had been taught in London from 1930.

In 1972 at the Cannes Film Festival, Hong Kong-produced martial arts films, which had been circulating in the Far East for some time, 'took off' in the international film market, possibly because they provided a new variant on the recently established genre of films based on stylized violence. Between 1973 and 1976 Kung Fu films, especially those starring Bruce Lee, were widely exhibited in this country, while ITV purchased and showed a Kung Fu television series from America. Unlike other forms of stylized violence (crime, war, western) the Kung Fu genre contained the potential for the fantasy to be partially realised. The Kung Fu 'fad' was an unintended consequence of this innovation in forms of fictional fantasy. The interaction between this available model and the cultural predispositions amongst relatively deprived groups of working class males produced, in ways which remain to be analysed in future research, a boom in both Japanese and Chinese martial arts. The British public had been earlier primed by glimpses of the Asian martial arts in such films as A Bad Day at Black Rock (1955), the James Bond films, and on television, 'The Saint' and 'The Avengers'. Initially many charlatan Kung Fu instructors cashed in, leading to an attempt at self regulation through the Kung Fu Council (formed 1974). Some Kung Fu instructors were imported from Hong Kong, but the process was not as systematic as the earlier Japanese invasion. Official attempts to regulate the violent martial arts have included the setting up of the British Karate Control Commission (BKCC) in 1968 with co-opted police officers, following a 'karate killing') and, in 1977, a new umbrella organisation expanded to include Kung Fu - the Martial Arts Commission (MAC). Recent developments have included the introduction of professional 'full contact' karate from the USA in the mid 1970's.



STATISTICS AND RELATED DATA

'Official' estimates of participants, based on licence returns, are inadequate. The large number of styles of karate and Kung Fu, the splits in organisations (from which even the largest organisations are not immune e.g. in 1974 Shotokan Karate International split off from the K.U.G.B.) the number of 'unlicensed' practitioners, the high turnover of membership in any martial art, the often local basis of organisation and the ad hoc premises in which clubs meet (e.g. church halls, schools), all these factors make accurate estimation of numbers of practitioners impossible at the present time. The MAC claimed a membership of 16,558 on December 31st 1977. Of these, about 1,700 were in Jiujitsu and Kendo, which do not emphasize the use of blows with hands or feet, so may be discounted for our purposes. However, the membership of the Karate Union of Great Britain (K.U.G.B.), about 9,500 in 1977, must be added, making a total of approximately 24,500. Making an allowance for the membership of smaller organisations and unregistered practitioners, we arrive at an estimated total of 35,000. The turnover must be guessed at, but is certainly very high - perhaps 90% wastage every year for new members. A large number of individuals will have passed through Karate/Kung Fu classes. Membership figures provided by the K.U.G.B. show the effect of Kung Fu as a 'craze' on Karate, since between 1973 and 1974, membership shot up from 5,088 to 14,824, of whom 11,528 were new members. Membership of the K.U.G.B. has now stabilised at around 9,500, and it seems reasonable to assume a similar levelling off for other styles. Provision is almost totally private/commercial, with fees going towards the hire of premises and a fee for the instructor. A handful of top instructors and a small number of martial arts schools may have derived a considerable income from instructing, at the peak of interest; but in general this has not been the case, and where sizeable profits have been made, they have derived instead from the sale of martial arts equipment, and martial arts books and magazines.

DESCRIPTION

Japanese style Karate, the relationship of which to Kung Fu is historically complex, depends upon the development of individual expertise within a strict framework of formal discipline. Coloured belts denote skill grades. Training, which is physically exhausting, consists of the practice of kicks and punches, free fighting without contact and 'kata' - the performance of a sequence of moves against imaginary attacks. The

relative emphasis on basics and free fighting may vary widely. A considerable amount of training is required to develop reasonable skill. Kung Fu is similar in many ways but is less formally structured and has a greater multiplicity of styles and approaches. There is sometimes an emphasis on Chinese philosophy and techniques of meditation.

Kung Fu seems to have induced a wider variety of venues and formats. At one end of the spectrum are the tournaments between individuals or teams, where the vocal support of the spectators tends to undermine more formal notions of discipline. At the other end, Kung Fu has been taken onto the streets, where the culture of the street corner incorporates a certain amount of Kung Fu feinting, buttressed by frequent attendance at Bruce Lee films.

CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

The essential characteristics of the practice of Karate/Kung Fu, are that it is highly demanding, both physically and in terms of time and 'commitment', involves the experience of fear under controlled conditions, and, as a highly individualistic sport is crucially concerned with questions of personal identity. Above all the martial arts provide a celebration of, and a means of acquiring the 'masculine' attributes of bravery, stoicism, (controlled) aggression, and physical power. The fantasy element, important in many sports, is also important in Kung Fu, since it offers a means of acquiring physical power. The Kung Fu films often draw on images of the lone individual correcting injustices imposed by the rich and powerful. The practitioners of Karate/Kung Fu are overwhelmingly young (12-25), male, and working class. There may be a tendency for clubs to concentrate in traditional manual working class areas, such as Liverpool. There are also a considerable number of teenage girl followers, and a growing number of female practitioners, as evidenced by the formation of the Womens Martial Arts Union in 1978. There is a very strong, continuing interest among male West Indian youths, especially in participating in free fighting in tournaments, and in watching Kung Fu films, now shown at special late night showings. The West Indian culture is one which puts especially strong stress on 'masculinity' and West Indian youths, faced with the prospect of unemployment, or menial jobs, are especially likely to value the alternative route to status achievement which the martial arts provide. There does not seem to be the same interest among Asian youths.



The Karate/Kung Fu phenomena must also be seen in the light of a rapid growth in participation of the combat sports of amateur boxing, olympic wrestling, and Judo, over the last five years. (Information from Amateur Boxing Association, English Olympic Wrestling Association and British Judo Association). The reasons for this are not clear.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Because of the looseness of its structure and the absence of commercially or publicly induced research, there is a faucity of accurate basic information concerning the numbers of practitioners, their age, sex, social class and regional distribution, as well as more specific facts, such as the extent of wastage of new recruits. The absence of major sponsors makes Kung Fu, and to a lesser extent Karate, almost 'underground' activities dependent on the resources of the devotees themselves. One topic for investigation therefore, would be the extent to which this is potentially a more widely-based 'fad', the development of which is blocked by the absence of facilities. The costs of travel and payment for hire of halls and instructors mean that the potential participant must be prepared to expend considerable time and expense, which may be sufficient to deter all but the ultra-enthusiast. The range of different forms of these activities may well reflect such problems of access and economics, as well as the sites and forms of leisure already established within the social group. The case of West Indian youth might be taken as a study of the relative importance of such factors, as might be rather different case of female participation.

The rather dense and elusive nature of the data necessary to increase our knowledge about Kung Fu and Karate might point to a regional study, perhaps based on one city, in which the breadth and depth necessary might prove more viable than in any attempt at a nation-wide survey. The emphasis would have to be on uncovering and interrelating the networks on which the activities depend rather than on more direct institutional analysis.

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CASE STUDY 4 : THE GAME OF POOL

HISTORY

Pool is a variation of snooker, itself a development of billiards and first codified in its modern form by a British army officer in India in 1875. At first restricted, like billiards, to 'gentlemen', it spread downwards into the English working-class during the twenties. Many snooker halls were built during the depression and they became the 'natural' place for many unemployed men to spend their days indoors: cheap, sociable, with illicit betting on the side. The Temperance movement adopted snooker as a strategy against the attraction of drink for the unemployed, who were thus kept off the streets and away from the pubs. It is through its association with the depression and Temperance that the snooker hall acquired its reputation: uncommercialized, slightly seedy, a men's club with a game instead of alcohol as its focus.

In the United States pool halls gained a similar status and image, though without Temperance links and with a slightly more subterranean (and semi-criminal) character. It was not until the 1970s that a concerted effort was made to import the game of pool into Britain. The table was reduced to one-third its original size in order to fit its most suitable venue, the public house. This 'fad' was thus not a discrete entity but an innovative form of the pub game, itself established as an integral part of pub culture. Unlike the traditional form of snooker, or more modern games like squash, pool does not have its own social and physical space built around it. Pool is an addition to an existing institution and not to be understood apart from it. This fact has important implications for analysis.

STATISTICS AND HARD DATA

It is estimated that one in three pubs now has a pool table; a smaller ratio than for darts. It has been specifically introduced to generate profit. Whereas traditionally pub games (darts, dominoes etc.) produced no independent profit (and may according to some sources have decreased profit by detracting from 'pure' drinking) pool, like jukeboxes and electronic games, creates a space for profitable investment for more than just the manufacturer.

A game will cost the participant between 10p and 20p a game; a regularly used table is expected to swallow between £1000 and £1500 a year. The capital outlay for a pool table is between £60 and £100 and overheads are low. The Music Hire group (Leeds), initially a company of juke box operators, took on pool and as a result increased its pre-tax profit fifty-fold between 1972 and 1976. Depending on brewery policy, a table may be rented via the brewery, directly from an independent operator or bought outright by the publican. The profit derived from pool remains a topic for further investigation, as do the respective roles played by promoting firms, breweries and publicans in its introduction.

TRENDS TRAJECTORIES AND DETERMINANTS

Pool spread rapidly between 1974 and 1977, since when it has remained stable. Essential to its development was its physical and cultural 'fit' with the pub as a leisure institution. The basics of the game could be retained on a small table (unlike snooker), while its simplicity enabled it to replace the rather esoteric knowledge required to play bar billiards. Pool is 'democratic' in that everyone can play it straightaway, yet the connection can still be made to the more complex and at the top level largely professionalized skills of snooker.

Pool is one of those profitable innovations in the pub, like jukeboxes and electronic games, which are also approved of by the patrons. A table will dominate a small bar and the publican will only accept such a physical alteration if it encourages or at least does not displace regular custom. Pool seems likely to become a fixture in working-class pubs until the customers refuse to tolerate its existence or are presented with an alternative.

DESCRIPTION

Pool is based on the same principles as snooker, though details of play may vary from pub to pub until standardized by leagues and other forms of competition. There are 15 numbered balls, seven striped, seven solid and one black 'eight ball', with additionally the white cue ball. 'Eight ball' is played in most pubs where each player endeavours to 'pocket' his seven (striped or solid) balls and then the black before his opponent. That more complex rules can be imposed on such a simple basic framework widens its appeal and potential for the development of skill.



Each game consists of two individuals pitted against one another. However, in all pubs where pool is played regularly, each person must 'chalk up' for his/her game and will play the winner of the previous game - at the challenger's expense. Apart from the queue of those wanting to play, a number of people are likely to watch, so each game takes on a group character.

Pubs have started to form their own teams, playing other pubs on a casual or league basis. Commercially - sponsored national and world championships have been instigated though as yet little media coverage has been attracted.

Pool is generally situated in the public or roughest bar; never in the lounge. It is mainly a male game but women are not systematically excluded and their participation is not denigrated. It seems to attract mainly the younger age group, but older players, often with some experience of snooker, are also evident. As a male, recreational, cheap and sociable pastime it fits neatly with the culture of the public bar.

CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

Although pool can be highly competitive between two individuals, the game is normally of a relaxed and sociable character. Players and spectators will comment on play, discuss tactics and arbitrate in disputes. It is often forgotten that an important function of pub games is to enable social intercourse between strangers. When your turn comes you will play whoever happens to have won the previous game, whether you know them or not. Newcomers are thus easily assimilated into established groups in a way which would be much more difficult in the absence of a common focus. Since little or no apprenticeship is required in the skills of the game, there is no discrimination against the notice. This particularly facilitates the acceptance of women - in contrast, for example, to darts.

The game remains framed however by the predominantly male ethos of the pub. It has also taken its place alongside pin tables in the slightly disreputable cafes frequented by those who are male, young or unemployed - or all three. In an ironic twist of history pool has to come to be the great time-filler of the unemployed as snooker once did between the wars.

Pool's great asset seems to be its flexibility. It can involve the skilled and the beginner, the 'regular' and the 'casual', the player and the spectator, the young and the old, the men and their girlfriends or

wives (though rarely the unattached female). It is more than compatible with the pattern of drinking and socialbility on which the pub is based; it can, in the form of a pub team, become expressive of the institutions corporate character. It is less difficult to see why it has been such a successful innovation than why it was not tried before. A suitably adapted game and its importation and promotion by commercial interests have coalesced in ensuring a change of form but continuity and extension of function, in this latest pub game.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Pool is an example of a leisure innovation which does not appear 'faddish' because it is situated within an established institution. Nevertheless in charting change in leisure patterns pool may be significant force, soon no doubt to lay claim to that well-worn claim of 'Britains fastest - frowing game'. It's evolution may reveal important aspects of commercial and cultural innovation. It should be possible to reconstruct a history of its importation, especially the role of independent commercial operators and their relationship to breweries. At the same time the trend towards organised competition would provide a case study of the emergence of voluntatily organised leisure organisations. Connections should be made with both the changing dynamics of the pub and with the culture of the irregularly or permanently unemployed. A range of techniques would need to be employed: investigation of relevant economic organisations, interviews of key personnel especially publicans, participant observation in pubs and cafes.



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CASE STUDY 5: SKATEBOARDING

HISTORY

Skateboarding originated in the USA over 30 years ago on the West Coast, when surfers, on days when conditions were unsuitable for surfing, improvised with roller skates, turning them into 'dry surfboards'. It was not, however, until the mid sixties that skateboarding expanded in the USA and even then it remained closely related to the 'surfing subculture'.

It first appeared in England on a significant scale in 1976. By the autumn of 1977 skateboarding had gained official recognition and status as a sport, with the founding of the Skateboarding Association and the sponsorship of the Sports Council. There was immense press and media coverage that year, with bbc's 'Nationwide' programme promoting its own National Skateboarding Championship. Further commercial exploitation occurred ranging from more elaborate basic equipment and safety clothes to specially marketed magazines. The peak came at Christmas 1977 but by the middle of the following year it had all but disappeared as a 'mass movement' despite continuing attempts to promote it.

STATISTICS AND RELATED DATA

It is impossible to estimate the number of skateboards at any one time since it remains largely an informal and uninstitutionalised activity. Membership of the official clubs encouraged by the Skateboarding Association is thus an unreliable indicator. However it is known that two million skateboards were sold in England in 1977 but the size of the 'rump' remaining after the peak cannot be estimated from existing information.

A huge range and standard of equipment is still available. A skateboard may cost anything from £4 [illegible] lar range [illegible] clothing and safety equipment (crash helmets, elbow and knee protectors, gloves and so on) which are recognised as an essential part of skateboarders attire, even if the compositie style seem as important as any specific concern with safety. Access to a Skate Park - an area built specifically for skateboarding activities - is rare, cheap and rarely free. In the fifteen privately owned parks listed in 'Skateboarding' magazine, the price per person ranged from 5p per hour to 25p per day. the average cost being 30-40p per 2-3 hours. Facilities varied accordingly. Of the 15, 11 were outdoor, of which 6 were floodlit, 5 opened 7 days a week and 6 at least one ''late night' session; 11 claimed first aid facilities; 13 had shops for sales of equipment and all offered it on hire; 14 offered food and refreshment; 7 held discoes and 11 others forms of amusement.



Established manufacturers or importers of skateboarding equipment numbered 37 in 1978 and a further 31 companies were involved in the design and construction of skateboard parks. The prevalence of a multiplicity of commercial organisations involved in equipment is partly explained by its ease of importation, since it is small, easily packaged and light. Alternatively, the process of polypropene moulding makes the production of low quality equipment quick and easy, with a resultant appearance of substandard and often dangerous equipment in the shops. Costs in the construction of skateboard parks are considerably greater. The need for advanced building techniques and a large area of land produces costs of between £20 and £30 a square yard. A largish park covering 40,000 square feet with a capacity of 300 boards would cost upwards of £90,000. It is possible to identify the contractors for such enterprises but less easy to establish who exactly was prepared to invent heavy capital in such a speculative venture.

It appears that there are two distinct forms of entrepreneurial involment: the short term, low investment quick return type of the manufacturer/importer; and the high cost long-term and uncertain return investment of park construction. Independant initiative has more than coped with the former variety. The latter, because demand appeared to outstrip the capital available for investment, has become the newest site for the debate over public responsibility for leisure and recreation facilities. The most frequent response from local authorities has been to cordon off specific areas of pavement or park for the use of skateboards. On 1977 figures, proper skate parks remain the perogative of private initiative. Of 11 under construction in that year, 8 were private, 2 public and one voluntary.

TRENDS TRAJECTORIES AND DETERMINANTS

The boom in skateboarding would have been inconceivable without a technological innovation. The early skateboards used the same wheels as roller skates, usually made from hard rubber, sometimes of clay or aluminium. These offered little traction stability or 'feel', restricting the manoeuvrability and versatility of the board and therefore its attraction. It was with the development of the urethane cast-moulded

wheels first marketed for rollerskates in 1968, that skateboards found the material basis for their advance. Experimenting with new materials and engineering techniques for trucks and decks followed, further refining the potential of the skateboard. These developments engendered both practioners and commercial interest. For the former, the skateboard suddenly became considerably more versatile than the rollerskate. The latter could now provide a greater range of basic and auxiliary equipment. Out of the interaction of these interests came the skateboard 'fad', subsequently to be imported into Britain.

DESCRIPTION

The skateboard is basically a short thin plank on four wheels, like a long rollerskate, big enough to take both feet. It consists of three main parts: the deck (board), the truck (axle and shock absorber unit) and the wheels. The size, material and shape of the components will vary considerably depending on the price and the demands to be made on the board. The activity is closest to surfing on dry land. Apart from the informal 'streetboarding', the recognised competition forms are slalom (as with ski-ing but using coke cans), speed (straight downhill racing) and freestyle (the display of individual skills and tricks often using elements of gymnastics).

It is very much an activity undertaken within a group, the group being early adolescents meeting outside the formal constraints of either family or school. Proficiency within the activity is classed by the level of individual skill, something between improvisation, athleticism and bravery. The 'aficianado' will develope both a highly specialist technical knowledge and an equally specialist language to describe equipment and technique.

It is clear that skateboarding is mainly, though not exolusively, an activity for males between 11 and 15 years old. Class differentiation is hard to pin-down, and would be a topic for further investigation, as would regional distribution. The majority of skateboard parks are in the South East of England but this could reflect any number of factors, especially entrepreneurial estimation of adolescent consumer power.

CULTURAL INTRODUCTION

The cultural meaning of skateboarding is elusive, locked in that (pre)



adolescent culture which is not (and is not intended to be) easily comprehended by the adult outsider. There is an obvious lineage in rollerskates and other forms of informally constituted street-based activities; 'soap-box carts' and 'chopper' bicycles are two obvious examples. Like such activities, it excludes adults and forms part of the closed street culture of male pubescence.

It also combines several elements valued by this 'leisure subculture'. Despite the arguments about specialist parks, skateboarding does not really need a specific site: the routine ones of the street and park will do. That this may incur adult wrath may be seen as inevitable and increase the attraction. It can be made relatively cheap by obtaining inferior boards and dispensing with safety equipment. If its site and cost are attractive, so too are the possibilities of cultural expression it offers. It is something you can practice on your own or in a group. It can be endlessly varied: individual improvisation and tricks, time or obstacle races, leaps and twists. It is both gymnastic and athletic, yet physically rough. The reality and fantasy of the tough-guy image is available here. Careering along pavements, the skateboarder can imagine himself as a cross between the American football star (whose clothing his resembles) and the athletic surfers (whose tricks he can with modification emulate). The occasional bump or graze is as nothing compared to the satisfaction derived from this style.

This is necessarily speculative and retrospective. Some of those assertions and corrections might be tested by examining the reasons for decline. The explanation (if it is not circular) may lie in the inherent volatility of this group of consumers; skateboarding may have simply gone the way of cigarette cards and hula-hoops. Skateboarding may have something to tell us about the largely unexplored area of pubescent youth culture.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research might consider at least five aspects. First it would be necessary to reconstruct the history, in a more detailed way than we have managed here, to examine how and why skateboarding was imported and by whom. Secondly the American roots and the American image would need to be understood: whether these were seen by promoters and consumers as part of its attraction. Thirdly the relationship between the discrete activity and the kind of 'street corner culture' described above would

need to be examined. Skateboarding may not have declined as much as it appears, but been incorporated with the base of that culture after a period of 'novelty'. Fourthly it would be important to understand what participants gain from the activity particularly the contribution of the 'right' gear to the desired 'style'. Fifthly the whole imbalance between private and public initiatives would provide a case study of how public bodies become held responsible for providing facilities for activities generated by commercial interests. Promoters of equipment, owners of parks, organizers of competitions and skateboarders themselves would be the essential sources of data.



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CASE STUDY 6: SQUASH

HISTORY

Like so many other British sports, Squash was originated at a public school (Harrow, about 1850) as a 'warm up' game for racquets, (which itself has venerable antecedents). Its early development was dominated by the public schools, the armed services and private country-house players. The inaugural meeting of the Squash Rackets Association (SRA) was held in 1928 at the Royal Automobile Club. By 1939, there were about 500 courts and 200 SRA affiliated clubs. The first 'boom' period in the 1930's broadened its public school/armed forces/upper class social base into a wider middle-class participation, associated with the growth of private members clubs. The second boom occurred after the end of the building shortages, in the 1960's: this expansion was based on new members' club and increased educational facilities. The third 'boom' began in the mid-1970's, and is still developing. This was marked by a significant increase in 'spare time' or 'leisure' squash, and increased provision of public, educational and non-club facilities.

STATISTICS AND RELATED DATA

Squash is now one of the fastest growing sports. The Target Group Index reckons that there were 0.9M players in 1974; 1.5M in 1976; 2.4M in 1978; and forecasts 4.7M players by 1985. The SRA estimates that affiliated clubs (about 60% of the total) numbered 155 in 1947/8; 374 in 1957/8; 489 in 1967/8; 600 in 1970/1 and over 700 by 1972/3. The Eastern Region Survey divided types of provision in the region as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Members clubs | 40% |
| Educational facilities | 20% |
| Commercial clubs | 10% |
| Local Authority (Sports Centres) | 10% |
| Armed forces | 5% |

Last year the SRA had a record-breaking income of almost £200,000. By 1970, between 80,000 and 100,000 squash rackets were made and sold on the home market. Apart from equipment, the suppliers of court construction materials (glass walls, beech floors etc.) are also doing well, with sales up 33% in 1975, and up 40% in 1976.

TRENDS TRAJECTURIES DETERMINANTS

Squash has a distinct social profile: 'Squash players emerge as a predominantly male, middle-class group, approximately two-thirds of whom are married and are 25 years of age or older ... better educated than the population as a whole and the vast majority travel to the centre by



car' (Wyndley Centre Report, P6). Squash remains, especially at the more professional end of the spectrum, overwhelmingly a 'man's' game: male outnumber women by 4:1. In the Inner City Study, 80% of players in both surveys were men. In class terms, though Squash has lost its 'upper-class' image, it is still overwhelmingly 'middle-class': professional workers, employers and managers, intermediate non-manual workers are strongly represented; semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers under-represented. At the Islington Centre (where one would expect the widest 'social mix'), 70% of squash players had continued education beyond 16, 33% beyond 21: over 66% were from car-owning households. Moreover, as far as social mixing is concerned, the Rugby Study (the most sociologically sophisticated survey) reports that two-thirds of the participants played an opponent of exactly matched class status, and a further 30% an opponent from an immediately adjacent class. This affects initiation or socialization into the game; middle-class players had twice the previous experience of the game, and were usually invited by previously-experienced players. Participation therefore strongly followed pre-existing social-class networks. Since, in Britain, class and region are strongly correlated, Squash is also heavily 'regionalized': it has grown fastest in London and the South East, next fastest in the Midlands, slowest in Yorkshire and Humberside. Most players fall into the 25-34 age range, (with a relatively higher starting age - 19).

DESCRIPTION

The form of the game has hardly altered, but its social composition and style of participation has been modified over time. It retains its armed services/public school image in the sense of being a highly competitive, 'individualist', hard-fitness game. It is, however, 'easier' than comparable sports (tennis, golf), providing an enjoyable game at even low levels of skill, provided partners are evenly matched. It offers maximum physical exercise, for short, intense periods, which - because they depend on just two players, affords maximum flexibility. It is a self-selective, two-partner, game: relatively un-organised - the 'squash ladder' rather than the professional tournament being the principal form of organised competition. It does not attract much press publicity, and has not yet become a 'TV spectacular sport' - the threshold which converted other, comparable games (tennis, golf, table tennis, billiards, show jumping) into mass-spectacular sports. Apart from Jonah Barrington, there are few Squash 'household names'. It attracts little mass-collective crowd support or public enthusiasm, no local allegiances or rivalries. It belongs essentially to that 'family' of sports - golf, tennis, badminton - with which it shares so much,

including its strongly-structured class and gender profile. It fits less with the public cycle of spectator sports (like soccer), and more into the more privatised leisure and recreational pattern. It is individualist and self-selective in its mode of participation. It might be called a 'permissive' sport.

CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

Two features deserve comment here: its typical mode of participation, and its relation to wider leisure patterns.

(a) The 'democratization' of Squash has stopped short at its middle-class barrier. It is 'middle-class' in its mode of organisation/participation as well as in its typical social profile. This may relate to its individual, privatized and 'permissive' character. Participation is govered by personal choice of partner, timing, level of play. Squash can be timed to suit highly-pressured professional routines, complementing the rhythms of work and family life. It depends on, and reinforces extra-sporting 'social networks', and supports regularity of social contact through private association. It is flexible in its social uses. It may thus be seen as favouring a style of participation paradigmatic of those envisaged in the 'towards a leisure society' movement. The favourable prospects for Squash therefore seem to be linked to its connection with this emergent, 'middle-class' recreational pattern. Its remarkable growth may indicate something of how far it is this pattern of leisure which is becoming dominant, extended to and incorporating other social classes netted by the growth in public sporting facilities.

(b) At each stage in its development, Squash has been centrally linked with wider, changing cultural patterns. Its early image reflected those 'hard' masculine, 'manly fitness' values inshrined in its public school and armed services associations. Its expansion in the 1930's related to changes in middle-class leisure, and was part of the wider (but still) class-specific) growth of tennis clubs, tea-dances, weekends in the country, and the outdoor-recreation and physical fitness enthusiasms of the inter-war middle classes. Squash did not expand with the growth of working-clas leisure pursuits in the 'affluent 1950's, but it did take off with the expansion of middle-class leisure in the 1960's and 1970's. Its current explosion is undoubtedly underpinned by the boom in publicly-provided sports facilities - even though this has not broken its clear professional, non-manual class affliliations.

Squash therefore provides an excellent 'case-study' through which to analyse emergent styles of leisure. Here, links can be made with the general growth of interest in individual physical fitness, regular



exercise and 'body maintenance': do-it-yourself types of physical recreation. These movements, in turn, reflect wider cultural movements, concerned with 'alternative life-styles' the pollution of the environment, resistance to the mental and physical strains of modern urban living, Like Squash, other forms of 'body maintenance' are closely complementary to - and structured as restful interludes between - more stressful occupations and responsibilities. They are designed on the withdrawal/recuperation model. Squash, which admirably fits this new structuring of leisure/non-leisure time, may be stimulated by these larger cultural forces. However, whereas activist environmental movements seek to modify the environment positively, Squash is a more 'enclave' adaptation to the same pressures. The more this very specific mode of structuring leisure/work time becomes the dominant pattern, the stronger does Squash become as a front-line contender - not so much a 'fad and fashion' as a solid trend: a new leisure 'growth industry'.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Because of its rapid growth, the size, character, scale, demography and social profile of the game needs to be closely monitored. This should include some attention to the impact of both the increased public provision of facilities and the scale of capital investment and profitable return, on the size and social characteristics of participation.

The most important aspect, however, is the relation between the growth of Squash and the emergence of new patterns of leisure; including the potential extension of these typically class-defined patterns to other social groups. The role of public facilities in the process of 'diffusion' is crucial.

Squash also provides an admirable site at which to investigate the cultural dimensions of sport. A single game can retain its formal characteristics, and yet be profoundly modified culturally, by how it is appropriated and used. This suggests that any game which exhibits real growth potential must be tapping wider and deeper cultural values. This depends on qualitative work, in order to interpret the different cultural connections of the game, in the present period, with a marked shift in contemporary patterns of leisure. A 'socio-cultural' history of this kind would considerably enrich our understanding of the long-term factors which find their expression, in part, through participation of the type which squash best represents. It might begin by exploring the hypothesis that Squash is a 'permissive' sport for a 'permissive class society. Our sketchy evidence certainly reinforces the argument that we are dealing, here not with a 'fashion' but with a cultural trend;

and that the basic social dynamic of sport cannot be properly understood within the delimited context of 'leisure studies', separated from other social and cultural factors.



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CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

Our conclusion has three objectives. The first is to read across the various case studies to see if dominant patterns can be identified. We are looking here for common elements - or in their absence for significant differences - within the rather arbitrary category of fads and fashions. Secondly we wish to make connections, even of the most tentative kind, between these patterns and more general trends in the field of leisure as a whole. The essential question will revolve around the relationship between the apparently ephemeral nature of fads and fashions and what are regarded as more substantial and long-term developments in contemporary leisure. Third, and implicit in the first two, is the attempt to outline the central questions and methods of investigating them, which ought to guide further research in the area.

We intend therefore to look in turn at each of the headings under which the case studies were presented, stressing here less the internal dynamics of each phenomenan than trends and patterns across the case studies as a whole. Having done that, we may be able to identify a number of essential questions about the nature of fads and fashions.

From our review of secondary sources and statistics and hard data, it is immediately obvious that we do not have even the barest knowledge about the economic and social distribution of fads and fashions. At best we have aggregate estimates of financial turnover which disguise, rather than reveal, important distinctions between and within sex, class and age groups. The proportion of leisure expenditure time and life-interests they occupy remain obscure. Without more systematic analysis of what data is available, it is impossible to make more than an intelligent guess about the significance of fads and fashions.

If it has proved difficult to assemble empirical data for the contemporary period, this has been even more so for any kind of historical outline. We can only identify general trends, whilst emphasising that fads and fashions are rarely genuine inventions and innovations but more frequently forms of adapting and disseminating previously existent activities. Disco, bingo and pool do relate historically to dance halls. housey-housey and bar billiards respectively. Pool is an adaption of an imported fad to more local conditions; the same is true of Kung Fu and skateboarding. Yet the continuity is also a kind of transformation often originating



outside this country: discos France, pool and skateboarding in the USA, Kung Fu in the Far East. Only squash and bingo are in sense indigenous. Important though transformation, importation and adaptation are, they constiute only the internal history of a particular fad or fashion. Equally important is the history of its specific social context, its potential users. Whether young or adult, male or female, working or middle class each user group has its own cultural and economic history without which no analysis of an emergent fad or fashion can be complete.

The mediation of the meaning of a fad or fashion by the experience of the participating group is evident from our deliberately naive descriptions of each case study. Bingo had to be understood both as a straight-forward form of gambling and as an activity defined and sanctioned (especially by husbands) as an appropriate night out for married women. Discos cannot be separated out from the emphasis of youth culture on music, dance, dress and sexuality. Skateboarding has to be located as part of the street-based culture of children. The flexibility of squash as a game enables it to be inserted into the temporal and spatial leisure networks of the young male middle classes.

The pub is more than the venue for playing pool; it provides a set of social relationships which defines the ethos, and even modifies the rules, of the game. Kung Fu has at its core a stylized and ritualised form of violence associated by cultural convention with masculine identity.

The discrete nature of the fad is reformed by the kinds of symbolic interactions which surround it. This process of cultural framing is itself structually constrained by the provision of opportunity and the distribution of resources. As our examination of trends, trajectories and determinants suggested, these constraints are complex and multiple in nature. Certainly the emergence of what might be termed new leisure subcultures of young people, women or minority ethnic groups is important, but there is no guarantee that their new aspirations will be met. Much will depend on the role of leisure sponsors: business, the State, or the self-activity of voluntary groups. The respective roles of such agencies in cultivating bingo, squash and Kung Fu are not necessary ones; that sports centres do not include specialised facilities for Kung Fu is a decision made by Leisure sponsors, not the outcome of some natural evolutionary process. In the communication and active promotion of new leisure options the mass media may have a crucial role. In televising sports, advertising leisure goods or toys

or unintentionally providing fictional models to follow, the media communicate to both potential users and sponsors the availability of fads and fashions. The predispositions of user groups, the promotion by the media and the response of sponsors interact with each other in ways which only more detailed study of particular cases can help clarify.

Some considerations have framed our attempts to offer cultural interpretations of our selected range of fads and fashions.

We have attempted to see the activity as the participants might see it while conscious of its historical developement and economic and political constraints operating upon it. Perhaps our most important finding is that each example was heavily differentiated by class, sex or age and often by a combination of these factors. Further, though generalisation on such a small sample must necessarily be tentative, this differentation was rarely inherent in the activity; rather the very fact of differentation had subtly altered the activity to make it appear as appropriate and exclusive to the participating group. To take and example: that men bet on horses and women on bingo is part of the sexual differentation of leisure. The different styles and patterns of social interaction in betting shop and bingo hall is as much an effect as a cause of such sexual differentation. The inherent differences between the forms of gambling maybe minimal, but are exaggerated by the imposition upon the activity of definitions of appropriate sex roles. A betting shop is no place for a woman, but a bingo hall is; the difference is not in the leisure activity itself but in the way it has been reshaped and re-defined in terms of sexual differentation.

Differentation by class is no less powerful. The affinity of squash with the male middle class is only minimally to do with the inherent properties of the game, its cost or availability. It is more that squash, like golf and tennis, becomes defined as middle class. In a society in which, despite appearances, class differentiation is still expressed culturally, it perhaps should not surprise us that fads and fashions should reproduce class distinction for no better reason than tradition.

It may seem more natural that differentiation by age should be so apparent: Skateboarding for the middle-aged would be a hazardous undertaking. Yet if we look at discos the chronological cut-off point comes remarkably early, as if no-one over twenty five likes dressing up and dancing. That courting, engaged or married couples



go to night clubs and not to discos may disguise the fact that what they do there is substantially the same. What has happened here is that particular definition of what it is to be a teenager has been imposed upon the discrete activity, rendering it inappropriate for those defined as adults. The fad has been differentiated by social - not a biological - definition of age.

SUMMARY

At this point it may be useful to summarise our preliminary findings and arguments in order to assess their significance for theoretical discussion and for future research.

1) Fads and fashions cannot be assumed to be a uniquely post-war phenomenon. They have a considerable, if unwritten, history.

2) Consequent upon this, fads and fashions cannot be seen as 'deviant' forms of leisure. Their relationship to historical forms and contemporary institutions suggest that that they are the outcomes of normal commercial practice.

3) No simple model of mass or collective psychological neurosis and/or straightforward commercial manipulation can suffice. Innovation is not confined to commercial orgainisations and no activity can be sustained if it does not meet the cultural needs of the participants.

4) Little statistical work has been done on fads and fashions, and much basic data remains unassimilated.

5) The pattern of innovation in fads and fashions inpartly determines by the response of potential sponsors and promoters; the state, business of voluntary clubs.

6) In terms of economics, the normal pattern seems to be that small-scale entrepreneurship is dominant in the early stages, but when the activity become established, the necessary capital investment is provided by business or the state. Few fads and fashions can exist without such financial support.

7) More unpredictable and less easy to control are the cultural predispositions of the participating group. Fads and fashions seem important for groups previously marginal in the leisure market, such as women and black people, to discover new kinds of activities, expressive of their identities.

8) The mass media cannot determine the success of fads and fashions but they can draw attention to an stimulate experimetation with, innovations, as well as providing models for others to follow.

9) No fad or fashion can be adequately understood without an appreciation of the cultural context in which it is located.

10) All the fads and fashions we examined were heavily differentiated by class, sex and age, a tendency which was less inherent in the activities themselves than a cultural redefinition of them by forms of stratification dominant in mainstream leisure.



## TOWARDS A THEORY OF FADS AND FASHIONS

In view of the modest and preliminary nature of our research, it would be presumptious to explore very far its theoretical implications. What can be done, however, is to indicate its relationship to what little specific theoretical argument - wholly American and mainly in the mass society tradition - we have been able to discover.

One of the most extensive writers has been Orrin E. Klapp, who has chapters on fads and fashions in two books - 'The Collective Search for Identity' and 'Currents of Unrest' (Klapp 1969, 1972). Much of his approach is compatible with our work. Klapp sees fads and fashions as primarily symbolic, not simply in the sense of being nonutilitarian, but as a positive search for forms of collective identity otherwise unavailable. Their social significance is that they are a means of differentiating the participants from the rest of the society. It is for this reason that they are so short-lived, since once disseminated generally they no longer have the power to differentiate; that is, by being diffused they are diffused. The symbols which can fulfill this role cannot be predicted or controlled, so that there is a continuous process of negotiation between the generators or disseminators of such symbols and their potential audience. The crux is the way in which the symbolic activities are situated within available life-style, and this problem Klapp argues can only be solved by specific research:

> to determine the viability of a fashion we need to know its meaning as a life style in context, including what it does for people psychologically and socially, a matter requiring intensive case study, which has been applied to very few fads fashions or social types.

It is clear that much of this supports our own line of interpretation: the stress on symbolic and collective meanings; the role of fads and in providing social differentiation; the reciprocal relationship between producers and consumers; the need to trace these processes in some detail. The difficulty with this approach is threefold. Firstly it situates fads and fashions in terms of symbolic behaviour as a whole. The psychology of crowd behaviour or the functions of religion are more in evidence as comparative sources than are more orthodox forms of leisure. Secondly it assumes that such activities are almost the only sources of identity in what is otherwise an anomic mass society. Thirdly, the emphasis on the mass nature of society actively suppresses consideration of the social structuring of collective identity by affiliations of class, sex, age and race.

In each case our stress is the other way. For us, fads and fashions are intimately related to leisure as a whole, do not constitute the only forms of identity expression and are strongly differentiated by social structures.

More useful in providing a model for concrete analysis is an influential article by Meyersohn and Katz (1957). Their abstract provides a useful, if rather flat, summary:

> The natural history of fads or fashion, a particular type of social change, is told as a series of chronological stages, each characterised by the interaction among producers, distributors and consumers. The process is thus: discovery of the potential fad, promtion by the discoverers and/or original consumers, labelling, dissemination, eventual loss of exclusiven ss and uniqueness, and death by displacement.

While this provides a potentially applicable model of the internal dynamics of fads and fashions, this pattern of cyclical movement remains uncontextualised. The kinds of theoretical, historical and institutional relationships we have argued to be abstractly and empirically central to the analysis of fads and fashions are conspicuously absent.

More is required than the invocation of an a priori theory of society into which the data on fads and fashions can be inserted: theory and data need to fit into each other. If we insist on the importance of history, that is not a historicist postion, but one justified by the actual historical processes of transformation, adaptation and dissemination evident in the emergence of each fad and fashion that we have examined. If we stress the role of institutional sponsors, it is because none of our fads and fashions would have become so popular without substantial capital investment. The differentiation of fads and fashions by class, sex and age is a finding not a premise. The-rejection of a model of manipulation by commercial interests is sustained by those instances where they have failed altogether, or in the long term, in attempting to control a fad or fashion.

In our view - and this is where we must part company with American work - any attempt to elaborate a theory of fads and fashions must situate them, not as symtoms of collective psychological neuroses induced by mass society, but as an extreme form of the underlying processes which govern the development of modern leisure. Indeed fads and fashions are almost a testing ground for leisure innovations. Some fail and die away; others remain as minortiy interests; while yet others may be so successful that they cease to be faddish and become institutionalised



as part of conventional leisure.

It may also be that the analysis of fads and fashions could make a substantial contribution to a more general theory of leisure. Three aspects at least are obvious: the definition of leisure, the concept of leisure needs and demands and the role of economics. In looking at the activities of women, children and minority ethnic groups, the established definition of leisure as the obverse of work may need severe qualification, since such groups (together a good proportion of society) are frequently without work, at least in the conventional sense of paid labour. If leisure as a theoretical construction is thus rendered problematic, the related conception of leisure 'demands' or 'needs' is also brought into question. The very existence of fads and fashions suggests a search for experiences outside those available through insititutionalised leisure provison. Further, the negotiation between the independent cultural generation of fads and fashions and their appropriation or incorporation by commercial interests shows that leisure 'demand' or 'need' is created dynamically, not a static given factor. It is questionable whether the concepts or 'need' or 'demand' are capable of accounting for such flexibility and variation; the whole model may require reconceptualisation. Lastly, the study of fads and fashions may reveal a certain tension between private profit and public provision. For example, the sale of skateboarding and squash equipment have both proved profitable enterprises, but it is the public purse which is now required to provide the facilities, frequently subsidised, for the equipment to be put to use, the nature of, and reasons for, this kind of economic imbalance, is one of the ways in which the exceptional forms of fads and fashions reveal processes not immediately apparent in more established types of leisure. How such processes might be further identified is indicated in our guidelines for further research.

## RESEARCH GUIDELINES

In each of our case studies we presented a number of hypotheses in need of further exploration. Here we wish to draw together the common lines of enquiry and inidcate some outstanding problems.

The implication of our case studies for the methodology of future research would be to suggest that it should be historical, institutional and observational. It would need to be historical in two senses. Firstly be seeing the whole phenomenon of fads and fashions in a historical context in the manner briefly indicated in the introduction.

Secondly it would need to be historical in its approach to any particular activity. In our examples we have managed only the barest of historical accounts; a more analytic approach is required. Whether it is an extreme case of deliberate importation, as in the case skate-boarding, or one of gradual growth and diffusion, as in the case of squash, the history needs to be understood as both the internal one of the activity itself, and the external context of the economic and social position of the potential user groups. A comparative approach would be particularly fruitful, perhaps looking at some examples of decline, such as ice-skating, or of relative failure, such as ten-pin bowling.

Future research would have to be institutional if only because much essential data is held by cultural sponsors and promoters of various kinds. But it would be equally important to ascertain the influence of institutions on the development of fads and fashions. The activation of different forms of organisation - commercial interests, voluntary clubs and the state - in providing the equipment, physical venue and cultural approbation of a fad or fashion seems to be crucial, but exactly how this process works remains obscure. It becomes important, therefore, to identify the cultural definitions and operational constraints within which such institutions of cultural sponsorship work.

However no historical or insititutional account would be complete without active consideration of the participants. It needs to be said here that three of our case studies (squash, pool and Kung Fu) were written by people who were enthusiastic adherents of such activities; two (bingo and disco) were written by people whose research interests had already led them to recognise the centrality of these activities for any comprehensive understanding of female leisure; and only one (skateboarding) was written by someone without previous personal or intellectual know-ledge of the activity. We were thus able, in our small scale study, to draw on the personal experience of the group. However, this may well have biased our understanding of the essence and cultural significance of particular activities. The best way to provide more systematic data would be to underake serious and sustained forms of participant observation. The operational implications of such a research design are discussed in our separate proposal.



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