WORKING CLASS YOUTH CULTURES

by

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Introduction:

This paper was presented as a continuation of Graham Murdock's
earlier paper at the conference. This provided us with the starting
point of our argument, and this paper takes for granted his critique of
the idea of a "classless" youth culture, and it is from that point that
we develop our analysis of distinctive styles in working class youth
cultures. For the purposes of this paper, the examples we have used
are the Mods and the Skinheads. Though not wishing to deny the
existence of some more general youth cultural developments during the
post war period, we feel that the analysis of styles and the way they
signify crucial themes of the period is of primary importance.

Some general comments are necessary by way of introduction to the
paper. Firstly it is essentially a "work in progress report" on a
collective project of post war British youth cultures which is being
undertaken at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, consequently,
we are both indebted to all the other members involved in that project
for the development of the ideas presented here. We owe special debts
to those whose work has been specifically used in this paper, Brian Roberts,
whose work on Phil Cohen is used extensively, and Dick Hebdige, for his
work on the Mods which forms the basis for the discussion of the Mods'
style. We would also like to thank Stuart Hall for his advice and
suggestions. The paper represents an attempt by us to critically come
to terms with some of the crucial theoretical formulations of the
field, which at times necessitates extensive analysis of other authors.

For another reason, the paper is also rather dense and compressed
in its presentation. This is because we have attempted to convey a
full account of our analysis of youth cultures, rather than present one
particular element of the work. This has meant that instead of being
able to present each aspect of the work with the full detail that it
deserves we have been forced to compress some difficult and complex
arguments. We hope that the reader will follow this in the interests
of having the overall approach established.

The structure of the paper is a movement through a number of
levels of analysis, each necessary to a full understanding of the
phenomena in question. We move from some necessarily brief introductory
comments on the nature of post war capitalist production and its
relation to major post war social changes. The effects of these on
working class culture generally and on the youth of that class are
next considered, to allow an understanding of how crucial aspects of
those changes and the responses of the young to them become crystallized
into distinctive styles of youth culture. Finally we look briefly
at some aspects of the societal reaction to youth culture.

PART I - Post war capitalism and the problem of hegemony

Because we are neither specialist economists nor attempting to offer a detailed consideration of the forms of advanced capitalism, our comments here are necessarily schematic and brief. However the consideration of such a level is necessary for the further analysis of more general social change in Post war Britain. What we are concerned with is the reorganization of capital in response to its earlier crises, and the forms which this reorganization took. The shift to monopolistic and oligopolistic capitalism may be seen as an attempt to preserve capital from the threats of recurrent crises, by increasing its stability in the face of temporary economic fluctuations through diversification and the rationalization of production.

Perhaps of more importance is the shift from product oriented to market oriented industry in an effort to constantly realise the surplus value of the product by ensuring that it is constantly and fully consumed - an attempt to overcome the recurrent possibility of over-production. Thus the increased employment of sophisticated techniques of market research and mass advertising are intimately connected to the need to ensure the matching of demand with production. Related to this is the continual effort to exploit existing markets more fully and to develop new markets and new needs for new products to maintain and increase profitability[1].

Finally we must note the increasing acceptance of the necessity of state intervention to minimize the worst effects of economic crises on the mass of the population, to maintain what has more recently become known as the 'human face of capitalism'. These points direct us to one central factor which is crucial to the understanding of the social change of the 1950's and 60's, which is the need for the bourgeoisie to rule by the consent of the population rather than by visible coercion. For example, consent is necessary, to ensure the full consumption of products, including those which lie beyond necessary demands. To achieve this, the bourgeoisie must 'universalize itself', it must spread to as much of the population as possible its way of life and way of seeing the social world as being the natural and only possible patterns. In doing this, it must attempt to negotiate the sometimes conflicting demands of other classes and to minimize the extent to which alternative patterns of life and ways of thinking about society have any force. This attempt to rule by consent, or, as Gramsci[2] describes it, hegemony, is at root an educational relationship in which other classes are made subject to the world new of the bourgeoisie. We trust that this general notion will be made more explicit in looking at post war social changes - the more visible forms of the reorganization of production.

Social change in the 50's and 60's

One of the most visible changes in the 1950's is the advent of "affluence" - increased production and higher levels of income made the new patterns of consumption realistic ones for many families (albeit often underpinned by easier hire purchase rates). The shift in social emphasis away from work and production to a focus on the home, leisure and consumption was a vital base for the 'consensus' politics of the period, offering visible proof that the problems of capitalism had been solved, and politics was now about who could manage our advanced industrial society most efficiently. Consequently, the argument ran, as all could now share in the benefits of consumption through this newly discovered affluence, class conflict was dead, trade unions and class based politics an unfortunate and redundant legacy from the

"bad old days". One central commodity of this new era, the television set, was both a symbol of affluence and a channel which allowed the ideological designation of 'classlessness' to penetrate areas which might otherwise have remained impervious to it. Linked to this is the Conservative government's policy of creating a "property-owning democracy" by focussing building resources on private rather than public development, again creating an image of a prosperous and open society[3].

However, more direct repercussions were visible in public redevelopment (for the bulk of the population remained excluded from private ownership) which effectively destroyed many traditional working class communities. Whether such redevelopment took the form of moving families out of areas like the East End to new towns or estates, or the later form of rebuilding old estates, their consequences for the local community, one of the major institutions of working class culture, was the same.

The removal of families to new towns and estates fragmented the extended family links so central in the traditional community, and both this geographical movement and the design of new houses and flats based on the needs of the ideal (i.e. bourgeois) nuclear family were instrumental in this destruction of the bases of the community. The further consequence for those who remained behind was either the 'downgrading' or less frequently 'upgrading' of the area . Downgrading was accompanied by the influx of numbers of coloured immigrants, in search of inexpensive housing, whose presence was interpreted by the indigenous population as lowering the social standing of the neighbourhood. It also involved the presence of speculatory property owners whose minimal interest in the property furthered the appearance of decay and dilapidation of the estate[4]. Upgrading involved the movement of young middle class and professional families in search of housing into areas possessing a certain local 'character'. Through either mechanism the end product was a further disintegration of the cultural homogeneity of the area[5].

In the redevelopment of the areas themselves, the model of housing needs was again that of the nuclear family, and nor were whole areas (streets, families etc) necessarily rehoused in the same area. A further consequence was the destruction of what Phil Cohen terms 'communal space' and the major foci of it, the pub, the street and the corner shop. "Instead there was only the privatized space of the family unit, stacked one on top of each other, in total isolation, juxtaposed with the totally public space which surrounded it".

As far as we are concerned this destruction of the community is crucial, for we would follow Frank Parkin[6] in seeing the working class community as being one of the central institutions of working class culture, a culture possessing its own partially independent sets of social relations and understandings of the world, which differ from those of the bourgeoisie.

A further significant area of these changing social patterns is that of leisure, where previously clearly demarcated class boundaries became comparatively blurred. With the shift in emphasis from production to consumption, leisure came to assume increasing social importance, and leisure as a social problem has come to occupy the attention of applied social scientists, educational bodies, leisure consultants and so on.

One major dimension of this change has been the decline of the

neighbourhood as the focus of leisure and the concentration of major
leisure facilities in city centres. The closing of local cinemas
has been followed by the redevelopment of multi cinema centre town sites,
while city centre pubs have set the redesign standards and patterns
for many one-time 'locals'. Many of the stylistic changes owe much to
the image of the young as affluent and potential consumers.

This clustering of central facilities meant that local provisions
have been forced into competing for trade on the terms set by those
facilities - the result: the development of stylized interiors for
pubs, the provision of evening discos and the restructuring of some
surviving local cinemas. The changes in leisure provision are structured
by a belief in the changing nature of the users of such facilities,
seeing them as possessing the once clearly middle class characteristics
of affluence, mobility and the ability to make 'rational' selections
among the leisure alternatives offered to him. This change is
reflected in the emphasis on 'competition' in the 'leisure industry',
and is captured in the description of the image of the user as moving
from that of 'member' to that of 'consumer'.

The post war changes in Football illustrate well these types of
changes, for football is important as a major focus of pre-war working
class culture and relevant here in terms of our later consideration of
the skinheads. The main post war changes in football may be summarized
as those of professionalization, internationalization and commercialization[7].
These cover such changes as an increasing concentration on the physical,
tactical and financial requirements of success, extra facilities to
entertain and make the spectator comfortable and the increasingly
financial concerns of the professional game generally. Football clubs,
anticipating the disappearance in the new social order of the
traditional cloth capped football fan, felt they would have to compete
for audiences with the providers of alternative types of entertainment,
television especially. If the traditional fan no longer existed,
then nor would traditional loyalties, and they would have to compete
for the favours of the new classless, rationally selective consumer of
entertainment. Consequently the game had to be made as exciting and
dramatic as possible to appeal to the uncommitted, and the spectator
had to be made comfortable, and his every whim catered for. Further
the uncommitted were unlikely to attend each saturday to watch an
unsuccessful team, and so greater attention had to be paid to avoiding
failure.

Ian Taylor describes the effects of these changes as 'bourgeoisification',
which is the process that: "legitimizes previously working class
activities for the middle class, or more accurately, activities which
were previously seen as legitimate only for the working class, such as
watching doubtful films or congregating on the kop."[8]

This process has carried with it a changed conception of the
football supporter. The "genuine" supporter is no longer the traditional
cloth-capped figure, living for the saturday match, his own fortunes
inextricably mixed with those of his team and actively participating
in the game, but has moved towards the passive, selective consumer
of entertainment, of the game as 'spectacle' and who objectively assesses
it. Consequent upon this changed image of the supporter is the re-
definition of certain previously normal aspects of crowd behaviour as
illegitimate - notably those of physical violence and bad language.
These changes are by no means total, either in the character of the
crowd, or in the clubs' attitudes to their supporters, but those
changes which have taken place have certainly had the new 'spectator'
in mind.

One final area of these changes is the growth of the welfare state, indicating the ability and the will of the new social order to care for and protect all members of society from "the cradle to the grave." The welfare state performed a double function, giving a secure grounding to the establishment of consensus politics, and absorbing some parts of the produced industrial surplus. One central area for the young in this general provision of facilities (though not itself specifically part of the welfare state) was the changes in education. The 1944 Education Act with its ideological redefinition on the education system as an open and achievement oriented process, with the transformation of secondary education provision from its previous income determined base where class inequalities were clearly visible to a position of its provision according to the abilities of the individual. Although this only marginally affected the in-school experience of working class youth, who still experienced school largely as a situation where one was forced to take in irrelevant knowledge by external and alien figures of authority - the traditional THEM of working class culture, it did have the effect of transforming the responsibility of educational failure from its previously class based terms on to the individual himself. This was especially true where parents invested their hopes in their childrens' performances in education as a means to success through the opportunities they never had.

To summarize this part of the paper, we would suggest that the major social changes of the 1950's should be seen as a move towards minimizing the economic crises of capitalism and to involving the working class in a major role in consumption. By mitigating the most visible forms of class inequality and subsequent conflict, at least at a symbolic level, the ground was laid for the consensual politics of a supposedly affluent and classless society. If this section has read as a somewhat 'conspiratorial' account of post war social history, this is not our view, but occurs because we have collapsed the complex processes of class conflict and negotiation into what proved to be their hegemonic outcome. As Gramsci stresses, the maintenance of hegemony is always the outcome of a struggle against challenges to it. Thus we would suggest that what we have described is the result of the hegemonic incorporation by the ruling class of demands from the working class (e.g. for improvements in housing, education and for more state protection) into the terms of their dominant world view.

CRACKS IN THE VENEER OF CLASSLESSNESS

Nevertheless these moves have been by no means totally successful and cracks in the veneer of classlessness and consensus became increasingly visible in the middle and late 1960's and produced further attempts by the dominant order to come to terms with them, both in terms of social reorganization and at the ideological level of redefining problems - a point to which we shall return later.

Thus in the different areas we have noted above - stability and consensus became increasingly threatened. Industry and the state were confronted by worsening economic crises as the measures of the 1950's proved inadequate and even counterproductive, and new measures, usually involving more state intervention were instigated, for example, the establishment of the tri-partite National Economic Development Council, a variety of measures to control prices and pay changes and industrial relations legislation, all with the definition of the government in the "neutral" role as representative of the "national interest". One added feature was the role of both economic crises and the increasing rationalization and mechanization of industry in creating a growing 'reserve army of the unemployed'.

Local councils found themselves faced by criticisms of new estates and redeveloped areas, and the general dissatisfaction of residents manifested in a variety of forms, rising request lists for transfers and increasing vandalism and delinquency. Some responded by rethinking their housing policies away from tower block developments.

Education found deep discontents manifesting themselves, especially in secondary education where teachers began to complain of having to face classes of hostile, disinterested and aggressive working class youths. Linked with this were academic criticisms of the poor performance of the 'meritocratic' system in enabling working class children to take advantage of the supposed opportunities. Among the attempts to deal with these problems were the shift towards comprehensive education, the growth of Educational Priority Areas, the theories of 'cultural deprivation', and a variety of attempts at child centred education and curriculum redesign.

One must also note the emergence of a new "social problem" - that of race. White racism, previously comparatively invisible, became increasingly overt and finally was given institutional definition and legitimation (beginning with Peter Griffiths' Smethwick campaign in 1964), shifting through a variety of measures such as conciliatory and assimilatory stages of Community Relations Councils and anti-discrimination acts to more overtly anti-immigration policies. Finally the politics of consensus were threatened from a variety of directions by groups who found themselves excluded from the legitimated parliamentary channels of democratic politics, or who found these increasingly irrelevant to deeper and more serious questions. Thus in the late 60's are found growing trade union militancy, more overtly oppositional community based politics, and the proliferation of direct action oriented groups with both specific and wide ranging aims.

PART II - THE WORKING CLASS RESPONSE

How did the working class respond to these changes? Before answering this question, and, more specifically, the question of how the working class young responded to these changes, we need some conception of how the working class responds generally, in its position of subordination, to the social formation it finds itself in: a social formation shaped largely by the bourgeoisie - the dominant class in terms of both its actual and legitimating power. In short, we are asking how does the social formation reproduce itself through its subordinate class?
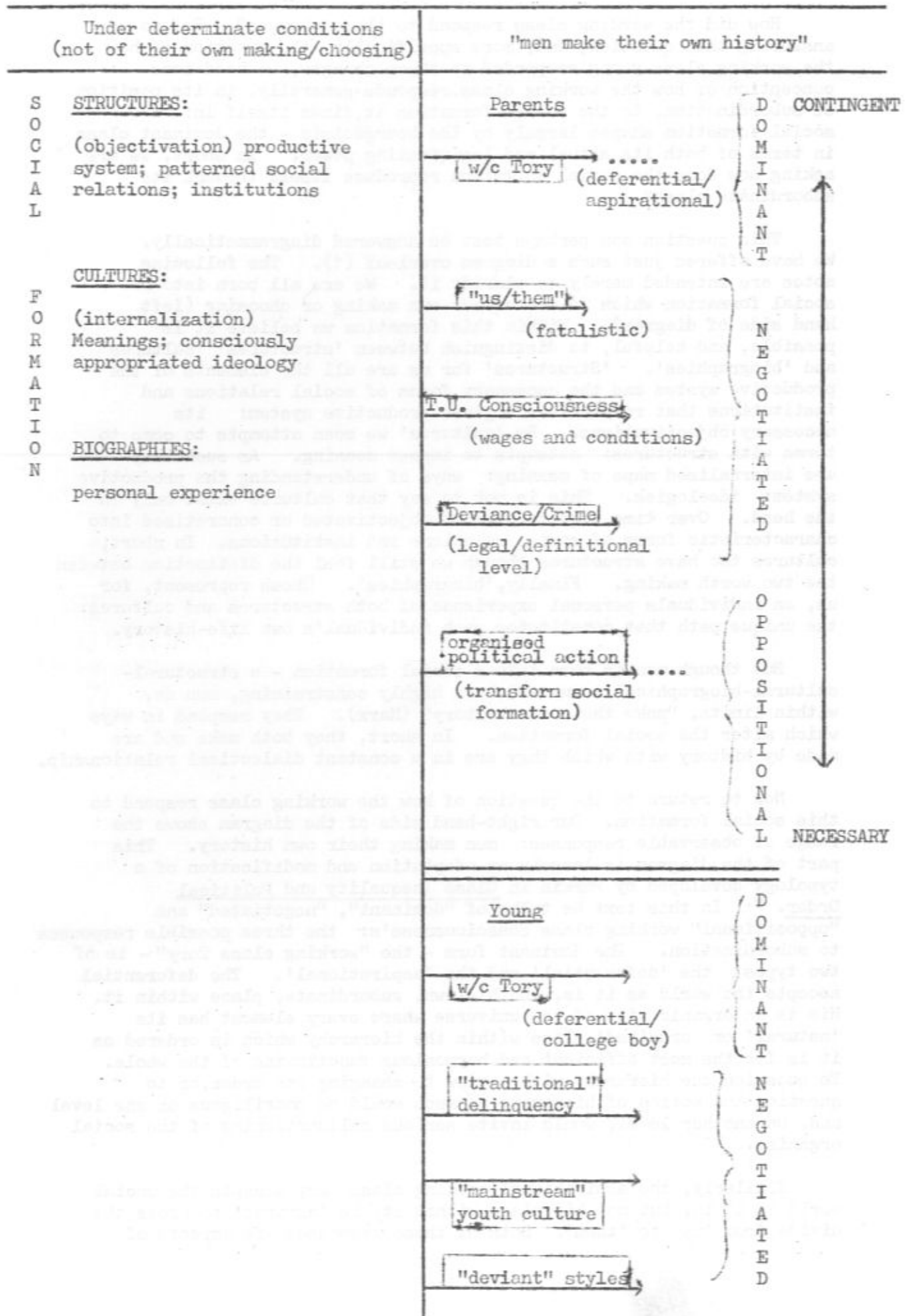
This question can perhaps best be answered diagrammatically. We have offered just such a diagram overleaf (1). The following notes are intended merely to clarify it. We are all born into a social formation which is not of our own making or choosing (left hand side of diagram). Within this formation we believe it is possible, and helpful, to distinguish between 'structures' 'cultures' and 'biographies'. 'Structures' for us are all the elements of the productive system and the necessary forms of social relations and institutions that result from a given productive system: its necessary objectivations. By 'cultures' we mean attempts to come to terms with structures: attempts to impose meaning. As such they are internalised maps of meaning: ways of understanding the productive system: ideologies. This is not to say that cultures exist only in the head. Over time they too become objectivated or concretised into characteristic forms of social relations and institutions. In short, cultures too have structures though we still feel the distinction between the two worth making. Finally, 'biographies'. These represent, for us, an individuals personal experience of both structures and cultures: the unique path that constitutes each individual's own life-history.

But though man is born into a social formation - a structural-cultural-biographical nexus which is highly constraining, men do, within limits, "make their own history" (Marx). They respond in ways which alter the social formation. In short, they both make and are made by history with which they are in a constant dialectical relationship.

Now to return to the question of how the working class respond to this social formation. Our right-hand side of the diagram shows the range of observable responses: men making their own history. This part of the diagram is largely an adaptation and modification of a typology developed by Parkin in Class Inequality and Political Order. 9. In this text he talks of "dominant", "negotiated" and "oppositional" working class consciousness's: the three possible responses to subordination. The dominant form - the "working class Tory" - is of two types, the 'deferential' and the 'aspirational'. The deferential accepts the world as it is, and his own, subordinate, place within it. His is an organic view of the universe where every element has its 'natural' or 'ordained' place within the hierarchy which is ordered as it is for the most efficient and harmonious functioning of the whole. To question the hierarchy with a view to changing its order, or to question the notion of hierarchy as such would be sacriligous on one level and, on another level, would invite serious malfunctioning of the social organism.

Similarly, the aspirational working class Tory accepts the social world as it is, but not his place within it: he 'aspires' to cross the divide from 'us' to 'them'. Both of these responses are aspects of

Diagram 1: Reproduction of the Social Formation

Under determinate conditions (not of their own making/choosing)	"men make their own history"	

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S   STRUCTURES:                               Parents              D   CONTINGENT
O                                                                  O
C   (objectivation) productive                                    M
I   system; patterned social       ┌─────────┐                    I
A   relations; institutions        │ w/c Tory│──→ ·····           N
L                                  └─────────┘   (deferential/    A
                                                  aspirational)    N
                                                                  T

    CULTURES:                            ┌─────────┐
F                                        │"us/them"│──→            N
O   (internalization)                    └─────────┘              E
R   Meanings; consciously                  (fatalistic)           G
M   appropriated ideology                                         O
A                                                                 T
T                                  ┌──────────────────┐           I
I                                  │T.U. Consciousness│──→         A
O   BIOGRAPHIES:                   └──────────────────┘           T
N                                    (wages and conditions)       E
                                                                  D
    personal experience
                                   ┌──────────────┐
                                   │Deviance/Crime│──→             O
                                   └──────────────┘               P
                                     (legal/definitional          P
                                      level)                      O
                                                                  S
                                                                  I
                                   ┌──────────────────┐           T
                                   │organised         │           I
                                   │·political action │──→ ····    O
                                   └──────────────────┘           N
                                     (transform social            A
                                      formation)                  L   NECESSARY


                                         Young                    D
                                                                  O
                                                                  M
                                                                  I
                                   ┌─────────┐                    N
                                   │ w/c Tory│──→                  A
                                   └─────────┘                     N
                                     (deferential/                T
                                      college boy)

                                   ┌─────────────┐
                                   │"traditional"│                N
                                   │delinquency  │──→             E
                                   └─────────────┘                G
                                                                  O
                                                                  T
                                   ┌────────────┐                 I
                                   │"mainstream"│                 A
                                   │youth culture│──→             T
                                   └────────────┘                 E
                                                                  D
                                   ┌──────────────┐
                                   │"deviant" styles│──→          D
                                   └──────────────┘
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'dominant' consciousness in that they tend to reproduce the social formation in its entirety: without, or with minimal, questions. By 'negotiated' consciousness is meant that consciousness which recognises its subordination but which does not totally acquiesce ,like the deferential, nor' seek to join them',like the 'aspirer'. However whilst it falls short of total acquiescence ,it also falls short of total opposition. As 'negotiated' suggests, it compromises, and both 'accepts' and 'does not accept' the dominant ideology. This statement is not as nonsensical as it might sound. At one level it is the difference between the public and private 'faces', both attitudes and actions, of many traditional working class neighbourhoods: the public face that supports, in the abstract, many of the principles and ideals of the dominant ideology and the private face , which is much less likely to show, in the concrete situation, such allegiance. Thus stealing, in principle, is likely to be condemned in public in such a neighbourhood,but individual acts of pinching, in certain contexts, will probably escape,in private, such censure. Thus, too, diligent 'dressing up' by parents for school speech day in order to create a good impression with the school authorities is likely to be the 'public' norm, whilst the private opinion of school is likely to be that education is really only for 'them'. We have, in short, been talking of the 'us/them' consciousness: a consciousness that fatalistically accepts and recognises the difference between 'us' and 'them' and comes to terms with it by paying public lip service to many of the dominant class's ideals whilst actually,in private, carving out a life of a very different texture: where morals and ideals, in action, are much more situationally based. In this way the dominant ideology is both 'accepted' and 'not accepted'.

The Trade Union consciousness represents a less fatalistic view of the us/them division. Stemming from a realisation of the strength of 'us' if organised collectively, it has led to the formation of unions to 'claw back' as much of the 'surplus value' from their member's labour as has previously been extracted by 'them'. Typically this takes the form of higher wages and better conditions. Conflict that arises as a result of these demands is, usually, restricted to this level, though, in times of crisis, such as the period surrounding the General Strike, it has the potential to become a revolutionary consciousness.

A similar consciousness, in that it is less fatalistic, is that of deviance or crime. But here again the conflict is usually a restricted one: for deviants to the level of definitions,and for criminals to the legal level, though, as Hobsbawne's examples of social banditry remind us, these too have the potential, in times of crisis, to take on a revolutionary perspective.

All of these consciousnesses('us/them'; 'trade-union'; 'deviant/criminal') remain 'negotiations' since they conflict with the dominant social formation only at certain points: they do not represent a total challenge to the social formation and its legitimacy. The 'oppositional' consciousness does represent such a challenge. It does not accept the legitimacy of the social formation and attempts to transform it totally, traditionally through organised political action of various kinds. It is,ultimately, totally subversive of the established order, though it may well recognise, as a strategy, the importance of a strong trade-union consciousness.

If the negotiated responses are varieties of 'contingent' consciousness, then the oppositional response represents the 'necessary' (from a revolutionary perspective) consciousness.[10.] /We prefer this nomenclature to the more widely used,but less helpful, 'false-true' consciousness distinction made by many writers_7.

We have worked out a similar range of possible responses for the working class adolescent. The embryonic working class tory consciousness mirrors the parental response being either of the 'aspirational' ('college-boy') or deferential variety. The three types of negotiated response we have identified as "traditional" delinquency, "main stream" youth culture and "deviant" youth culture. Though, empirically, these three responses may well prove to be somewhat mixed in that a "traditional" delinquent might well be involved also in a "deviant" youth cultural style, we still feel the distinctions worth making, theoretically, for the moment. The essential differences between the three would be, in "ideal-typical" cases, as follows: the traditional delinquents would be those juvenile delinquents whose "opposition" was limited to the extent of their delinquency or illegal activities. These activities would be largely those fairly common, and traditional, in certain working class neighbourhoods i.e. petty thieving, taking and driving away cars, vandalism, some fighting. Though the content of such delinquency might alter with time so that car radios would be more popular now than say 30 years ago, we believe the form has probably altered little.* In this sense we believe it strongly parallels the 'us/them' consciousness of working class adults: though a less sophisticated version of it.

The "main stream" youth cultural response represents, briefly, the "incorporated" version of the "deviant" style: the version that has been bought up, sanitized, 'made safe' and resold to the wider youth market: the "deviant" life style become "consumption" style: the commercial version of the real. We have placed this main stream response in the 'negotiated' box since it is a compromise, albeit largely engineered by commercial interest, with 'pure' dominant consciousness - the difference between flared trousers and cavalry twills perhaps - though it might, more properly, belong in the 'dominant' consciousness box.

The "deviant" style represents the 'more extreme' version of the main stream response: its deviant original and progenitor. This is not to deny the role of commercial interests in the perpetuation, modification and eventual incorporation of these styles. But it is to assert a 'moment' of originality in the formation of such a style. It is this formative moment we are most interested in when we later read the styles of the mods and the skinheads. These styles, though deviant, remain 'negotiated' and not 'oppositional' because they operate in only one area of life: the leisure area. Since they are not oppositional in all areas of the social formation they cannot hope to transform it. Nevertheless we do feel that these styles offer a symbolic critique of the established order and, in so doing, represent a latent form of 'non-ideological politics.' Whilst there are no fully 'oppositional' working class adolescent groups, we feel the deviant youth cultural styles come nearest to being such.
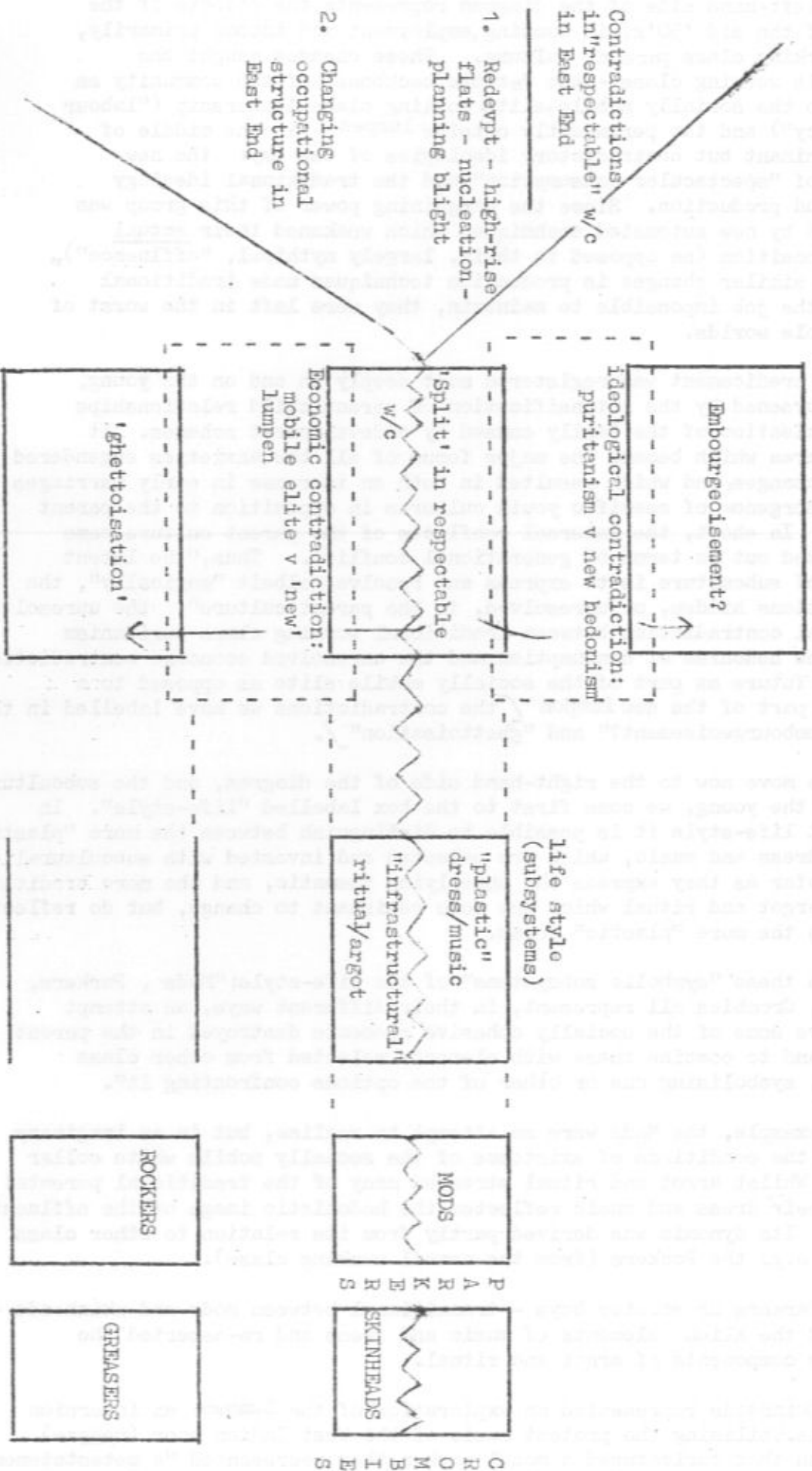
So much for diagram 1. Needless to say it has all the disadvantages of any model which is ahistorical and static. What follows will attempt to historicise it and make it more processual i.e. it will attempt to look at the actual responses, to the changes outlined earlier, of the "deviant" youth cultural element of the working class young throughout the post-war period.

To do this, we have again found it easier to resort to a diagram (2). What follows is an elucidation of this diagram.**

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* This is to ignore the whole question of the differential policing as between working class and middle class neighbourhoods and the consequent largely hidden figures for middle class delinquents. Whilst we would subscribe to the importance of this question, we do not feel it affects our notion of much working class juvenile delinquency being a widespread, traditional and, usually, temporary phenomenon of mid to late adolescence.

** A note on the genesis of the diagram. The diagram represents an attempt by Brian Roberts to extract the kernel of a complex article on post-war youth cultures by Phil Cohen: probably the best and certainly the most sophisticated explanatory model of the genesis and evolution of post-war "deviant" styles. The full article can be found in W.P.C.S.(2)and should be read in conjunction with this article, if possible, since it still provides a pivotal axis for our thinking on the subject. (P.Cohen "subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community", W.P.C.S (2)1972.)

Diagram 2: Post-war Youth Cultural Styles

Contradictions in 'respectable' w/c in East End

1. Redevpt – high-rise flats – nucleation – planning blight

2. Changing occupational structure in East End

'Split' in respectable w/c

ideological contradiction: puritanism v new hedonism

Embourgeoisement?

Economic contradiction: mobile elite v 'new' lumpen

'ghettoisation'

life style (subsystems)

"plastic" dress/music

"infrastructural" ritual/argot

ROCKERS

GREASERS

MODS

SKINHEADS

P A R K E R S

C R O M B I E S

The left-hand side of the diagram represents the effects of the changes of the mid '50's, in housing, employment and income primarily, on the working class parent culture. These changes caught the respectable working class - the "staple backbone" of the community as opposed to the socially mobile, elite, working class leadership ("labour aristocracy") and the permanently outside lumpen - in the middle of the two dominant but contradictory ideologies of the day: the new ideology of "spectacular consumption" and the traditional ideology of work and production. Since the bargaining power of this group was threatened by new automated techniques which weakened their actual economic position (as opposed to their, largely mythical, "affluence"), and since similar changes in production techniques made traditional pride in the job impossible to maintain, they were left in the worst of all possible worlds.

This predicament was registered most deeply in and on the young, and was worsened by the intensification of parent/child relationships due to nucleation of the family caused by redevelopment schemes. It was this area which became the major focus of all the anxieties engendered by these changes, and which resulted in both an increase in early marriages and the emergence of specific youth cultures in opposition to the parent culture. In short, the internal conflicts of the parent culture came to be worked out in terms of generational conflict. Thus, "the latent function of subculture is to express and resolve, albeit "magically", the contradictions hidden, or unresolved, in the parent culture": the unresolved ideological contradiction between traditional working class puritanism and the new hedonism of consumption, and the unresolved economic contradiction between a future as part of the socially mobile elite as opposed to a future as part of the new lumpen /the contradictions we have labelled in the diagram "embourgeoisement?" and "ghettoisation" 7.

If we move now to the right-hand side of the diagram, and the subcultural styles of the young, we come first to the box labelled "life-style". In looking at life-style it is possible to distinguish between the more "plastic" forms of dress and music, which are selected and invested with subcultural value insofar as they express the underlying thematic, and the more traditional forms of argot and ritual which are more resistant to change, but do reflect changes in the more "plastic" forms.

Given these "symbolic subsystems" of the life-style; "Mods , Parkers, Skinheads, Crombies all represent, in their different ways, an attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in the parent culture, and to combine these with elements selected from other class fractions, symbolising one or other of the options confronting it".

For example, the Mods were an attempt to realise, but in an imaginary relation, the conditions of existence of the socially mobile white collar worker. Whilst argot and ritual stressed many of the traditional parental values, their dress and music reflected the hedonistic image of the affluent consumer. Its dynamic was derived partly from its relation to other class fractions e.g. the Rockers (from the manual working class).

The Parkers or scooter boys - transitional between mods and skinheads - distressed the alien elements of music and dress and re-asserted the indigenous components of argot and ritual.

The Skinheads represented an exploration of the lumpen: an inversion of the mods. Utilising the protest music of the West Indian poor (reggae) and a dress that caricatured a model worker, they represented "a metastatement about the whole process of social mobility". They were a reaction against contamination of the parent culture by middle class values, and a reassertion

of the integral values of working class culture through its most recessive traits: puritanism and chauvinism. The puritanism crystallised in opposition to the hedonistic greasers and hippies and the chauvinism in "Queer Bashing" (1969-70).

The crombies/casuals/suedes represent a further transitional phase and a move back to the mods but incorporating certain elements from middle class subcultures (e.g. dress and soft drug use from the hippies) but still conserving many of the distinctive features of earlier versions of subcultures.

If the whole process appears circular, it is because it cannot break out of the parental contradiction - it merely transcribes its terms at the micro-social level and inscribes them in an imaginary set of relations.

So much for our attempt to compress a complex article into one diagram with the above accompanying notes. Earlier we acknowledged our indebtedness to this article. We wish, now, to present our critique of it,followed by our view of the whole process. But this has not been a detour but the essential foundation stone to our conception of all this.

Though there are minor criticisms which, given more space, we would want to elaborate, we wish to concentrate on two major ones. The first relates to the historical dimension. Though the article is grounded, in detail, in a particular area, the East End, at a particular time, the 1950's and 1960's, the notion of "circularity" - of being "unable to break out of the parental contradiction" implies a more static notion of the historical changes than the model itself does. Thus the structural/cultural nexus would seem to be the same for the mods as for the skinheads. For us, this ignores the changes that took place between the early and late '60's : changes which meant that the social situation of the mods was different from that of the skinheads and it is this - their different situations - that accounts for their different responses. This is not to deny that there were also similarities between the experiences of both groups. Hence the form of their response, in terms of a symbolic style, was similar,but the symbolic contents were different because they were expressing different social situations. Furthermore, Cohen's notion of "variations on a theme" does not explain why the mods should choose to explore the upward option (and not the downward one) and the skinheads the downward one (and not the upward one), at the points in time when they did. Why could not, for example, the skinheads have preceded the mods? Why was the 'upward option' explored first? Cohen's analysis is not equipped to answer these questions and yet a full theory of youth culture needs to explain not only their evolution,but why they evolved when they did, in the order that they did. The corollary of this limitation, that the skinheads reacted to the middle-classness of the mods, whilst partly true, is too mechanistic an explanation of human action. Without reference to the detailed social situation of these groups,the mechanistic notion of 'circularity' cannot be surmounted. And this notion of 'circularity' also fails to explain what the young of the new ' lumpen ' parents were doing during the end of this period (the late 60's). This criticism leads onto the second one which is Cohen's ignoring of the discontinuities between the experiences of the young and their parents. Though we agree that the young "cannot break out of the parental contradiction", we do not see why the young "magically resolve" contradictions on behalf of their parents. We would argue that the young have contradictions of their own to live through and come to terms with and that their parents, through their own adaptations, come to terms with their contradictions in their own way. These contradictions which are specific to the young - what we have termed parent-young discontinuities - Cohen ignores.

There are, of course, continuities between the general experience
of the young and their parents - being members of the same oppressed
class fraction ensures this.   We do not wish to ignore these.
Redevelopment, for example, affected the class fraction as a whole,
young and old alike.   But other changes demonstrate the discontinuities
between the two groups which make many of the experiences age-specific.
Changes in the structure of employment, whilst affecting the whole class,
would be <u>differentially experienced</u> according to age. Not only is the
prospect of redundancy in the middle of a working life, after more-or-less
continuous full-time employment ,a different experience to the prospect
of being an unemployed school-leaver with the possibility of all but
permanent unemployment, but in a contracting unskilled job market
inexperienced youngsters fare badly as against more experienced older
men.   The unemployment figures of the late 60's bear this out: unskilled
school-leavers were twice as likely to be out of work as unskilled adults.

Changes in the area of education, on the other hand, offer an even
better example of parent-child discontinuities since such changes only
ever directly affect those of school-age.   We have argued earlier that
to 'fail' within the post-war educational system with its underlying
meritocratic ideology, where all had 'equal' chances to succeed ,was a radically
different experience to failing in the more openly class-based system of
the pre-war years.   In the former case, onus for failure rested on the
individual's 'merit' or 'ability'; in the latter on one's social position:
a position that has made 'educational failure' much harder to bear in the
post-war period - and the more galling if one's parents , too, believe the
myth.   Thus, again, we are brought back to the social situation of the
young themselves and the importance of this in any explanation of youth
cultural styles.

What follows is our explanation or reading of such styles.   The
social situation of the young themselves is paramount in our 'reading' since
our notion of 'style' is one of instants when, momently, the social formation
becomes crystallized via specific, symbolic systems which express that
formation.

Part III: Reading Youth cultural styles:

We now want to consider how to understand the symbolism of distinctive youth cultural styles. Style we consider to be the appropriation of disparate objects and symbols from their normal social context and their reworking by members of the group into a new and coherent whole with its own special significance. Such a process is only possible because all objects, symbols and actions possess a variety of potential meanings for social actors, and not simply one closed definition. However in any given historical situation, each such symbol has one meaning which is preferred or dominant, that meaning which it is given by the dominant culture and which represses and conceals its other potential meanings. What the creation of a style involves is the selection of certain objects (clothes, hairstyles, music and so forth) which are relevant to the focal concerns of the group in question, its investment with the meanings of the specific group, and its use as a distinctive whole to symbolically express that group's self conception and focal concerns. It must be stressed that these visible, symbolic elements of the style are not separate from the group who create them, but are shaped by the group and are consistantly carried and reaffirmed in the group's shared activities and relationships.

To locate these general comments on style more specifically we have chosen to consider two youth cultures as examples of how to 'read' styles in this way.

Firstly, the Mods,[11] who are often portrayed (as we saw with Cohen) as living out the life style of the upwardly mobile affluent worker, and being dedicated to consumption for its own sake. This view is essentially superficial, for it misses the Mods' own distinctive relation to the commodities they consumed, and the self conscious exploitation of that style of consumption. Such an understanding cannot occur if separated from the Mods' experience of their social situation and their demands on it. Being mainly unskilled or semi-skilled workers or in routine white collar jobs (clerks, shop assistants etc), their experience of the world was characterized by the recurrent themes of working class youth - routinized domination and control by others, and the threat of eternal boredom - an experience intensified by the disjuncture between it and the promises of the "Golden Age" of affluent consumerism. The Mod life style cannot be understood without this search for "action"[12] and the related need to escape the patronising adult reaction to youth. But if the daytime world was controlled by a succession of "grey adults", then the leisure time of nights and weekends offered the possibility of autonomy and excitement. The style of the Mods took on the qualities and forms formally approved by the "straight" world (notably its smartness, neatness) in an attempt to disarm adult disdain, but subverted them into a style which seemed simultaneously "normal", and yet incomprehensible and threatening to the adult world. Thus as Dave Laing commented, they "looked alright, but there was something in the way they moved that adults couldn't make out."[13]

This subversion of the "normal" characterized the Mods' relation to the other commodities they used.

"In order to project style it became necessary first to appropriate the commodity, then to redefine its use and value and finally to relocate its meaning within a totally different context."[14]

Consequently, far from being the ideal passive consumer of capitalist society, consuming the commodity in the form in which it is presented, the Mods raised the possibility of an _active_ relation to the commodity:

"Thus the scooter, a formerly ultra-respectable means of transport, was appropriated and converted into a weapon and symbol of solidarity. The metal comb was honed to a knife-like sharpness, thereby providing the mod's individual narcissism and collectively projected menace with a mutual symbolization in a single object.

"Thus pills, medically diagnosed for the treatment of neuroses, were appropriated and used as an end-in-themselves, and the negative evaluations of their capabilities imposed by school and work were substituted by a positive assessment of their credentials in the world of play."[15].

This emphasis on the active role of the mod may also be seen in the Bank holiday "riots" where the mods search for action led to a rejection of the passive role of consumer and spectator in favour of being an active instigator of events. Finally the mod's relation to the media in these and other instances indicates the culture's concern with the image - the self projection. Their courting of attention made them the perfect subjects for the media's search for sensational content. The image of the Mod life is perfectly exemplified by Denzil's description of the mod week in the Sunday Times

"Monday night meant dancing at the Mecca, the Hammersmith Palais, or the Streatham Locarno.
Tuesday meant Soho and the Scene Club.
Wednesday was Marquee night.
Thursday was reserved for the ritual washing of the hair.
Friday meant the Scene again.
Saturday afternoon usually meant shopping for clothes and records. Saturday night was spent dancing and rarely finished before 9 or 10 Sunday morning.
Sunday evening meant the Flamingo, or perhaps, if one showed signs of weakening, could be spent sleeping."[16].

This image - the image of the style - was more significant than the more mundane reality ... "every mod was preparing himself psychologically so that if the opportunity should arise, if the money was there, if Welwyn Garden City should be metamorphosed into Piccadilly Circus, he would be ready. Every mod was existing in a ghost world of gangsterism, luxurious clubs, and beautiful women, even if reality only amounted to a draughty Parker anorak, a beaten-up Vespa, and fish and chips out of a greasy bag."[17].

The Mods' victories, then, were symbolic, victories of the imagination, and in the last analysis, imaginary victories. For the Mods' underestimated the dominant culture's ability to incorporate and exploit the subversive and anarchic imagination. "The magical transformations of commodities had been mysterious and were often invisible to the neutral observer, and no amount of stylistic incantation could possibly affect the oppressive economic mode by

which they had been produced.

The State continued to function perfectly no matter how many of Her Majesty's colours were defiled and draped around the shoulders of skinny pill-heads in the form of sharply-cut jackets."[18]

The Mods, then, were the children of affluence but were not simply its product. Their own mode of appropriation offered the possibility of a collective and active experience of consumption. Ultimately their attempted self sufficiency and introspection (which attempted to "magically" remove the real constraints on their situation) led to the incorporation and exploitation of their stylistic innovation - Mod became "manufactured" not "created".

THE SKINHEADS:

We have already talked of the different social situation of the Mods and the skinheads, and presented an abbreviated account of their style in Cohen's terms of its "exploration of the downward option" of social mobility. At this point we intend to substantiate these earlier general statements with a more detailed analysis of the skinheads' style.

The connection between the skinheads and football is not, as some would suggest, fortuitous - that they could have gone anywhere but just happened to pick on football grounds. Rather, the traditional working class activity is crucial because it allows some of the Skinheads' crucial concerns to be symbolically articulated. Most importantly, the support of a particular team provided a focus for the assertion of territorial loyalties, involving both a unified collective identity ("We are the Holte enders, the Shed, etc."), and an assertion of territorial rights - not those of property ownership, but of community identification. As Cohen notes:

" Territoriality is simply the process through which environmental boundaries (and foci) are used to signify group boundaries (and foci) and become invested with a subcultural value."[20]

This assertion took place both physically, through the defending or taking of the "home end"; and symbolically through the sloganising such as "Smethwick Mob rules here". The emphasis on territory is a crucial one, and the "mob" may be viewed as an attempt to retrieve the disappearing sense of community, with an emphasis on the distinction between "us" and "them", and the stress on mutual assistance in times of need. Thus, one fundamental rule was not to "cut and run" from fights, as one ex-Smethwick skinhead said:

" The only real thing they'd put pressure on about was if you were the first to run and leave a fight. They'd get you for that, no matter what happened."

The other major Skinhead location also has strong cultural roots in the working class - the pub, which acted as a territorial base and landmark. Here, supported not by pot or pills, but by a rather more traditional drug - beer, was the place where exploits could be discussed, plans laid, and time killed. Unlike his predecessor the mod, the disco and club were not the skinhead's natural habitat - they were perhaps functional locations where birds could be chatted[21] or fights held with whatever opposition were available - but they were not the

"natural" resting place.

We have talked about the element of communal assertion, and another element of the style may be read as involving the "defence" of the community - the widly publicized activity of "paki bashing". Coloured immigrants are understood as a threat to the homogeneity of the community, to its cultural and racial unity.   They are also obvious scapegoats for the problems of the working class being doubly visible.   Firstly in a racial sense, and secondly by visibly competing with the white working class for limited resources (notably housing and employment) within a particular district.   By comparison, the real nature of structural inequalities are obscured by geographical and ideological barriers.   In addition to this, at the time of the skinheads' crystallization, such racial scapegoating was, as we mentioned earlier, being given increasingly vocal public and official support by the statements and actions of both the Labour and Conservative parties and by sectors of the media. However, "paki bashing", unlike the dominant public expression which found little to distinguish different groups of immigrants, was overlaid with a significant cultural dimension, which distinguished between Asians and West Indians.   The latter were less of a threat to the cultural homogeneity of the area because many of their cultural patterns were much closer to those of working class youth than were those of Asians whose introspective, family centred and achievement oriented way of life were nearer to a middle class outlook.   For example, West Indian youths were respected because they were tough and willing to physically defend themselves.

However, the violence associated with skinheads was much more closely articulated around football.   Football crucially provides and allows for the expression of excitement, although its expression is supposed to take place within certain legitimate and institutionalised boundaries (eg. those of chanting and cheering but excluding the use of crude or vulgar language).   Similarly, the legitimate source of that excitement is supposed to be the match itself, but the skinheads extended both the source and expression of the excitement (illegitimately, of course) through their own violence.   Fighting both expressed their involvement in the game, and was a source of excitement both directly, in the physical activity of the fight, and indirectly, in its providing a topic of conversation to dispel the continual threat of boredom in the periods between fights and other group exploits.[22].

The violence, both actual and discussed, acted as an expression of toughness, of a particular working class self conception of masculinity, and of particular symbolic importance here is the activity of "queer bashing".   The skinhead definition of "queer" extended to all those males who looked "odd", that is those who were not overtly masculine looking, as this statement indicates:

> Usually it'd be just a bunch who'd find someone they thought looked odd - like this one night we were up by Warley woods and we saw this bloke who looked odd - he'd got long hair and frills on his trousers."

This emphasis on overt masculinity was visible in the most obvious areas of skinhead symbolism, most importantly the clothes and the 'prison crop' hairstyle from which their name derived. The clothes (heavy denims, plain or striped button down shirts, braces and heavy boots) created an image which was clean cut,

smart and functional - a youthful version of working clothes. The
haircuts completed the severe and puritanical self image, a
formalized and very "hard" masculinity. (It is also important
to note that both the mods and the hippies had gone some way
towards undermining traditional stereotypes of masculine and
feminine appearance and behaviour).

Thus we would argue that by reading the skinhead style in
terms of its creators' structural and cultural context, it offers
a reassertion of traditional working class culture, displaced
certainly into a symbolic leisure style, in a period when the norms
of that culture and its social base had been threatened by
erosion and disappearance, and yet when social conflicts were
becoming increasingly visible and demanding a form of articulation.
The erosion of some expressions of working class culture and
the incorporation and quiescence of others in the 1950's and
early 60's had removed crucial articulations of this consciousness.
For the skinheads, whose experience was grounded in some of the
crucial nexi of this economic and cultural conflict (eg. housing,
education and employment), their style attempted to revive in a
symbolic form some of the expressions of traditional working class
culture which could articulate their social experience. This
we take to be the process behind what Cohen describes as choosing
the "downward option", a "choice" which is grounded in and
structured by their experiential situation.

Part IV: The social reaction to youth cultures.

We have not the space in this paper to deal properly with this topic, but this should not be taken to mean that we attach no importance to it.   Indeed, it is an integral and indispensable part of what the authors of the New Criminology[23] call a "fully social theory of deviance".   We must be content here to sketch out some of the elements of our view of this area.

An analysis of the social reaction must deal with its structural base: with the State and its complex institutional mediations, especially between the formal organisations of social control and the major public signifiers - the media.   Secondly, it must deal with the cultural forms of expression of the social reaction: that is, the way in which groups and events are publicly defined.   Their definition must be considered in terms of the State's attempts to mobilise public support for its actions and to tighten their support for the legitimacy of the State.   Youth culture is worthy of special attention here, because one of the consequences of the closure of the political discourse to "consensus" politics in the post war period was to displace the discussion of society and social change into moral terms, in which youth was a central metaphor in the articulation of such concerns (eg. for the discussion of the consequences of affluence and for the likely effects of the growth of mass media.)   It is as a consequence of this displacement that Cohen can say:

> "The Mods and Rockers symbolised something far more than they
> actually did.   They touched the delicate and ambivalent
> nerves through which post-war social change in Britain was
> experienced."[24]

The social reaction to youth cultures cannot be fully understood without an awareness of this prominence of youth as a vehicle for the discussion of wider matters of public concern.

The third element which must be taken into account in the social reaction to youth cultures is the element of commercial reaction, which attempts to universalise, at a purely stylistic and consumption level, the innovations made by distinctive youth cultures, while simultaneously defusing the oppositional potential of the exclusive life styles.

Finally, the form of this presentation has suggested a separation of the youth cultures and the social reaction. However, to produce a "social history" of youth cultures necessitates an analysis of the relations and interpenetrations of these two domains in historicised, processual terms.

Conclusion:

In this paper we have been attempting to establish our view
of the necessary bases of an analysis of youth cultures in relation
to the situation of the English working class in post war Britain.
Our main emphases are two fold: one is the stress on the
historicity of such analysis; and the second is that the analysis
must relate the specific phenomenon in question to the social
totality.   We have attempted to do this in two ways : through the
analytic distinction between different levels of the totality
which must be understood; and through our formulation of structures,
cultures and biographies.   This enables us to locate groups
within the organization of the totality, and allows us to
locate their practices in terms of their established and emergent
cultural definitions of the situation.   For us, this is perhaps
the crucial area.   Class conflict is increasingly being fought
on the terrain of a struggle for the control of cultural as well
as material resources.   It is within this location that we
see the symbolism of working class youth cultures as representing
both a significant dimension, and a signification of the struggle
for cultural hegemony.

Footnotes

1. See, for example, Baran and Sweezy, Monopoly Capital
   Penguin., 1968

2. Antonio Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks, Lawrence and Wishart, 1973.

3. See, for example some of the articles in Bogdanor and Skidelsky,
   The Age of Affluence, Macmillan, 1971

4. See, inter alia, Rex and Moore, Race, Community and Conflict, O.U.P.
   1971.

5. For a presentation of these and subsequent points, see P. Cohen,
   "Subcultural conflict and working class community" in W.PC.S.2., 1972

6. Frank Parkin, Class inequality and political order, Paladin, 1971.
   Especially Ch.3.

7. On football, see I. Taylor "Football mad" in Dunning (ed.) A sociology
   of sport, Cass, 1971; C. Critcher, "Football as popular culture".
   CCCS; and "Football and cultural values". in W.P.C.S.I. , 1971

8. Taylor, op.cit., p.364.

9. Parkin, op.cit.

10. The distinction is Meszaros', in his article in Aspects of History and class
    consciousness. edited by Meszaros, R.KP., 1971

11. The text here draws heavily on Dick Hebdige The style of the mods,
    ANNALI - UNIV. of NAPLES (Forthcoming).

12. See S. Cohen on the search for "action" on the beaches: Folk Devils
    and Moral Panics, Paladin, 1971, also Hebdige, op.cit.

13. Dave Laing: The Sound of our Time, Sheed and Ward, 1969, p.150.

14. Hebdige, op.cit.

15. ibid.

16. Sunday Times Magazine, Aug. 2. 1964, quoted in Hebdige, op.cit.

17. Hebdige, op.cit.

18. Hebdige, op.cit.

19. The material here is drawn from J. Clarke. The Skinheads and the study
    of Youth Culture, ANNALI, (forthcoming).

20. P. Cohen, op.cit., p.27.

21. See Pete Fowler, "Skins rule" in C. Gillet (ed.) Rock File, N.E.L., 1973.

22. This discussion compresses a number of points about football and working
    class culture, see the papers by Taylor and Critcher (note 7).

23. Taylor, Walton and Young, The New Criminology, RKP, 1973.

24. S. Cohen, op.cit., p.192.