There is not one homogeneous youth culture in any of the countries of the Western world; there are a series of interconnected cultures varying with the class and educational level of the youngsters themselves. Frank Musgrove argues that:

The adolescent was invented at the same time as the steam-engine. The principal architect of the latter was Watt in 1765, of the former Rousseau in 1762. Having invented the adolescent, society has been faced with two major problems: how and where to accommodate him in the social structure, and how to make his behaviour accord with the specifications. For two centuries English society has been involved in the problems of defining and clarifying the concept of precocity.‘1

Young people are hived off from the rest of society, placed by adults in a special category between child and man. The justification for this segregation is twofold: in social and economic terms it is argued that there is a greater need for preparation in a 'complex' society and, in biological terms (with strong evolutionary undertones), that there are three physical phases of development: child, adolescent and adult. But why are they separated, what are the initial reasons behind this socially created schism?

The educational and apprenticeship system in this country expanded as the demand for child and adolescent labour declined. It took up the slack of unemployment, it regulated entry into the labour market. Thus:

The young were extensively withheld from the economy and given compulsory schooling after 5870 when the economy no longer required their services on the scale that had prevailed over the previous century. The economy's diminished scope for juvenile labour was already evident in the sixties: not only was the demand decreasing, but it was shifting from the important, central industries like agriculture to employment more marginal to the economy, like domestic service. The statutes of 1870 and 1880 which introduced compulsory education were largely superfluous acts of rescue; they signalized for the young a displacement which had already occurred from a pivotal position in the nation's economic life.2
Young people were no longer central to the economy; they were moving ever more on to the periphery, into marginal and relatively trivial occupations: street-trading, fetching and carrying and particularly indoor domestic service.3

A consequence of this was that there was an increasing proportion of young people at the margin of society who were perceived as outcast, neglected, idle and — most important — uncontrollable. It is in such a historical context that compulsory education was introduced, and it was in such a manner that it proceeded.

Restrictions on youth’s economic activities are reflected in the moratorium placed upon their sexual habits. For the ethos of productivity dictates that only those who are economically self-sufficient are entitled to enjoy full sexual relationships.

The resulting position which youth are placed in is peculiarly ambiguous. Ralph England outlined this process of exclusion and ambivalence when he wrote:

The groundwork for the emergence of a teenage culture in our society was laid a century and more ago when youngsters were gradually removed from functional roles in the economy through restrictive apprenticeship codes, protective labour legislation, the compulsory education movement, and the withdrawal of children from agricultural activities attendant upon urbanization. However diverse the forces were which led to this removal from productive roles, the result was that for probably the first time a major society deactivated a large and energetic segment of its population without clearly redefining the status and function of that segment. The resulting ambiguity of status, the blurring of the lines separating childhood from youth and youth from adulthood, has been commented upon by many observers; the middle-class teenager, with his typically lengthened period of ambiguous status compared with working-class youngsters, is faced with contradictory expectations. He is not expected to engage in productive labour, but neither is he encouraged to loaf; he is discouraged from early marriage, but is allowed to engage in proto-courtship; he cannot vote, hold public office, or serve on a jury, but is expected to be civic-minded; he is given many privileges and a large measure of individual freedom, but without the obligatory ties to significant others which, for the adult, help keep privileges and freedom from deteriorating into licence.’4

Musgrove corroborates this in a survey where he found that not only do adults oppose
teenagers taking up adult productive or marital roles, preferring that 'they should have a good
time while they have got the chance', but that they simultaneously condemn them for their
hedonism and irresponsibility. This ambivalence about hedonism is typical of our society, with
its bifurcation between formal and subterranean values; for what we embrace on the one hand
we automatically condemn on the other. Adolescents then are committed to a limbo, but
severely reprimanded if they act out the implications of this limbo.
Adults for their part take steps to ensure that young people are not exempt from the ethos of
productivity. Education provides the necessary labour to guarantee that they are correctly
socialized for their future roles. But this education is more symbolic than functional. That is, it
Teaches the value of deferred gratification, rather than the requisite skills required for adult jobs.

It can be argued that the notion of our society being more complex than 'primitive' societies is
something of a misconception: the skills that many tribal peoples learn, both technological and
social, are often formidable. Further, whilst the notion that adolescence is a physiological stage
ii between childhood and adulthood may be true as regards puberty itself, it hardly justifies its
extension up to the late teens and early twenties. The body of information that the educational
system, which perpetuates and concretizes this social definition of adolescence, conveys to its
students is very largely vocationally and socially irrelevant to their future adult lives. Education
has, as Musgrove indicates, largely a 'ritual function': a place where pupils diligently mark time,
where pseudo-productive tasks are engaged in, and where the work ethic is firmly ingrained into
at least the more educationally 'fortunate' youngsters. Thus he writes:

The more highly rewarded young are expected to pay a price: they realize this, and for the most
part enter into a tacit bargain with their seniors who enact it. The price is deferred social
gratification in return for augmented gratification in the end; the deferment takes the form of
industrial apprenticeships which the apprentices themselves may regard, after the first few
months, as futile, or extended education in formal institutions which may have little relevance to
life present or future. The more perceptive of the young recognize this as a game devised by
their elders in which they would be wise to co-operate.5

In such a fashion young people are controlled not only by the external pressures of parents,
school, and work authorities, but by the knowledge that deviance would jeopardize their future.

THREE TYPES OF YOUTH CULTURE

**Conformist Youth Culture**
The vast majority of young people adopt the role that adults expect of them: that is, of diligent
application to their work or study, not questioning their low-status position. They find their real
focus of life in leisure activities around which they construct a subculture of courtship, dancing, popular music and entertainment. None of this infringes in any way the expectations of adults. Young people are controlled externally by their parents and school, and internally by their own career aspirations. Thus they, like the majority of adults, are instrumental towards their work and have relatively 'non-deviant' leisure activities. But, unlike adults, there is little chance of youth obtaining status from its work or study; the latter is instrumental only so far as the future is concerned; it does not give rise to the present rewards of wage packet or salary. Their sense of status is derived, then, not from their productive roles, but from the world of leisure: athletics, dancing, the aesthetics of clothes and physical prowess, motorbikes, cars or surfing. Youth culture is a subculture embodying the subterranean values, and status within it is measured in terms of this yardstick. Because part of their role commits them to the world of leisure, and because status is derived from leisure activities, the subterranean values are accentuated more amongst young people than amongst adults. But — like adults — because extreme accentuation would threaten their — in this case — future productive roles, this accentuation is kept largely within bounds.

As we have noted previously, legal psychotropic drugs, particularly alcohol, are freely utilized in our society to ease the transition between the worlds of work and leisure. But young people in Britain and North America, despite the greater emphasis on subterranean values within their culture, are largely prohibited from using such drugs. For the use of alcohol, like the availability of sexual pleasure, is forbidden to those who do not perform productive roles.

Deviation, however, does occur but it is hidden; for there exists what has been termed a 'conspiracy of silence' between the generations, which serves to minimize potential conflicts. The teenage party which occurs when parents are away is a prime example of such a period of concealed deviancy. Here

THE DRUGTAICERS
the young people have removed themselves from the watchful eyes of adults and for a short while espouse subterranean values of an extreme nature. Guilt and inhibition are liquidated by a mixture of drink and music in a situation of collective solidarity. But these lapses are carefully timed and executed, and no attempt is made to challenge the dictates of their elders. Illegal drugs are rarely taken although marihuana may be deemed innocuous enough to deserve an occasional secretive puff. The real conflict if any, then, between conformist youth and adult dictates is not that of illegal versus legal drugs, but over the right to use legal drugs such as alcohol now rather than to wait until they are of sufficient age. Because of our prohibition of cigarettes and alcohol to the young, plus the emphasis in advertising and folklore on the masculinity incumbent (for example, 'the man who likes a good pint' yet can 'hold his drink') these drugs come to symbolize for conformist youth the achievement of adult status. Thus Maddox'6 notes how many adolescents seem to use alcohol as a help to resolving the question: 'when am I an adult.'
Delinquent Youth Culture

For a minority of youth — usually from the lower working class — attainment at school is largely unrelated to the unskilled manual job they will take, and work itself is perceived fairly accurately as being deadend and without much promise of material success. David Downes has described such boys in his study of delinquents in Stepney and Poplar. Their response, he argues, is to dissociate themselves completely from the world of work or school. They lower their expectations of material success down to a realistic level and focus their lives almost completely on their leisure activities. Young people in this category are not prevented from engaging in illicit activities because of fear of jeopardizing their future careers, because their careers are non-existent. Internally, then, social control is minimal, and externally they often live in areas which are exceedingly permissive as regards delinquent activities. They tend, therefore, to accentuated subterranean values and disdain the workaday world to a much greater extent than conformist youth. Leisure and the present is more important to them than the uncertainties of the future. However, their independence from the adult world is strictly limited: they usually live at home, have only slight economic independence, and are surrounded by adults. Often, of course, the adult culture which is their heritage is of a hedonistic sort—the culture of the ghetto Negro being a prime example — and in these instances accentuation of subterranean values will be considerably greater than where adults have some commitment to the work ethic.

The delinquent youth culture centres itself around the various available ways of creating for itself a world of adventure, hedonism, 'kicks', and excitement. These subterranean themes are, in fact, consistently encountered in any analysis of lower-class culture. Thus:

Gans (1962) described the life style of action-seeking Italians as 'dominated' by the adventurous episode and claimed the goal of action was 'an opportunity for thrills, and a chance to face and overcome a challenge'. Miller (1958) noted among Negroes a concern for excitement and a high regard for toughness. Reissman (1962) in his participant observation of Puerto Ricans in New York City described their preference for physical strength and excitement that counteracted the hum-drum of daily life. These descriptive qualities may be summed up in a lower socio-economic ideology that prepares and guides the youth in slum neighbourhoods to compete and survive in 'street life'. It is 'on the street' that qualities of excitement, feats of strength, and the day-to-day thrills get played out to whatever important audience happens to watch.

In the folklore of the streets, where reputations of the young may prescribe the degree of deference or disrespect for the total family, there are pressures on adolescent boys to live up to the ideals of toughness, strength, daring, and the willingness to challenge the bleak fate of being poor. Some youths achieve high status reputations built on these qualities. Some do not.
Persons who do not subscribe to the ideology, who turn their backs on the beliefs of their neighbours, are sometimes called riddle-class oriented or upward mobile by sociologists. In the language of the streets, they are called: 'chicken' [archaic], 'punk', 'square', or 'faggot'. They and members of their families may be ignored, ridiculed, or exploited. Those youths who energetically thrust themselves into the slum neighbourhood ideology seek to establish their reputations according to an ideal type: the stand-up cat. Puerto Ricans call him a 'maucho'. Negroes may refer to him as 'a bad-ass nigger'. And Italians call him 'a guy with a pair of balls'. But across the boards, he is a stand-up cat.

The stand-up cat requires fortuitous situations in which he can prove his daring, strength, predilection for excitement, and ultimate toughness. If the situations do not arise — and they seem to occur with frequent regularity — the stand-up cat may arrange them. The situations are primarily dangerous, where severe bodily damage may result. More important, the situations provide tests for the stand-up cat recruit, tests in which he demonstrates well or badly his commitment to what he believes is the code of the streets.'

One of the activities which provides both excitement and pleasure is the use of illicit drugs. The precise drug chosen is dependent on three factors:

1. The availability of drugs in the neighbourhood.
2. The socially defined effects of the drug and their degree of coincidence with the values of the group; e.g., heroin may be viewed as a drug which saps spontaneity and delimits the possibility of excitement or as a drug which is the ultimate 'kick'. This relationship between the valuation of effects and use is, as outlined in the second chapter, more complicated in that values within limits alter effects.
3. A minor factor is the degree to which the prohibition of a drug, and alarmist stereotypes of the drug user, add excitement and bravado to its use. The attitude concerning heroin, for example, is sometimes of the sort, 'you can't get much farther out than that'. Illegal drug use then is not only a vehicle for the emergence of subterranean values, but, because of the taboos surrounding it, also a visible method of kicking over the traces and seeking forbidden pleasures.

**Bohemian Youth Culture**

The culture of delinquent youth is created when a body of young people are cut off from access to the material rewards which the system has to offer. The good job, the suburban house, the new car are not within their legitimate reach. Thus, work and school are not only boring and stifling, they are also meaningless in the instrumental sense of being inadequate as a means of obtaining valued material goods. The bohemian's response is fundamentally different. For initially at least he is well capable of leading a materially successful life. But in practice he finds the rewards offered him insufficient to warrant his conformity to the work ethic. Instead, like the delinquent, he focuses his life on his leisure, but unlike the former his dissociation is a matter of choice rather than a realistic bowing to the inevitable. Moreover, his disdain for society is of an
articulate and ideological nature. He evolves social theories which uphold subterranean values as authentic guides to action, and which attempt to solve the problem of the domination of the ethos of productivity.

It is only within bohemian cultures that drug use is exalted to such a paramount position, ideologically and morally buttressed against the criticisms of the outside world. In comparison, the majority of other cultures are ambivalent about drug use and mundane in their assessment of the significance of their chosen drugs. Moreover, bohemian cultures are in the West — the major growth area as far as illegal drug use is concerned. It is important, therefore, and consistent with our cultural approach, to examine in detail the values held by bohemian § and to indicate how the use of drugs is intimately woven into the fabric of such a culture.


2 Ibid PP- 58-9-

3 Ibid., p. 74.


