THE TEDS: A POLITICAL RESURRECTION

by

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. Introduction.

This paper is an attempt to read the Teddy Boy phenomenon of the ' 5o's as primarily political manifestation, albeit an inarticulate and symbolic form of protest. To read t thus is to use the word " political " more boadly than is currently usual but, given he narrowness of current definitions of " political ", I wish to emphasise this broader sage of the term. However, at this stage, I do not wish to define my usage of the term ince I feel this is best left to the end, after my argument has been outlined.

In addition to reading the phenomenon politically, this paper is also an attempt to einstate, to full validity, the original behaviour of the group under study, in this case he Teds, something which the transactional approach to deviance, with it's emphasis on ociety's labelling and hence, creating deviants, has a tendency to de - emphasise. Models f deviancy amplification, often used in conjunction with a transactional approach (see, or exam le, Stan Cohen's Folk Devils and Moral Panics), by concentrating on the way ocial reaction to deviance increases or decreases its incidence, similarly de - emphasise he original behaviour. Whilst not wishing to take issue, in any fundamental way with this osetical revolution"(Folk Devils and Moral Panics P. 13.), I do wish to re - assert the mportance of behavioural questions. Not to do so is to remove from the actors the authenicity of their acts: their responses to objective social conditions.

Traditional approaches to Youth Culture.

Traditional approaches to the study of youth culture have either ignored the notion f class or the meaning of youth cultural " styles " or have, in attempting to deal with oth, failed to come adequately to terms with either notion. Coleman, in The Adolescent Society, is an example of those theorists on youth culture who ignore the notion of class-based youth cultures. Despite his own strictures about the importance of not regarding dolescent culture as a "single invariant entity" (p.43.), he can only conclude, after xamining the adolescent culture in a number of schools, that the cultures are more alike t than different . He thus adds weight to the notion, despite his own warnings and along with many others, of a single, all but monolithic adolescent culture. The delinquency sub-cultural theorists, on the other hand , have, of necessity, been pre-occupied with since class recorded delinquency is almost exclusively a phenomenon of working - class adolescent boys. But this enforced pre-occupation with class has left the meaning of youth cultural " styles " seriously under - attended to. Failing to deal adequately with either class or style have been the pop historians of post-war youth culture. Less turgid than some of the more academic studies, the best of these as with Jeff Nuttall's Bomb Culture , are imaginative, insightful and impressive. Ultimately though, perhaps because of their attempt to cover too vast an area in one go, at the really crucial points rigour is sacrificed to rhetoric.

Class, Structures and Cultures.

Since these approaches are all found wanting it is necessary to outline what I take to be the crucial elements in any examination of youth culture. These I take to be class, historically located structures and cultures and social reaction. Leaving aside the notion of social reaction since, as I mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this paper is to " re-assert the importance of behavioural questions", what we need to ask about any youth sub-culture are:

(1) Who are its principal bearers and supports in class terms.

(2) What is their " structural" situation which sets limits to their possible courses of action i.e. what is their historical situation in relation to the basic structures of society (to income, education, housing, employment and race).

(3) How do these structural constraints operate to modify the range of possible cultural responses or options. (By cultural response I mean a response which, whilst not freely chosen since it is subjected to structural constraints, nevertheless attempts to impose meaning. It is both symbolic expression of a given structural situation and a negotiated adjustment to it: both subjective reaction to objective structural conditions and an attempt to objectivate subjective experiences of the world.

What I shall now attempt to do is to look at what we know about the Teds in the light of these " crucial elements". First, this requires that we examine the data that is available concerning the Ted phenomenon.

Teds: New Elements.

Very little of a serious academic nature has been writtena about the phenomemon, despite its undoubted impact on the 1950's. But when what has been written has been sifted through, there seem, to me, to be four genuinely 'new' elements that need interpreting and explaining. (By new, I mean things that clearly represented points of departure from earlier deviant phenomena of an 'apparently' similar nature, e.g. Spivs and Cosh boys.) The first is what Fyvel, quoting a probation officer "who had witnessed the arrival of the very first Teddy boy gang in his "district," calls the fusion of "two distinct anti-social attitudes", that of the usual adolescent rebellion (which in the case if the Teds was 'abnormally tense') with " that of the outlook of the typical criminal area". (The Insecure Offenders, p.63) The question which then presents itself is: Why did these two attitudes come together, or, put in another way, why did large numbers of youths, going through an ' abnormally tense ' adolescent phase, see their interests as coincidental withthe 'submerged tenth': society's traditional outcasts? The second element was the "peculiar viciousness in the Teddy boy assaults" (Ibid.p.64), together with an extreme touchiness to insults, real or imagined. This factor Fyvel, whilst admitting its speculative nature , attempts to explain psychologically in terms of "a streak of intensified psychological disturbance, derived from war - time dislocation, but which made itself felt belatedly in a certain adolescent age-group" (Ibid. p.65) Our job, which I see as a

the third new element, needs no further elaboration. Finally, there is the element which I have chosen to call 'group mindedness'. This element is augmented by what Downes calls " a strong sense of territory" (The Delinquent Solution, p.119). Since the picture of group structure is not known with any clarity, due to academic neglect, it is not possible to talk of 'gangs' in any strict sociological sense.

Whatever else may be in dispute about the phenomenon, these four elements are fairly easily empirically verifiable and seem, from the data that is available, to be distinctive elements.

The Teds: Empirical Evidence.

Apart from these 'new' elements, there are a number of other empirical facts known about the Teds which need also to be mentioned. Firstly, their birthplace, which would appear to have been South London (Fyvel). Secondly, the early Teds were almost certainly from the lumpen proletariat: the submerged tenth, (Fyvel). Thirdly, " they were market porters, bricklayers, a lot of van boys, all in jobs that did not offer much - 'labourers' could cover the lot" (Fyvel), i.e. occupationally, they were unskilled, semi-skilled or unemployed (the latter partly as a result of being unskilled and in some cases to the imminence of National Service which made some employers unwilling to employ them.) As would be expected from this list of occupations, they were largely early leavers from secondary modern schools. Finally, the objects of their fighting were:1. other groups of Teds; 2. individuals who 'insulted' them individually or collectively; 3. Cypriot cafes; 4.Blacks; 5. bus conductors; 6. youth clubs. (Op. cit. Fyvel, p. 66-68). This empirical evidence has been culled from all the literature on the phenomenon and on press reports of the period, together with first-hand accounts from the Teds themselves, where available. Only that evidence, as with the 'new' elements mentioned, which has been substantiated from a number of sources has been used. Thus, although Fyvel has been used extensively throughout for quoting purposes, this has largely been a matter of convenience. Other sources could equally well have been used. (See, for example, to verify the point about occupations, the jobs of the six Teds originally charged with the Clapham Common murder of 1953 in Tony Parker's The Blough Boy.)

To return to my model for looking at youth cultures in the light of this empirical evidence, we need now to ask what class fraction was principally involved, what were the structural changes most affecting this particular class fraction, what cultural responses were made, by the class fraction, to these structural changes and, finally, since culture, as I have earlier argued, is both expressive of structure and a negotiation with it (or, more concisely, the moment when social processes achieve symbolic articulation), how do we decode these cultural articulations into social meanings and, in our case, into political ones?

Since the lumpen proletariat or lower working-class were the class fraction who were the "principal bearers and supports" of Ted culture, we need to look at the structural situation of this class fraction, especially as it impinged on the lumpen adolescent. My contention is that the position of the young of this particular class fraction was worsening in many of the principal areas of their life.

The Lumpen adolescent and growing structural Inequalities

Ecology

Traditionally working class areas have been community minded and perhaps even more so in the slums because more necessary for survival than elsewhere. Matrilocal residence, the extended family and kinship networks, the practices of neighbouring (both informal and formalised in the loan clubs and holiday clubs, etc.), the street, the pub and the corner-shop, all help generate and perpetuate this sense of loyalty, solidarity, and tradition existing in slum communities (For a fuller, more sophisticated account, see Phil Cohen's "Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community", in Working Papers in Cultural Studies, no. 2, Spring 1972). After the war re-development in an area like South London in the form of new housing estates and high-rise developments began to break up these communities. The effect of this re-development was "to destroy the function of the street, the local pub, the corner shop, as articulations of 'communal' space", (This communal space is that space partway between the essentially private, e.g. the family and the essentially public, e.g. the local park, P. Cohen, ibid); and to destroy matrilocal residence and hence kinship networks (to compound this problem a large influx of immigrants accompanied this re-development. But this added ramification I will deal with later under the section on 'fighting'.)

(N.B. This section on Ecology is culled largely from literature dealing with the East End (although the Ted phenomenon originated in South London), since the re-development of the East End has been infinitely better documented. It needs to be said, however, that there are important differences between the two areas in as much as:

1. South London was never such a close-knit community as the East End;
2. There was more movement away from the East End than from South London;
3. Re-housing in South London was predominantly within the area in the form of new estates or in high-rise developments.

But the above by no means alters the thrust of the argument. It merely means that perhaps a more strong notion of community break-up was given than is perhaps legitimately the case with an area like South London.)

Education.

"A general survey of the Act of 1944 justifies the statement that it probably constitutes the most important single advance ever made in the history of English education". (Curtis and Boultwood, An Introductory History of English Education since 1800, p. 205). If the above statement is restricted to the intentions of the act, it is perhaps justifiable. If it is restricted to the social effects of the act, then, far from re-presenting an advance, it probably becomes one of the more retrogressive acts ever passed. It was intended that the act should provide every child with an education suited to a child's age, aptitude and ability. What it actually did was to select off roughly 20% of the age-group (at eleven) for a classical, largely intrinsically

[illegible] education (but [illegible]

education and hence high-status occupations), and consign the overwhelming majority (75%) to the secondary modern 'scrap heap' which was both intrinsically and instrumentally useless as an education. Boys in the A/B streams of these schools normally went on to serve apprenticeships in the skilled trades or perhaps, through assiduous application, began to climb the 'academic' ladder. The C/D stream boys often went on to become Teds. (I have deliberately ignored the very marginal influence of technical schools). But, since the lumpen have always been excluded from the education process anyway, what was so significant about the 1944 Act that worsened their situation? The new element was that now, according to the meritocratic myth, it was your own fault if you failed at 11. Since the Act specifically stated that each child was to be educated according to his or her aptitude and ability (i.e. merit), then it followed that failure of the 11+ had only to do with your inability and your inaptitude. It was seen as personal failure, and as having nothing to do with the selection procedure itself. (It was not until the next decade that selection procedures came seriously under attack and the link between school attainment and social class was firmly re-established, J. Douglas, The Home and the School). A cursory glance through the newspapers of the period would show how the media compounded the problem by constantly extolling, and hence amplifying, this prevailing myth of an open ladder

Politics.

The 1950's saw the emergence, in the political sphere, of the notion of consensus. Bogdanor and Skidelsky in their introduction to The Age of Affluence explain the need for this political consensus in psychological terms, i.e. "the desire for relaxation" following the "sustained effort " of "the years 1940-51"and the "psychological need to hide the facts of decline". It expressed itself in the acceptance by both parties of the mixed economy and welfare state, " and from this point of view, it did entail a real humanising and civilising of the political battle". However,as the authors go on to say , "it also imposed a moratorium on the raising of new and vital issues."(ibid p.10)

But, for our purposes it meant that there was a blurring of the distinction between Labour/Tory - a loss of potential alternative to Toryism, as ther had been traditionally. Additionally,working class parents were increasingly being persuaded to become family/ home/commodity centred (the housing re-developments aided this process as we have seen), and hence losing some traditional political vigour. Finally, the positions of power within the Labour party itself were increasingly becoming dominated by the middle-classes. (See B. Hindess, The Decline of the Working Class Politics).

Thus the traditional upholders of their class interest, the Labour party formally and, informally, their families were doing so less and less: their traditional institutional avenues of redress were becoming indistinguishable from those of the enemy, "them".

Economy.

"The years 1952-5 were, as T.W.Hutchison has put it, 'ignorantly blissful years' in which The Economist could comment complacently, 'the miracle has happened.....full

employment without inflation (June 1954). Although, "this miracle was built upon temporary and fortuitous circumstances" ("Introduction", The Age of Affluence,1951-64,p.8), as we can, from our vantage point, see only too clearly, it is against this general mythology, enshrined in McMillan's offensive "you've never had it so good", and partly in response to it, that the Teds played out their particular scenario which was of a very different order. In a period of full employment, those that are out of work are more socially isolated than usual. Due to impending National Service in particular, unemployment was a reality for many Teds. Some employers were just not interested in employing lads who were soon to be called up. Additionally, they were in jobs (semi-and unskilled) which, by their very nature, were much more prone to small fluctuations in the job market. Periods of unemployment were therefore endemic in their situation. The prospects of altering this situation were remote, and becoming more so, because of the increasing link between educational qualifications and occupational prospects. "To the extent that education becomes a key determinant of occupational achievement the chances of 'getting ahead' for those who start in a lowly position are inevitably diminished". (Quoted in S.Hall "The Condition of England").

Leisure.

Prevented by the growing structural inequalities from coming meaningfully to terms with their lives in the areas outlined above, leisure becomes the crucial dimension in the Teds' lives. And here, as elsewhere, they were let down. The lag of public provision was a general feature of the decade of the 1950's (not one hospital or prison was built during the decade; Fyvel), and the emergent commercial teenage culture was merely embryonic. What was available, the Locarnos and Meccas, were still largely aimed at the over 20's. The Cafes, their only real home apart from the streets were viewed ambivalently since many were Cypriot owned.

Both Cohen, in talking of the Teds as reacting "not so much to adults, but the little that was offered in the '50's" (op. cit.) and Fyvel, referring to the "lack of social amenities" for the young in working class areas and the boredom this generated (The Insecure Offenders), recognised the importance of this area - but it was not a not a lack of facilities causing the Teddy boy response: rather, it was the area where grievances engendered in other areas were felt most - where the contradictions endemic in the other areas of their lives were worked out and, to some extent, and at least for some of the time, 'magically' resolved. This is not to say that the leisure area did not engender its own contradictions. Since there was also a discrepancy here between the aspirations and the provisions, it was both an area with its own contradictions and the area where other contradictions were felt.

This emphasis that I am insisting upon has been validated by subsequent events. That the presence of good youth clubs in a district can prevent some 'anti-social' behaviour is undeniable - and this we would expect from the above position, since good youth clubs are helping to remove one of the contradictions engendered in the leisure context. That some 'anti-social' behaviour still continues even with the best youth clubs available is also undeniable - and this, similarly, we would expect from the above position, since leisure amenities alone cannot remove contradictions engendered elsewhere,

e.g. in The schools and workplaces. Thus, there have been, predictably, many post-Ted youth cultural manifestations with accompanying 'anti-social' behaviour, such as Mods, Rockers, Skinheads, etc., despite the ever-increasing sophistication of the provision of leisure facilities for young people in both the private and public sphere. On this evidence, it is obvious that some of the 'causes' reach further back, into other contexts besides the leisure one.

Cultural Responses: A defence of "Space" and Status.

In the light of these growing structural inequalities, how can we read the Teds cultural responses as symbolic articulations of their social plight? If we look at the cultural responses adopted, in turn, what becomes apparent in decoding them is an attempt to defend, symbolically, a constantly threatened "space" and a declining status.

"Group-Mindedness"

The "group-mindedness" of the Teds can be read partly as a response to the upheaval and destruction of the socially cohesive force of the extended kinship network mentioned under the section on "Housing". Thus the group life and intense loyalty of the Teds can be seen as a re-affirmation of traditional slum working-class values and the "strong sense of territory" (Downes, p.119) as an attempt to retain, if only imaginatively, a hold on the territory which was being expropriated from them, by developers, on two levels:

(1) the actual expropriation of land;

(2) the less tangible expropriation of the culture attached to the land i,e. the kinship networks and and "articulations of communal space" mentioned by Phil. Cohen (op. cit.)

"extreme touchiness to insults, real or imagined."

If we look at their extreme touchiness to insults, real or imagined, we find that most of these incidents revolved around insults to themselves personally, to their appearance generally, and their dress in particular. To illustrate this point, using one of the more dramatic examples available, the first 'Teddy boy' killing, the Clapham Common murder of 1953, was a result of a fight between three youths and a group of Teds which had been started when one of the Teds had been called 'a flash cunt' by one of the youths. (For a full account of this incident, and the subsequent trial, see Tony Parker's The Plough Boy). My contention is that to lads traditionally lacking in status and being further deprived of what little they possessed, as I have argued earlier, there remained only the self, the cultural extension of the self (dress, personal appearance) and the social extension of the self (the group). Once threats were perceived in these areas, the only 'reality' or 'space' on which they had any hold, then the fights, in defence of this space, become explicable and meaningful phenomena.

If we look closely at the objects of Teddy boy fighting mentioned earlier, this notion of defending their space is, I believe, further amplified. Group fights, i.e. fights with other groups of Teds, are explicable in terms of a defence of the social extension of the self - the group (hence, the importance, noted earlier, of

groupmindedness'). Fights which ensued when individuals insulted Teds are explicable in terms of a defence of the self and the cultural extension of the self symbolised in their dressand general appearance. Especially important in this area is the touchiness to insults about dress. This I shall enlarge upon in the next section on "Dress".

Whilst many of their fights resulted from extreme sensitivity to insults, even their "attacks" on the Cypriot proprietors of Cypriot cafe's and Blacks can be read, in terms of defence: a defence of status. Their position as 'lumpen' youths was worsening, as I have demonstrated, independently of the influx of Commonwealth immigrants in the early 1950's. but in the absense of a coherent and articulate grasp of their social reality, it was perhaps inevitable that they should perceive this influx as causal rather than contid-ental. Thus, they rationalised their position as being, in part anyway, due to the immigrants and displaced their frustration onto them. An additional irritent was the perception many Teds had of immigrants as actually making it - the corollary of this, of course, was that they were making it "at the Teds expense". The cafe-owning Cypriots were one example of those who had "made it". Others were the coloured landlords and racket-eers. Living, as many Teds did, in dilapidated inner urban areas scheduled for re- devel-opment, they came into contact with the minority of coloureds, who, because ofthe hopelessness of their position,(being coloured and working class), were forced into positions of very limited options (small-time racketeering and pimping were probably two of the more available and attractive). And so the myth of the coloured immigrants being either pimps, landlords or in on the rackets, very prevalent among Teds, (and many white working class adults) started and spread. The repercussions of all this, the 1958 'race-riots' in Nottingham and Notting Hill, are known, sadly, only too well. That it should have been the Teds who started them lends weight to my thesis. That large numbers of working class adults responded in the way that they did, by joining in, demonstrates that it was not only the young 'lumpen' who were experiencing a worsening of their socio-economic position. But, in an age of affluence,'the real structural causes' could not be admitted, and, predictably, were not. Instead, the nine unskilled working class adolescents who started the Notting Hill riots, were savagely sentenced to four years imprisonment apiece. The obvious scape-goating involved, as in all similar cases of scape-goat punishments, was, and still is, a sure sign of mystification at work - the protective cloak of the ruling classes being drawn closer to prevent its real interests becoming too visible.

The attacks on youth clubs are perhaps easiest to explain if one remembers that many youth clubs "banned" all Teddy boys purely on "reputation". Simple revenge must then have constituted the basis for some attacks. Additionally, though, there was the chronic lack of public provision of facilities to match the increase in adolescent leisure. Consequently, much was then expected of what was provided - far too much. When these failed to live up to the expectations, as they invariably did, the disappointment was invariably increased. Thus, ironically, the youth clubs that did exist, far from alleviating adolescent leisure problems actually exacerbated them. (For a fascinating account of the trials and tribulations experienced in this area and of a valiant, but short-lived attempt to supply the kids with what they wanted, see Ray Gosling's excellent Sum Total).

Finally, the [illegible] on late-night bus routes, this suggests that the opportunity of anonymity and possibly alcohol combined to increase the already high level of sensitivity to imagined insults.

Dress and Appearance.

Despite periodic unemployment, despite the unskilled jobs, Teds, in common with other teenagers at work during this period, were relatively affluent. Between 1945-50, the average real wage of teenagers increased at twice the adult rate (Abrams quoted in S.Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics). Teds thus certainly had money to spend, and because it was practically all they had, it assumed a crucial importance. Much of the money went on clothes: the Teddy boy "uniform". But before "decoding" this particular cultural articulation a sketch of the "style" and its history is necessary.

Originally the Edwardian suit was introduced in 1950 by a group of Savile Row tailors who were attempting to initiate a new style. It was addressed, primarily, to the young aristocratic men about town. Essentially the dress consisted of a long, narrow - lapelled waisted jacket, narrow trousers (but without being "drainpipes"), ordinary toe-capped shoes, and a fancy waistcoat. Shirts were white, with cutaway collars and ties were tied with a "windsor" knot. Headwear, if worn, was a trilby. The essential changes from conventional dress were the cut of the jacket and the dandy waistcoat. Additionally, barbers began offering individual styling, and hair length was generally longer than the conventional short back and sides. (This description is culled from a picture of the "authentic" Edwardian dress which was put out by the "Tailor and Cutter" and printed in the Sketch (14th November 1953.) in order to dissociate the "authentic" from the working-class adoption of the style).

This dress began to be taken up by working class youths sometime in 1953 and, in those early days, was often taken over wholesale (The Daily Mirror of 23rd October 1953 shows a picture of Michael Davies, who was convicted of what later became known as the first "teddy boy" killing, which would bear this out. In fact the picture shows him in a three piece matching suit (i.e. without the the fancy waistcoat).

The later modifications to this style by the Teds were the bootlace tie, the thick-creped suede shoes (Eton clubman chukka type), skintight, drainpipe trousers (without turn-ups), straighter, less waisted jackets, moleskin or satin collars to the jackets and the addition of vivid colours. The earlier sombre suit colours occasionally gave way to suits of vivid green, red or pink and other "primitive" colours (e.g. the warwick "rebels"). Blue - suede shoes, post-Elvis, were also worn. The hair-style also underwent a transformation: it was usually long, combed into a "D-A" with a boston neck-line (straight cut), greasy and with side whiskers and a quiff. Variations on this were the elephants's trunk or the more extreme "apache" (short on top, long at sides)

I see this choice of uniform as, initially, an attempt to buy status (since the clothes chosen were originally worn by upper-class dandies) which, being quickly aborted by a harsh social reaction (in 1954 secondhand Edwardian suits were on sale in various markets as they became rapidly unwearable by the upper-class dandies once the Teds had taken them over as their own), was followed by an attempt to create their own style via the modifications just outlined.

This, then, was the Teds one contribution to culture: their adoption and personal modification of Savile Row Edwardian suits. But more important than being a contribution to culture, since culture only has meaning when transposed into social terms, their dress represented a symbolic way of expressing and demonstrating their social reality, of giving cultural meaning to their social plight. And because of this, their touchiness to insults about dress becomes not only comprehensible but rational and meaningful.

But what "social reality" was their uniform both "expressive of" and "a negotiation with"? Unfortunately, there is, as yet, no "grammar" for decoding cultural symbols like dress and what follows is largely speculative. However, if one examines the context from which the cultural symbol was probably extracted, one possible way of formulating one aspect of such a grammar, then the adoption of, for example, the bootlace tie, begins to acquire social meaning. Probably picked up from the many American Western films viewed during this period where it was worn, most prevalently, as I remember them, by the slick city gambler whose social status was, grudgingly, high because of his ability to live by his wits and outside the traditional working class moves of society (which were basically rural and hardworking as opposed to urban and hedonistic), then I believe its symbolic cultural meaning for the Teds becomes explicable as both expression of their social reality (basically outsiders and forced to live by their wits) and their social 'aspirations'(basically an attempt to gain high, albeit grudging, status for an ability to live smartly, hedonistically and by their wits in an urban setting. This brief example is,I hope, illustrative of one aspect of a possible approach in this area. And if it is "correct" it relates back, and amplifies, the first mentioned distinctive element in Ted. culture: that of seeing their interests as "coincidental with the submerged tenth", the outsiders.

Finally, to end this section on "dress", there is the importance of the symbolic visibility of the uniform in a period when, as I mentioned earlier, "the traditional institutional avenues of redress" (their families and the Labour Party) were becoming all but invisible. This is another way of viewing the "social" significance of the Teds uniform.

A return to theory.

How does what I have been arguing fit in with the work of other sociologists. Willmott (in Adolescent Boys of East London) and Downes (in The Delinquent Solution) have both looked extensively at working class adolescents in East London. Willmott's look at adolescent boys concludes that by far the majority of boys, two-thirds to three-quarters, conformed to the norms of their working class parents, and an even larger proportion, nine-tenths, were 'relatively' content with their lot. Only one-tenth could be classified as 'rebels'. Downes offers us a similar picture. Working with boys from Stepney and Poplar, as opposed to Willmott's Bethnal Green sample, he similarly concludes that his boys retained "an almost monolithic conformity to the traditional working class value system". (Op. cit.p. 230-1), and showed little dissatisfaction over jobs and social status. What, in the light of the conformity and relatively little dissatisfaction displayed by working class adolescent in these two studies, are we to make of my notion

of symbolic expression". I shall [illegible] findings in both books which can be seen as confirming my thesis.

Willmott's work, despite its overall conclusion does, in one significant aspect, add weight to my thesis and that is in his profile of the 'rebels'. Small in number, admittedly, (one-tenth of the sample, although "under-represented" according to Willmott), but, for our purposes, the most significant finding in the book. Here is his 'rebel' profile which, because of its importance for us, I have quoted in full. I think it sounds familiar:

> "He went to a secondary modern school and, like the 'working class' boy, left at 15. But he did not like school: he disliked the teachers and the regime, as well as thinking the lessons 'useless'. His job is manual, and is more likely to be unskilled or semi-skilled than skilled. He is discontented with his work and particularly the lack of prospects. He has probably had at least three jobs since leaving school, sometimes many more. He does not get on too well with his parents and he dislikes the police. He is more likely than other boys to say that he does not intend to marry at all or that he does not know whether he will. He rejects, even more firmly than his 'working class' fellows the idea of deferred gratification. It is probably from boys like this that the seriously delinquent are drawn".
>
> (Adolescent Boys of East London, p. 173)

(One thing not mentioned here, but elsewhere in the book, is that the rebels tended to be the 'unclubbable' ones - vis-a-vis the youth clubs.)

Had we drawn up a profile from our own knowledge of the Teds, the similarity with the above would have been remarkable. My strong suspicion is that many of these 'rebels', had the study been conducted during the '50's and not the early '60's, would have been Teds. Downes, whilst similarly concluding as to the conformist nature of most working class adolescents in Stepney and Poplar does also talk, theoretically, of delinquent contra-cultures (this term was borrowed from J. Milton Yinger "Contraculture and Subculture" in The Sociology of Subcultures, ed. D. Arnold). The distinction between the two terms (subculture/contraculture) according to Yinger is that whilst "Subcultures probably confict in some measure with larger culture", in a contraculture* *"the conflict element is central; many of the values, indeed, are specifically contradictions of the dominant culture" (p. 127). Although Yinger adds that empirically both infuences, subcultural and contracultural, may be mixed, my own feeling is that, even analytically, it is impossible to make such definite distinctions as Yinger suggests. To elaborate, it is possible to be 'contra' rather than 'sub', whilst still retaining the focal concerns of the parent culture, by adopting these concerns in a radically different fashion. And it is in this way that the Teds can be read as a 'contraculture'. More precisely what I mean by this, I shall outline in the following section.

The Teds and their parents: continuities and discontinuities.

Miller talks of the focal concerns of American lower-class culture as being:

trouble; toughness; smartness; excitement; fate; autonomy; (p.57, "Lower- class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency", in The Sociology of Subcultures, ed. D.Arnold) Ignoring small transatlantic differences, this list, as a general guide, is an adequate one for the British working class also, both parent and youth culture. But, in so far as these values are adopted, hedonistically, by the young, and not instrumentally, as with their parents, then they are 'contracultural' and, hence, oppositional. To elaborate, the Teds used "excitement", for example, to create themselves, that is, the excitement of 'the exploit' (e.g. senseless vandalism), besides its element of expressing frustration has the additional element of being an end in itself. Conversely, the routinised "excitement" of their parents' "Saturday night out" is ultimately instrumental in that it enables them to face Monday morning and work for another week. It is thus intimately connected with the production process (a means to this end), and basically re-creative. Far from being oppositioned it is an integral part of the 'negotiation' constantly being enacted between the subordinate and the dominant class.

A corollary of parent culture instrumentality vis-a-vis the focal concern 'excitement' is that it takes place in the 'negotiated' institutional setting of the pub, which legitimates it. The Teds hedonistic pursuit of excitement takes place largely in the streets - a non-negotiated, non-institutional and only ever partly legitimate setting (depending on how the social-control agencies percieve of your presence there). Because they are non-institutional, the streets are, to a large extent, ideologically neutral. Hence the desire to club the 'unclubbables' and in so doing, to place them within the ideological confines of society (via the institutional setting of the youth club and the ideological mediations of its leaders and ethos.)

What I am arguing here is that the cultural responses of the Teds show continuities with their parent culture in terms of focal concerns, since both parents and offspring, as members of the same class fraction, have similar negotiations to make with the dominant culture, but that their adoption of these concerns in a radically different fashion is indicative of some basic discontinuities between parents and their young which are a result of different generations experiencing structural changes differentially. To elaborate, the situation of the Teds in relation to school and the job market were areas where the young, and only the young, were affected. Thus there are elements in their cultural response which have "structural" roots which did not affect their parents: responses which have to be veiwed as relating to their, the Teds, specific socio-historical situation, and independently of that of their parents.

Conclusion: The Teds and the Politics of Youth Culture.

What I have tried to do in this paper is explore some of the factors which I believe make it possible to read the Teds as a "political" manifestation, albeit in an inarticulate and symbolic, rather than an articulate and organised way. S.Hall in the "Condition of England" talks of discontents being experienced as "private grouses" which, although being an "apolitical way of experiencing social deprivation and need" nevertheless is "a way of perceiving oneself in relation to Politics....." (People and Politics, p. 21). In this restricted sense of "political" the Teds cultural articulations;

read as symbolisations of their "private grouses" - their perception of growing structural inequalities were expressive of themselves "in relation to politics"

But cultures, as I have argued, do not simply reflect social structures. Being dialectically inter-related with them they are the site of the constant negotiations between dominant and subordinate cultures: the site of a struggle for some sort of control over one's life situation, for imposing one's own meaning-systems, albeit contingent in the final analysis on society's structural arrangements.

So, for the Teds, with other areas or "spaces" increasingly foreclosed and controlled by others (e.g. school/work), leisure, with its possibilities of freedom, became the crucial site for these negotiations. Here contradictions were worked through, including the contradiction in the leisure situation itself (between aspirations/provision), cultural symbols adopted (dress, crucially) and meanings imposed. Here a "space", tenuous and constantly threatened by various social control agencies, was generated in the form of the "group" and its headquarters- the caff. To retain a hold on that space, to negotiate, in a symbolic way, for some recognition of their group identity and needs, these I believe were some of their "political" aspirations and the sum of their "political" achievements.

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