



Cohen

Folk Devils and Moral Panics


ROUTLEDGE

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DEVIANCE AND MORAL PANICS

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way the society conceives itself.

One of the most recurrent types of moral panic in Britain since the war has been associated with the emergence of various forms

of youth culture (originally almost exclusively working class, but often recently middle class or student based) whose behaviour is deviant or delinquent. To a greater or lesser degree, these cultures have been associated with violence. The Teddy Boys, the Mods and Rockers, the Hells Angels, the skinheads and the hippies have all been phenomena of this kind. There have been parallel reactions to the drug problem, student militancy, political demonstrations, football hooliganism, vandalism of various kinds and crime and violence in general. But groups such as the Teddy Boys and the Mods and Rockers have been distinctive in being identified not just in terms of particular events (such as demonstrations) or particular disapproved forms of behaviour (such as drug-taking or violence) but as distinguishable social types. In the gallery of types that society erects to show its members which roles should be avoided and which should be emulated, these groups have occupied a constant position as folk devils: visible reminders of what we should not be. The identities of such social types are public property and these particular adolescent groups have symbolized – both in what they were and how they were reacted to – much of the social change which has taken place in Britain over the last twenty years.

In this book, I want to use a detailed case study of the Mods and Rockers phenomenon – which covered most of the 1960s – to illustrate some of the more intrinsic features in the emergence of such collective episodes of juvenile deviance and the moral panics they both generate and rely upon for their growth. The Mods and Rockers are one of the many sets of figures through which the sixties in Britain will be remembered. A decade is not just a chronological span but a period measured by its association with particular fads, fashions, crazes, styles or – in a less ephemeral way – a certain spirit or *kulturgeist*. A term such as ‘the twenties’ is enough to evoke the cultural shape of that period, and although we are too close to the sixties for such explicit understandings to emerge already, this is not for want of

trying from our instant cultural historians. In the cultural snap albums of the decade which have already been collected¹ the Mods and Rockers stand alongside the Profumo affair, the Great Train Robbery, the Krays, the Richardsons, the Beattles, the Rolling Stones, the Bishop of Woolwich, *Private Eye*, David Frost, Carnaby Street, The Moors murders, the emergence of Powellism, the Rhodesian affair, as the types and scenes of the sixties.

At the beginning of the decade, the term ‘Modernist’ referred simply to a style of dress; the term ‘Rocker’ was hardly known outside the small groups which identified themselves this way. Five years later, a newspaper editor was to refer to the Mods and Rockers incidents as ‘without parallel in English history’ and troop reinforcements were runoured to have been sent to quell possible widespread disturbances. Now, another five years later, these groups have all but disappeared from the public consciousness, remaining only in collective memory as folk devils of the past, to whom current horrors can be compared. The rise and fall of the Mods and Rockers contained all the elements from which one might generalize about folk devils and moral panics. And unlike the previous decade which had only produced the Teddy Boys, these years witnessed rapid oscillation from one such devil to another: the Mod, the Roker, the Greaser, the student militant, the drug fiend, the vandal, the soccer hooligan, the hippy, the skinhead.

Neither moral panics nor social types have received much systematic attention in sociology. In the case of moral panics, the two most relevant frameworks come from the sociology of law and social problems and the sociology of collective behaviour. Sociologists such as Becker² and Gusfield³ have taken the cases of the Marijuana Tax Act and the Prohibition laws respectively to show how public concern about a particular condition is generated, a ‘symbolic crusade’ mounted, which with publicity and the actions of certain interest groups, results in what Becker calls *moral enterprise*: ‘... the creation of a new fragment of the moral constitution of society.’⁴ Elsewhere⁵ Becker uses the same

analysis to deal with the evolution of social problems as a whole. The field of collective behaviour provides another relevant orientation to the study of moral panics. There are detailed accounts of cases of mass hysteria, delusion and panics, and also a body of studies on how societies cope with the sudden threat or disorder caused by physical disasters.

The study of social types can also be located in the field of collective behaviour, not so much though in such 'extreme' forms as riots or crowds, but in the general orientation to this field by the symbolic interactionists such as Blumer and Turner.⁶ In this line of theory, explicit attention has been paid to social types by Klapp,⁷ but although he considers how such types as the hero, the villain and the fool serve as role models for a society, his main concern seems to be in classifying the various subtypes within these groups (for example, the renegade, the parasite, the corrupter, as villain roles) and listing names of those persons Americans see as exemplifying these roles. He does not consider how such typing occurs in the first place and he is preoccupied with showing his approval for the processes by which social consensus is facilitated by identifying with the hero types and hating the villain types.

The major contribution to the study of the social typing process itself comes from the interactionist or transactional approach to deviance. The focus here is on how society labels rule-breakers as belonging to certain deviant groups and how, once the person is thus type cast, his acts are interpreted in terms of the status to which he has been assigned. It is to this body of theory that we must turn for our major orientation to the study of both moral panics and social types.

THE TRANSACTIONAL APPROACH TO DEVIANCE

The sociological study of crime, delinquency, drug-taking, mental illness and other forms of socially deviant or problematic behav-

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ON THE BEACHES: THE WARNING AND THE IMPACT

This is the point at which to return to the 'impact phase', the original scene of each event, and observe something of the interaction between the various audiences and actors involved. How was the stage set? How were the crowd scenes (there were few leading roles) played out? How did the various elements in the societal reaction – media, control agents – influence what was happening?

After this chapter, the disaster sequence will have to be abandoned and the dramatalurgical analogy will also have nearly exhausted its utility. What have been visualized as audiences and actors will have to be analysed as occupants of particular positions – young, old, middle class, working class – in a particular society, England – at a particular time, the 1960s. But for the time being the dramatalurgical analogy is far from played out; indeed, more than at any other point in the narrative is it justified to use the language of the theatre to describe what was happening. In a real sense, being on the beaches was being on stage.

SETTING THE STAGE: THE WARNING PHASE

For a very obvious reason, disaster researchers have devoted considerable attention to studying the warning phase: reactions to warnings are crucial in determining the effects of the disaster. Research has concentrated on the stages in the psychological reaction to threat, paying particular attention to the defence and coping mechanisms which inhibit a realistic assessment of the approaching disaster.¹ The culmination of a sequence involving recognition and validation of the appropriate cues, the expression of emotional responses such as fear and anxiety and a definition of the alternative actions available in the situation, may be disbelief or distortion (the danger will occur later than expected, it will be worse elsewhere). The eventual outcome depends on factors such as set or anxiety level ('if a person is "set" to expect a disaster a minor suggestion will raise the probabilities of occurrence in his mind considerably so that reaction to the disaster, whether it is imminent or not, is precipitated'²) and familiarity with similar situations.

While parallel processes developed in the warning before each Mods and Rockers event, a crucial difference was that there were very few of the factors tending to produce denial, disbelief, defence and other such end-products described in disaster research. There was little warning before the initial Clacton event, but the inventory build-up and reaction to this and subsequent events was such that the widely disseminated warnings and threats were generally believed. Few were predisposed to erect the elaborate defence mechanisms that are used, for example, to discount the possibility of nuclear warfare. The inventory, particularly the prediction factor, was crucial in building up a reaction to deviance identical to the sensitization which occurs in an 'effective' disaster warning:

If a threat cannot be denied, there is likely to be an increased sensitization to the danger, so that cues to danger result in

overreaction and emotional and sometimes precipitous behaviour. Where threat cannot be discounted, aggressive and projective behaviours begin to develop and scapegoating, polarising of antagonists, and other hate and fear situations are generated.³

The analogy between the warning phase of a natural disaster and a situation close to the Mods and Rockers disturbances is also used by Thompson in his description of the tension in a resort prior to an expected Hells Angels invasion: 'As the weekend began, the atmosphere at Bass Lake was reminiscent of a Kansas hamlet preparing for a tornado.'⁴

Such elements could be observed throughout the whole sequence of the reaction to the Mods and Rockers, and they were condensed and concentrated before each single event. As such, they were part of the general sensitization process already described, but two further unfolding features of the warning phase need to be noted. The first is the tendency for the warning system to become more complicated and formalized and to start earlier; the second is the increasingly unreal and ritualistic nature of the system as evidenced by the number of false alarms and warnings out of proportion to the imminent threat.

Initially, the warning system operated only locally and was confined to certain seaside resorts on the south coast. Although there was nothing intrinsic in the Clacton event to expect that it would be repeated, the way it was reacted to made the threat of a repeat performance very real to the other resorts. It needed only one interview with a Rocker who said (or who was quoted as saying) 'Next time Brighton will get it' to increase the threat. The atmosphere of expectation and apprehension before the Bank Holiday immediately after Clacton can be gauged from the local press at the time.

A few days before Whitsun, a Brighton paper carried a story headed: 'Rioting Rockers Plan Raid on Brighton Soon' (Evening

Agus, 13 May 1964). It was claimed that a number of seaside towns had been warned by letter and anonymous phone calls that they would be targets for the next Mods and Rockers 'invasion'. Details were given of police preparations ('we will crack down on them immediately') and on the Saturday, there was another report 'Seaside Towns Ready for Trouble' in which it was disclosed that police leave had been cancelled in Brighton, Eastbourne and other resorts. At about the same time an editorial in another Brighton paper (*Brighton and Hove Gazette*, 15 May 1964) carried a warning about '... the riot-raising Rockers who, rumour has it, have it in mind to do a Clacton on Brighton'. In case the action properties of this warning cue had not been assimilated by the public, readers were urged: '... if they see signs of a "little Clacton" brewing, they should give the police their active support in reporting it.' This type of warning is equivalent to inhabitants of a flood area being told to evacuate when sirens sound; but while their evacuation would *reduce* the effects of the disaster, the Brighton inhabitants, sensitized to report signs of a 'little Clacton' would, in fact, *create* deviance in something like the original sense suggested in the transactional approach. This is the paradox intrinsic in moral panics.

Warnings in Margate at that time were more specific as there had been minor incidents there over Easter. The build-up in the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* in April and May, with articles such as 'Put Them in the Stocks', and stories of local vigilantes, leaves little doubt that the Mods and Rockers were expected. As early as 3 April an editorial noted that the Easter hooliganism '... can be construed as a foretaste of the type of behaviour which will be rife on our seafronts during the coming holiday season, unless swift and effective action is taken right now....'

After the second wave of incidents confirmed expectations, warnings became articulated at a much broader level. The national press and other sources of public opinion made it clear that the Mods and Rockers were now an institutionalized threat

to seaside resorts. Symbolization made the cues for recognizing incipient deviance ('little Clactons') much easier to pick up. Warnings were sounded earlier and the threat was expressed in terms of certainty and not probability. So, by August 1965, the *Evening Standard* (27 August 1965) carried a prominent report describing police preparations and quoted a police spokesman about leave being cancelled '... as a precaution against the usual riots between rival teenage gangs' (emphasis added).

As the societal control culture moved towards diffusion, escalation and innovation, so did the warning system become more formalized and bureaucratized. Shortly before August Bank Holiday, 1964, the Home Office Airborne Police Scheme to fly reinforcements in RAF Transport Command, was publicized. A local paper, in a report headed 'Town Is Ready For All Comers' announced that besides elaborate police preparations, special arrangements had been made to open the Town Hall courtroom over the weekend. (*Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 1 April 1965). These were not only warnings but stage-setting ceremonies: there was no doubt that the show would take place, one just had to make sure that the folk devils and their denouncers would have the appropriate arenas for their performance.

Certain Chief Constables institutionalized the practice of formal press conferences to explain preparations. Elaborate plans were made well in advance and national institutions such as the Home Office began to take a coordinating role. These 'secret' plans were judiciously leaked well before the expected event ostensibly to warn the Mods and Rockers what was in store for them, but also to reassure the public that something was being done. A week before Easter 1965, the *Sunday Telegraph* (11 April 1965) carried a detailed report of a Home Office conference the previous week attended by the Commissioner of Police and Chief Constables from all forces in southern England which might be affected. At the same time in Clacton, arrangements were made to station a squad on the main road junction on the outskirts of

the town to transmit warnings to a seafront patrol equipped with walkie-talkie sets. In 1966 an even more sophisticated warning system was set up. The Chief Constable of Hastings revealed at a conference of senior police officers at Leicester University that a secret network of plain-clothes police and informers were operating in clubs and coffee bars.⁵ Agents who had infiltrated the ranks of Mods were passing information direct to Scotland Yard and had apparently noticed a sinister development – the rise of self-appointed mob leaders. According to the Chief Constable, danger signs of this advanced planning could have been noticed well in advance at football riots and the organized interruption of political meetings during the General Election. The police now had their own early warning system to detect such signs: 'These people will not be able to get together without our knowing something about it beforehand.'

As in the cases of mass delusion described previously, the situation was ambiguous enough to allow for a number of false alarms to occur. Unfulfilled expectations, however, did not lead to a breakdown in the warning system or the erection of psychological defences against threat: if things did not happen, this could be explained in terms of the effectiveness of the deterrent ('they know we won't stand for them in X') or a change in the invasion plan. When public interest in the Mods and Rockers died down, and there was consequently less need for such rationalizations, the warnings became less publicized – despite the fact that the behaviour itself had not considerably changed its pattern. The deviance was now a regular occurrence, so there was no need for formal warnings. One merely had to consult a calendar to find out the date of the next show.

*See Withey's remarks about 'overreaction' and emotional behaviour. One might speculate that such fantasies about planning (cabalism) and spies infiltrating coffee bars, provided control agents with a satisfaction analogous to gang-leaders' fantasies about gang life.

THE CROWD SCENES

What happened and what was the atmosphere during the impact phase of a typical incident? The first feature to be noted was that in every instance, the young people present constituted a crowd or series of interlocking crowds, rather than a group (or gang) or even less, two highly structured opposing groups (or gangs). In terms of the organizational criteria used by sociologists to define such phenomena,⁶ the collectivities were at the least defined ends of the continua, and were far removed from the image of cohesive gangs presented in the inventory. Leadership was more spontaneous, actions were more momentary and less premeditated, emotions were more transitory, organization was weaker and goals were less clearly defined than most descriptions of the incidents using the 'warring gangs' image, lead one to believe.

Neither could the crowds be characterized in terms of the classic stereotypes of crowd or mob mentality. There was little of the initial psychological homogeneity which is supposed to characterize such groupings, and there was a considerable range in background and motivation. Homogeneity developed only through continued interaction and even at the peaks of crowd activity there were very diverse patterns of participation. These were not like revolutionary crowds or lynch mobs, but, on the whole, a series of passive and uncertain groups waiting to be entertained.

Passivity and expectancy were the dominant moods, and the context – the ritual Bank Holiday weekend by the sea – was one of leisure and entertainment. Brighton, Clacton, Margate, Southend – whatever the differences between them – share common characteristics on these occasions: a certain shabbiness, the overstrained and overpriced commercial facilities, a strange sensation of crowds moving almost randomly around you, and the all-pervasive smell of onions, hot dogs and fish and chips, the sense of cheapness and somehow having been cheated.⁷

But while Graham Greene was right in detecting a certain desperate air in the search for pleasure at these times, such moods are balanced by the positive exaltation produced by being away from home, from responsibilities, from routine.⁸ For the kids coming down to the resorts during those heady years of the mid-sixties, the weekend was an event, a happening, a ceremony which, in some senses, was affirmative. This was where the action was. It was the action of consumption which Goffman talks about when describing the 'fancy milling' process in such crowd settings:

....mere presence in a large, slightly packed gathering of revealing persons can bring not only the excitement that crowds generate, but also the uncertainty of not quite knowing what might happen next, the possibility of flirtations, which can themselves lead to relationship formation, and the lively experience of being an elbow away from someone who does manage to find real action in the crowd.⁹

Such generalized processes have to be put in their specific cultural setting and seen at a particular time in history: the point at which a whole new generation was beginning to define just simply *being present in a crowd* as an event. The pop concert, the love-in, the happening and (most appropriately named of all) the be-in, could be events even if, and perhaps especially if, nothing at all happened. One was just with others. The only structure was that brought to the event by its participants.

Now while the Mods and Rockers scenes were every bit as unstructured as this, most of the crowd – with the exception of the constant beatnik population and the hippies and flower children of the later years – had not quite reached the cultural sophistication by which non-action is defined as action. Their aim was excitement, but for most of the time nothing happened and so the dominant feelings were boredom, listlessness, ennui,

a sense of drifting aimlessness and lack of any specific plans. In these respects, of course, the kids were not much different from most adults on holiday at any time. But this mood was missed by the outsider because it clearly was incongruent with the folk devil image.

The following conversation, overheard between two 15-year-old girls huddled together on a windswept Brighton beach, conveys something of this tone:

First Girl: What's the time?

Second Girl: Three o'clock.

First: Blimey, we don't have to sit around here for another three hours, do we?

Second: We could get a train before.

First: Well, but you never know.

(Notes, Easter Sunday, 1966)

Let me quote two further examples, one from the notes of a youth worker on the Archways project, the other from a journalist:

I asked them why they had come down. Many didn't know, but from later conversation, I gathered it was to pick up girls. Some came because they went to Clacton last year and Margate the year before; some came because everyone else was coming. I asked them where they had planned to sleep. Few had planned anything: they'd expected to find a spot on the beach. Few had considered cold weather or rain. Some had come without even a blanket ... The general impression I formed of what they actually did in Brighton was rather hazy. 'Nothing', was the usual response. They seemed to wander about rather aimlessly; they were bored and cold ...¹⁰

I asked an Eltham boy whether he was enjoying himself. 'Not really.' Why did he come then, when this was all he knew he could find? 'There's nothing doing in London.' But what is

there doing anywhere that you'd like to do? 'Well, if you put it like that, there isn't.'"

There are two significant points to be made about such reports. The first is the total and almost cynical awareness by the kids of what their situation was: a boy who said to me, 'Well, we're bored at home, so it's a change to come down here and be bored at Brighton,' was being more than a little serious. Then, there was the apparent lack of understanding by outside observers as to why such feelings were dominant at all. These feelings can make sense as I will suggest in the next chapter, in terms of the discontinuities in leisure values stressed in Downes's theory of fringe working-class delinquency.

This boredom was accompanied, though, by the perpetual hope (which, under the impact of the inventory and the subsequent societal reaction, became a more conscious expectation) that something would happen; after all, 'you never know'. A conversation with an Archways volunteer (who had misinterpreted the situation from his own middle-class perspective) conveys this expectancy:

Volunteer: Was Brighton what you expected?
Fifteen-year-old Mod: Well, I didn't expect anything, I don't think.

Volunteer: No?
Mod: Well, you know, I just thought I'd see what was happening, and if things turned out right, then we'd have a ball, wouldn't we?

It is clear in the context that for 'things to turn out right' would mean that there would be trouble or excitement: fights between Mods and Rockers, baiting of the police, throwing girls into the sea, 'buying up some pills', or 'finding a bird'. If these

things happened, one could 'have a ball'; there was no specific plan in coming down other than to take part in or (more likely) to watch any sign of fun.

Trouble, excitement, action (or in the later skinhead version 'aggravation'), was built into the crowd scenes. There were not just the common elements described in other reviews of disturbances at sporting and recreational events¹² – an influx of outsiders into a small town or amusement centre, their high visibility in terms of interests, age group and overt symbols such as dress – but a particular sequence of societal reactions which created new scenarios to play out. Increasingly, the action became more ritualistic and predictable. While only a quarter of the Barker–Little sample (at the beginning of 1964) admitted to going to Margate expecting trouble, all of them expected trouble at the subsequent weekend's gatherings. As trouble became defined as institutionalized, the hope that something would happen became a definite expectancy.

The inventory reporting can be seen as having a reinforcing effect on already existing tendencies to expect and look forward to trouble. Constant repetition of the violence and vandalism images and reports about preparations for the next 'invasion' generated an atmosphere in which something had to happen. With the exception of those 'troublemakers' who, like Matza's positivist delinquents, nearly corresponded to their stereotype, the young people coming down constituted a massive audience. Usually this was an audience at a non-event, but the non-event had to be made into an event in order to justify the journey and the predefinitions of what the situation would be. Whatever little initial homogeneity there was in the crowd, could be attributed to this expectancy factor, as reinforced by the societal reaction. A group of boys walking down the beach could get caught up in a nexus of mutual misunderstandings; *ego* thinking that *alter* will perform a certain role and expect the same of him, while at the same time *alter* perceives *ego* in identical terms and both

perceive that the publicly defined situation was making demands on them.¹³

Once a dominant perception is established the tendency is to assimilate all subsequent happenings to it. It is in this context that one must view the relatively trivial incidents which attracted attention and sometimes triggered off trouble. Through the process of sensitization, incidents which would not have been defined as unusual or worthy of attention during a normal Bank Holiday weekend, acquired a new meaning.

Two boys stopped to watch a very drunk old tramp dancing about on the beach. They started throwing pennies at his feet. Within 45 seconds there were at least 100 people gathered round and in 60 seconds the police were there. I turned my back on the crowd to watch the spectators gathering on the promenade above and by the time I turned back, two policemen were leading a boy away from the crowd.

(Notes, Brighton, Easter, 1965)

Other similar precipitating, or potentially precipitating, incidents were road accidents, a Rocker walking past a group of Mods, a group of youths being refused service in a bar or café and scooter riders being stopped to produce their licences. Where incidents did not occur 'naturally' they had to be created. The following is what I mean by a more natural type of incident – natural in the sense of having a culturally understood precipitant and sequence:

...The boys (from Ealing mainly) were in the dance suite in a body of about 35 people. They were obviously creating a disturbance because a bouncer told one of the group to leave. The boy obviously took exception to being singled out and so pulled a gun from out of his pocket and threatened the bouncer with it. Apparently the bouncer had said, 'Go on, then, pull the

trigger' to which the youth replied, 'I haven't any fucking bullets.' The gun was a toy cap gun. The youth was then in the position of having his bluff called and was defenceless. Obviously, loss of face was involved in this as well. His friends realized this and created a tremendous uproar in the dance suite to make sure that they did keep the upper hand. There was a bloody fight and the police and ambulance were called.¹⁴

Often though the sequence was more contrived, and while malice or damage might have been the end result, the initial step was less likely to be maliciously inspired, than in Matza and Sykes's term 'manufactured excitement'. Crowd members, usually younger ones, could be seen self-consciously and deliberately trying to attract attention with ploys such as throwing stones at a paper policeman's helmet floating on the sea, ducking girls into the water, ganging up to bump someone on the dodgem cars, riding on the children's merry-go-round, jumping from the pier with an open umbrella held aloft. These were the events out of which trouble could come. More often than not the crowd would not respond; when it did so it would act momentarily and then return to just simply waiting around. One might see a hundred kids milling around, some of them throwing stones, others shouting and then suddenly moving on together as if nothing had happened.

The air of expectancy generated in these incidents is very similar to the 'milling process'¹⁵ observed in crowds gathering around a road accident or similar event. One finds not just a restless, excited physical movement, but a process of communication in which individuals try to restructure an ambiguous situation by seeking cues in the reaction of others. It is this type of restructuring which marks the next crucial stage: without it, a concentrated and even excited crowd would have soon disintegrated. A socially sanctioned meaning was given to the situation by seeing others act and through the development of rumours.¹⁶

In the milling process, individuals become more sensitized to each other and a common emotional tone develops, mediated by the type of circular reinforcement described earlier. In such ambiguous situations, rumours should be viewed not as forms of distorted or pathological communication: they make sociological sense as co-operative improvisations, attempts to reach a meaningful collective interpretation of what happened by pooling available resources.

Rumour, then, substitutes for news when institutional channels fail. Compared to news, it is low in formalization and this element – as Shibutani suggests – is inversely related to collective excitement. The suggestibility and behavioural contagion reported in certain crowd situations are again not pathological processes, but are forms of reciprocal reinforcement of emotional responses which provide the channels and controls for rumours to develop.¹⁷ A rapid dissemination of mood and content via rumours, constricts the range of alternative responses and the intensity of non-inhibited responses increases. One is sensitized to concentrate on particular targets, shutting other considerations out. In constructing rumours, only those items consonant with the mood are selected. The participants seek a justification for their action and the rumours provide the 'facts' to sanction what the crowd wanted to do anyway.¹⁸

This analysis applies equally to the spread of definitions to the control agents and the mass media during the reaction phases. In the present context, the point is that the content of the shared definition that emerged in the crowd about what was happening, owed much to this reaction. The mass media provided the images and stereotypes with which ambiguous situations could be restructured; a stone-throwing incident might not have progressed beyond the milling stage if there were no readily available collective images to give meaning to the activity. These images provide the basis for rumours about 'random' events; so, an incident in which a girl was carried on a stretcher to an

ambulance was variously explained by the crowd gathering round as 'this bloke with her must have knifed her', 'too many pills if you ask me', 'these Rockers' birds just drink all the time'.

Different versions of such events are circulated and eventually assimilated into one theme that receives collective sanction. Each link in the chain of assimilation involves preconceptions derived from sources such as the mass media; without publicity about 'stabblings on the beach' or 'drug orgies' the rumours about the girl being carried to the ambulance would have assumed an entirely different form.

The form and content of the rumours are important because they serve to validate a particular course of action: the deviant, as well as the control agent, uses collective imagery (which may be objectively false) to justify action. This type of process is paralleled in the genesis of other types of violent outbreaks such as race riots. The sequence includes: (i) murmurs of unrest before the outbreak; (ii) the spread of specifically threatening rumours ('something is going to happen tonight'); (iii) the precipitating spark (which may itself be an inflammatory rumour, for example, of police brutality); and (iv) fantastic rumours spread during the disturbance (for example, of murder by the other side) which are used to justify violence.

The following are examples of these four types of rumours during the impact phase: (i) 'I heard a bloke say the cops at Southend are really getting tough this Easter'; (ii) 'There's going to be trouble on the pier tonight when these Rockers get there'; (iii) 'Let's go – there's a big fight at the station'; (iv) 'There were thirty of them beating up one of our blokes'. In Clacton, the specific rumours circulating were those alleging hostility from the 'other side': in this case, local residents. There was a story of a group being refused breakfast at a café, and another about an old woman stopping three boys in the street and shouting abuse at them about their clothes. In later incidents, numerous rumours spread to reinforce the Mods-Rockers barrier ('The Mods are

wearing lipstick this time', 'You can smell the grease on those Rockers; they never wash'). Later on, stories of police brutality and intimidation were particularly common ('They beat this bloke up in the cells'). One legend circulating in Brighton in Easter 1965, was about a drunken out-of-uniform policeman brawling with some boys in a café; they didn't know that he was a policeman and when he was getting the worst of the fight he screamed a 'signal' and his friends arrived to arrest most of the boys there.

The truth of such rumours is not at issue: the point is that they can be traced to certain elements in the societal reaction and they serve both to validate a mood and course of action, and to solidify a diverse crowd into a homogeneous mob. The rapidly fluctuating content of the rumours also illustrates a significant aspect of the Mods and Rockers phenomenon: the way in which the targets chosen for hostile action changed under the impact of the belief system.

In the first place, if, during any one event, an object of hostility became inaccessible, or rumours were spread of new targets, a satisfactory substitute would be accepted. If there were no Rockers in sight, the Mods would quite happily turn on the beatniks; in the course of one morning, the target could rapidly change from Rockers, to beatniks, to police, depending on the mood of the crowd, rumours of victimization or actual police interference. In the second place, the dominant target throughout the whole sequence changed: in Clacton, the enemy was Clacton (the shopkeepers, the weather, the lack of facilities); in Margate and Brighton, at Whitsun (under the impact of the warring gangs image), the enemy was the Rockers; later on (under the impact of the control culture), the enemy became the police.

Implicit in the analysis so far is a recognition of the importance of symbolization. This process provided a short-circuited definition of the situation whereby deviants and control agents used culturally sanctioned signs and symbols to justify or validate

perceptions or actions. The inventory symbols prepared the crowd for action because shared images and objects contribute to uniform action: if a dance hall becomes defined as 'The Top Mod Spot of the South', then the defence of it against invading Rockers takes on a symbolic significance. Symbols such as clothing, hair-style, linguistic innovations and other stylistic attributes also create a sense of group cohesion. A crucial stage in the emergence of folk devils, is the point in the moral panic when such symbols become recognized (initially, in an exaggerated and distorted way), elaborated on and then diffused. Stigmatization and other negative sanctions then become easier to apply and the chance of triggering off an amplification sequence – through facilitating identification and solidarity within the group – is multiplied.

In the rapidly shifting crowd situation and the heightened emotional atmosphere, the slightest cue or sign could become a significant symbol. The following are some examples of symbolization and sensitization during the impact period:

A young journalist, who was trying to get into the Margate courtroom, was shown to the cells instead of the Press Bench because he had fairly long hair and was wearing jeans. 'You look just like them,' he was told.

(Interview with P.B., 19 November 1964)

Wearing a white shirt and tie with a conventional sportscoat, I was walking with a group of Mods down the promenade which had temporarily been made a 'one-way'. After we were moved along by the police, I turned round and together with a number of others started walking back the wrong way. Although I was pushed once, the police were not as abusive to me as to the others; the boys on either side of me were bodily turned around and pushed in the other direction.

(Notes, Brighton, Easter, 1965)

Wearing a pair of old jeans and an army-type anorak, I had a hamburger and a cup of tea in a café. Not having any change, I gave the waitress a £5 note and being in a hurry started walking towards the cash desk. I heard the manager angrily say, 'Hasn't he got anything else?', but as soon as he saw me approaching he smiled nervously and said, 'Oh, I was going to argue until I saw you.'

(*Notes*, Brighton, Easter, 1966)

A boy accidentally fell to his death over the cliffs at Saltdean (Brighton) during the night. When his friends woke up and missed him, one went across to the houses on the other side of the road to phone the police. 'But,' he told a reporter, 'they wouldn't open their doors at first. They thought we were out for trouble; you know what it is.'

(*Evening Argus*, 18 May 1964)

So far, this dissection of the crowd scenes has remained in the context of generalizations about crowd and collective behaviour and some particular links suggested by the transactional approach. The wider backdrop remains the development of the Mods and Rockers phenomenon as a whole but, for the moment, we will remain in the theatre.

THE AUDIENCE

A more direct influence on the behaviour than the belief system was the presence of spectators during the impact period. If the mass media can be said to have created a metaphorical audience, one may also talk of a literal audience: the adults who lined the beaches and promenades to watch the battle being enacted before them. As early as *Whitsun* 1964, one local paper (*Brighton and Hove Herald*, 23 May 1964) carried a photo of a man in a crowd of boys swinging deckchairs, holding his child above his head to get a

better view of the proceedings. Crowds of adults were always conspicuous at each stage of an event: milling around any sign of potential excitement, watching fights, making a path through which arrested boys could be bundled into the police van, crowding the public benches of the courts. If it cannot be said that they came down with the specific intention of watching the Mods and Rockers, certainly – at least when the phenomenon reached its peak – they regarded the troubles as part of the scene, and were subject to the same hope and expectancy as the boys and girls themselves. When the events tailed off in 1966 and there was little of a show to be seen, the gaping spectators were even more noticeable. Old hands could be seen pointing out the scene of previous campaigns: 'You should have seen it last year, love,' 'Remember they were throwing all those deckchairs from up there?'

It is difficult to generalize about the motives which brought the spectators to the scene. The simplest explanation is that they came because there was nothing to do or else – when the young people were present in such great numbers that they occupied much of the available space – because they were forced to watch. One did not get the impression, though, that there were many unwilling spectators. Sheer curiosity accounted for a large element of the motivation. This is analogous to the phenomenon of 'mass convergence' observed in disaster studies: the public flock to the scene of the disaster not so much to help, but to stare compulsively at the damage and rescue work. One might, in addition, speculate along conventional psychoanalytical lines, that the adults watching in fascinated horror were gaining some vicarious satisfaction from the sight of aggressive or sexually suggestive behaviour.

A more convincing sociological explanation is that the Mods and Rockers events were viewed as a ceremony. This was a modern morality play,* in which good (the police and the

*A team of researchers studying football hooliganism have noted a similar element in these public confrontations between policemen and deviants.

courts) met evil (the aggressive delinquent). Like all morality plays – or bull fights, which the atmosphere often resembled – there was little doubt about which side would win: the devil's place was known in advance. This type of morality image was sedulously cultivated by the mass media in the interest of consensus, and the audience reaction showed that the image was absorbed. The passive fascination (which might correspond to the psychoanalytical 'vicarious satisfaction' and the aficionado's admiration for the brave bull) was lived only when the forces of good triumphed. On a number of occasions spectators were observed cheering the police when they made an arrest and when boys were bundled into a police van, the type of remark one heard was 'that'll teach them a lesson', or 'put them in Lewes for a few nights, that'll show them'. In the courts there was applause from the public benches when the Chairman praised the police.

Whatever the reason for the spectators' presence and involvement, it is as important to observe their effect on the behaviour during the impact, remembering that just about everyone present – including the Mods and Rockers – played the spectator role at one time or another. One direct effect of the numbers of spectators was, in fact, to hinder the police in performing their duties of crowd control. The more important effect of the audience, though, was more subtle in that its very presence provided an encouragement to deviance. The audience is part of the crowd, and even if it may disapprove, it makes the crowd larger numerically and increases the expression of strength and support for what is being done. Turner and Killian quote the

'... Spectators seemed to adopt the attitude that the scenes were comparable to those shown at old-fashioned music halls where villains and heroes were booed and cheered in a ritualized manner.'¹⁹ There is a crucial difference, though, between these situations: at football matches it is often the police who are the villains, at the resorts it was always the Mods and Rockers.

Southern Commission on the Study of Lynchings to show that the spectators often constituted a source of protection for the very elements of which they might disapprove.²⁰ In the presence of an audience, the more active members of the crowd become committed to a line of action, because to back down would be to lose face. A passive audience may also have unwittingly contributed to creating what F. H. Allport originally termed 'the impression of universality' whereby the crowd member loses some responsibility through assuming that 'everybody is doing it'. Exaggeration – by observers and participants – of the numbers involved, only heightens this effect.

In the case of violence, as Westley suggests,²¹ the presence of others can lead to a direct escalation. In each type of violence he analyses – by mob members, concentration camp guards and police – the violators have a symbiotic relationship to a supportive audience. The police, because of public support for the use of violence against criminals and other non-persons such as the insane, can use an audience to legitimate illegal forms of violence. Escalation occurs when there is a combination of a group willing to use violence and an audience to which it plays and will encourage it and give it moral support. For the crowd the presence of spectators and cameras might have decreased inhibitions about provoking the police. The kids were one up in a situation which called for some restraint on the part of the police and they knew that the police image would suffer if unnecessary violence was observed by the audience.

THE MASS MEDIA

This is the point at which to analyse the more explicit on-the-spot role of the mass media which, as we have seen, operated from the outset in reinforcing and giving shape to the crowd's sense of expectancy and in providing the content of rumours and shared definitions with which ambiguous situations were

restructured. Although popular commentators on the Mods and Rockers often blamed 'publicity' for what happened (and the press responded with indignant editorials about its 'duty' to publish the 'facts'), the term 'publicity' was used in a somewhat restricted sense. It either referred to the publicity immediately before the event (during the warning phase), which advertised the disturbances and pin-pointed the resorts where they would take place, or to the supposed gratification young people derived from the exposure to publicity during the event.

The first of these factors operated in the gross sense of publicizing the event in such a way that it might look attractive, but it is unlikely to have directly influenced the choice of target: asked where they got the idea from (of going to Margate), 82.3 per cent of the Barker-Little sample mentioned friends as their source, only 2.9 per cent mentioned newspapers and 2.9 per cent television. Only a handful I spoke to at any stage said that anything in the press or television initially decided them on a particular resort. The media more likely reinforced rather than initiated rumours already current. There were certain exceptions, though, when during the weekend a sensational report or TV interview might have directly attracted new crowds. One notorious BBC interview in which two Rockers said that reinforcements would be arriving was followed by a sudden influx of both Mods and Rockers, large numbers of whom might have been attracted by the excitement the interview promised.

There were also signs of direct publicity-seeking behaviour in the sense that on-the-spot attention from journalists, reporters and photographers was a stimulus to action. The following account is by one of the boys in the Barker-Little sample: 'By the railway station a cameraman asked, "Give us a wave". So me and a group ran about and waved some flags we bought. My picture was in the paper. We were pleased, anybody would be.'

If one is in a group of twenty, being stared at by hundreds of adults and being pointed at by two or three cameras, the

temptation to do something – even if only to shout an obscenity, make a rude gesture or throw a stone – is very great and made greater by the knowledge that one's actions will be recorded for others to see. There is a tendency for the participant in such situations to exaggerate the extent of his involvement and to look for some recognition of it. Thus at every weekend, young people could be observed at newspaper kiosks buying each edition of the evening paper as it appeared and scanning it for news of disturbances. The exploitative element in this feedback is reflected in the rumours – which, at least in one case, I am certain were firmly based – that press photographers were asking suitably attired young males to pose kicking in a window or telephone kiosk.

The cumulative effects of the mass media, though, were at the same time more subtle and more potent than simply giving the events pre-publicity or gratifying the participants' need for attention. Through a complex process that is not yet fully understood by students of mass communication, the mere reporting of one event has, under certain circumstances, the effect of triggering off events of a similar order. This effect is much easier to understand and is better documented in regard to the spread of crazes, fashions, fads and other forms of collective behaviour, such as mass delusion or hysteria, than in cases of deviance. The main reason why this process has been misunderstood in regard to deviance – particularly collective and novel forms – is that too much attention has been placed on the supposed direct effects (imitation, attention, gratification, identification) on the deviants, rather than the effects on the control system and culture and hence (via such processes as amplification) on the deviance.

The simple triggering-off or suggestibility type effects can be seen even in apparently individual forms of deviance such as suicide. A particularly vivid example is the spread in self-immolation as a form of suicide following the report in 1963 of a Vietnamese monk burning himself to death as an act of political

protest. This is a form of suicide almost completely unknown in the West; in the period 1960–63, there was only one such case in England, yet in 1963, there were three and in 1964, nine. A similar progression in numbers occurred in America.²² In this case, the contagious or imitative effect was in the technique rather than the motivation behind the act. Cases where the motive as well as the technique is stimulated by mass communication, might be the spread of prison riots, prison escapes and racial and political riots. A particularly well-documented example is the Swastika Epidemic of 1959–60. The contagion effect could be clearly shown in plotting the curve of the epidemic.²³

An example closer to the Mods and Rockers is the spread during the fifties of the Teddy Boy riots and similar phenomena elsewhere in Europe. Most commentators on these events acknowledged the role of publicity in stimulating imitative or competitive forms of behaviour²⁴ and some studies have been made on the mass media coverage of such events.²⁵ At the same time, though, blame was put on 'publicity' in the restricted sense and there was little awareness of the complex ways in which mass communication operates before, during and after each 'impact'. The causative nature of mass communication – in the whole context of the societal reaction to such phenomena – is still usually misunderstood.

The common element in all these diverse examples of the amplification of violence is that an adequate medium of communication must be present for spreading the hostile belief and mobilizing potential participants. The mass communication of the news of one outbreak is a condition of structural conduciveness for the development of a hostile belief which, in turn, has to sensitize the 'new' crowd (or individual deviant) to incipient or actual action and lower the threshold of readiness by providing readily identifiable symbols. The possibility that the mere reporting of one event might have a triggering and eventually amplifying effect, has been apparent to many observers of

contemporary crowd violence. This recognition lies behind suggestions to consciously use the media to achieve aims of crowd control.²⁶

The triggering-off, sensitization and other such effects of mass communication described so far, deal with the way in which the likelihood of deviant behaviour during the impact was increased: one almost *had* to attempt to see or take part in trouble. The inventory and subsequent opinion themes, though, also affected the *form* and *content* of the behaviour. The societal reaction not only increases the deviant's chance of acting at all, it also provides him with his lines and stage directions.

The crucial effect here is the way in which deviant behaviour is shaped by the normative expectations of how people in that particular deviant role should act. Much of the Mods and Rockers behaviour can be conceptualized in terms of a role-playing model. Posing for photos, chanting slogans, making warlike gestures, fantasizing about super-gangs, wearing distinctive insignia, making a mock raid on an ice-cream van, whistling at girls, jeering at the 'other side': all these acts of 'hooliganism' may be seen as analogous to the impersonation of mental illness resorted to by those defined as mentally ill. The actor incorporates aspects of the type cast role into his self concept and when the deviant role is public – as hooliganism is by definition – and the deviants are in a situation of heightened suggestibility, then this incorporation is often more conscious and deliberate than in those types of 'private' deviance such as mental illness, homosexuality and drug-taking, to which transactionalist writers have applied such concepts.

New recruits might search for and positively try to exemplify the values and imagery portrayed in the stereotypes. The media created some sort of diversionary side-show in which all could seek their appropriate parts. The young people on the beaches knew very well that they had been type cast as folk devils and they saw themselves as targets for abuse. When the audiences, TV

cameras and police started lining themselves up, the metaphor of role-playing becomes no longer a metaphor, but the real thing. One acute observer at the live TV coverage of the Mod Ball at Wembley (a week after the initial Clacton event) described a girl in front of the cameras worshipping a hair salvaged off Mick Jagger's trousers, as being like a man acting drunk when he is hardly tipsy, 'acting out this adoration. She sees she is being watched, grins sheepishly and then laughs outright.'²⁷

In the present context, the importance of the role-playing perspective is that the content of the type cast role was present in the inventory and crystallized more explicitly in the process of spurious attribution or labelling. This is not to say that a new one to one link between the labelling and the behaviour was formed. For one thing, the type cast hooligan role was known to the potential actors before the deviance even began; like the labellers themselves, they could draw upon an existent folklore and mythology. The point, however, was that the normative element in the role was reinforced by the societal reaction: although the actors might already have been familiar with the lines and the stage direction, they were now confirmed in their roles. In the same way as the 'chronic' schizophrenic begins to approximate closer to the schizophrenic role, so did the Mods and Rockers phenomenon take on every time an increasingly ritualistic and stereotypical character.

Although the hooligan role was ready made and had only to be confirmed by the labelling process, there were other elements in the behaviour which could be directly traced to the societal reaction. The first of these was the way in which the gap between the Mods and Rockers became increasingly wider and obvious. Although (as I will show in the next chapter) the Mods and Rockers represent two different consumer styles – the Mods the more glossy fashion-conscious teenager, the Rockers the tougher, reactionary tradition – the antagonism between the two groups was not initially very marked. Despite their real differences in

life styles – visible in symbols such as the Mods' scooters and the Rockers' motor-bikes – the groups had a great deal in common, particularly their working-class membership. There was, initially at least, nothing like the gang rivalry that is supposed to characterize the type of violent conflict gang enshrined in folklore by the 'Sharks' and 'Jets' of *West Side Story*. Indeed, one could not justifiably talk of 'gangs' at all in any meaningful sociological sense. The only structured grouping one could find in the early crowds was based on slight territorial loyalty and it was tenuous enough to be broken up in the crowd situation.

Constant repetition of the warring gangs' image, however, had the effect of giving these loose collectivities a structure they never possessed and a mythology with which to justify the structure. This image was disseminated in the inventory, reinforced through the symbolization process, repeated in the 'Divide and Rule' and 'Cabalism' themes, used to advantage in the form of commercial exploitation and repeated during the warning phase. Even if these images were not directly absorbed by the actors, they were used to justify control tactics, which, as we shall see, still further structured the groups and hardened the barriers between them.

The mass media – and the ideological exploitation of deviance – also reinforced another type of polarization: between the Mods and Rockers on the one hand, and the whole adult community on the other. If one is seen as the 'enemy' in the 'war against crime', it is not difficult to respond in similar spirit: one 'rejects the rejectors' and 'condemns the condemners'. The specialized effect of the Lunatic Fringe theme, is to segregate and label those involved by emphasizing their difference from the majority. A striking parallel from a similar form of deviance was the labelling by the motor-cycling 'Establishment' of riders identified with the Hells Angels image as the 'one per cent who cause all the trouble': the term 'one percenter' was then used by the groups as an honorific epithet, reinforcing their commitment.²⁸

THE CONTROL AGENTS

The police – the main control agents operating during the impact period – had two types of effect on the behaviour: the one immediate and the other more sustained. The immediate effect of police policy and action was to create deviance – not only in the sense of provoking the more labile members of the crowd into losing their tempers but in Becker's sense of making the rules whose infraction constituted deviance. The types of control tactics adopted by the police under the impact of sensitization and symbolization involved a certain arbitrary element. The practice, for example, of designating certain areas in advance as 'trouble spots' meant that youths with the appropriate symbols could be moved along even if they were causing no apparent harm. In one case in the Brighton court, a constable from Eastbourne, who had been helping the local force, gave evidence that he had seen a number of youths standing under a bus shelter; they were not doing anything, but he 'had heard that this was a trouble spot' and had told them to move away. Not all moved away quickly enough and one was arrested. 'If you allow him to get away with what he did,' the constable told the court, 'and not move when the police told him to, then others would be free to come down. It was necessary in the public's interest that these youths should not shelter from the rain in this particular shelter.'

The police (and the courts) acted on the assumption that certain forms of behaviour, although not criminal in themselves, were, under the particular circumstances, so situationally improper* as to call for official action. It must be emphasized that the majority of arrests throughout were for offences which are both potentially provokable and involve considerable police discretion. This means

* The notion of situational impropriety is derived from Goffman: his discussions of attitudes to 'loitering' and 'loitering' are particularly apposite to the situation on the beaches where the police appeared to be given a license to move people along who were doing nothing: one had to appear purposeful.²⁹

that the sheer number of charges could give a distorted picture of the disturbances. In Brighton, Whitsun, 1965, for example, there was little serious trouble: the weather (there was hail and sleet) had sent people home early and the Chief Constable even issued an official statement that most young people had been well behaved and the police were in control. But 'in control' meant making a large number of discretionary arrests; from late Saturday to Monday there were over 110 arrests. These were not clear-cut offences, such as possessing an offensive weapon or assault, but charges which required highly subjective definitions of what constituted 'obstruction', 'abusive', 'threatening', 'insulting', 'disorderly' or 'unruly' behaviour. These terms could only acquire an objective and reified status through the acceptance of situational logic which, in turn, was based on the belief system. The following are examples of this situational logic; the first two are from statements by the Inspector prosecuting in the Brighton court, the second two are from Hastings:

In a case of wilful obstruction: 'In the circumstances which operated in Brighton at the time, it can be seen that what the boys did was likely to provoke a breach of the peace.'

In a case of using threatening behaviour: 'We will allege that he was one of nine or ten Rockers chanting "We want blood" and we would also allege that in these particular circumstances in Brighton at the time he should be classified as unruly and we will oppose bail on these grounds.'

An 18-year-old girl was at the back of a crowd which was being moved. She refused to move quickly and turned round to her side where the constable was walking and said, 'Don't push me, you ... copper; I will report you.' The prosecutor commented: 'This is a case where in ordinary circumstances the police would shrug the thing off, but in an inflammable situation of this nature, silly little girls like this could cause a great deal of trouble.'

In one of the few cases that were actually dismissed in Hastings (August 1964) on the grounds of insufficient evidence, a boy, P.G., was charged with abusive behaviour. According to the evidence, a constable had seen a large group of 'unruly youths' walking along obstructing the road. Along with other officers, the constable moved one part of the group along the promenade. P.G. was one of the group and the constable heard him jeer at another officer and make personal observations including the remark, 'Look at freckles.' This sort of remark 'might not have been taken much notice of in normal circumstances, but because of the inflammatory nature of the occasion, it assumed much greater proportions. Things could snowball very rapidly.'

The last two cases, together with personal observation of similar incidents, bear out Becker's point that a great deal of enforcement activity is devoted not to the enforcement of the rules, but getting respect from the people the enforcer deals with: 'This means that one may be labelled as a deviant, not because he has actually broken a rule, but because he has shown disrespect to the enforcer of the rule.'³⁰ This factor assumed a particular significance at the seaside resorts, where police were hypersensitive to being exposed to public ridicule. In view of the audience watching their actions, this feeling was understandable. No matador wants to be laughed at.

The more sustained effects of police action were less visible, but, in terms of the amplification model, as important. These effects were to increase the deviance by unwittingly solidifying the amorphous crowd forces into more viable groups for engaging in violence and by further polarizing the deviants against the community.

These sorts of effects are well known to students of gang behaviour. The early Chicago sociologists – particularly Thrasher and Tannenbaum – documented the ways in which attack, opposition or attempted suppression increase the group's cohesion. According

to Thrasher, such attack was virtually a necessary prerequisite for any embryonic street group to become a gang. More recently, Yablonsky has shown the same effects and they have also been documented in the general literature on crowd control in political racial and other types of disturbances.

The crowd situation offers, *par excellence*, the opportunity for police intervention to have the unintended effect of solidifying the opposition. Such solidification and polarization takes place not simply in the face of attack, but attack that is perceived as harsh, indiscriminate and unfair. Even if the attack was not like this, the ambiguity of the crowd situation offered the maximum possible opportunity for rumours of such police action to spread. In the same way that the Mods and Rockers were perceived symbolically and stereotypically by the police, the police too were perceived by the crowd as the 'enemy'. Here was a Punch and Judy show, with each side having a partially false perspective on the other and each acting in order to justify this perspective.

It was not just a question, though, of a nexus of mutual misunderstandings; the police did objectively act in such a way as to increase solidification and polarization. In the first place, their control tactics were based on the assumption that the young people present were either divided into two homogeneous groups, Mods and Rockers (the Divide and Rule theme) or constituted a single homogeneous mass. Both these assumptions were false. By emphasizing the Mods and Rockers' difference (e.g. by preventing the two groups from coming into proximity) the police might have widened the gulf between the groups. In one particular case (not in a seaside resort) the police, under full publicity, attempted to call two groups together for a peace treaty.* By seeing the crowd as a homogeneous mass, to be

*Yablonsky comments on a similar peace treaty: 'The meeting gave a degree of official recognition to the illegal activity of a disorganized connection of neighbourhood youth. Moreover the treaty may have structured a loosely developed

controlled on the basis of the visible stigmata of dress, a greater sense of cohesion develops. If subject to indiscriminate harassment or even if only witnessing the innovative use of violence by the police, the more marginal and passive sections of the crowd could quite easily develop a sense of resentment and grievance. This could be the first step towards a sense of identity and common purpose with the real or imagined hard core of the crowd, with 'police brutality' as a convenient rallying point.

It should be noted that feelings of persecution were particularly acute among the Rockers, who were observably discriminated against by the police. This group was more visible than the amorphous Mod crowds and also occupied in the public mind the traditional 'yobbo' status. Their existent minority group status *vis-à-vis* the Mods and their sense of fighting a rearguard battle against the new emancipated teenagers, was reinforced by the police who naturally enough found it easier to identify a minority group. The literature on crowd control points to this type of partiality as being particularly provocative and police are usually impressed with the necessity to avoid entering into issues that move the crowd.

Another source of solidification stemmed from the fact that the opposition was largely ineffectual. From the initial incident at Clacton, the police were faced with a new situation for which there had been little precedent. Unlike the Metropolitan Police, the police forces of small seaside resorts have little or no experience in handling potentially violent crowd situations such as political demonstrations. The tactics of crowd control emerged on an *ad hoc* basis and were necessarily over-influenced by false perceptions of the situation and the highly charged emotional atmosphere. This meant that hallowed strategies such as 'the show of force', which most manuals on crowd control advocate

conflict. The meeting confirmed the fact that there was trouble brewing between rival groups. Now two "gangs" had a war truce.¹³¹

in such situations, were not properly implemented. Either the 'force' was not strong enough, or had a comic opera aspect (e.g. the use of converted public health vehicles as patrol vans), or police action was often hesitant instead of quick and decisive, or action went beyond the show of force to the actual use of force. In the face of control that was manifestly inadequate to deal with the crowd if it did, in fact, become a viable violent mob, the crowd could easily develop a sense of its potential power. If one hundred Mods are chasing a handful of Rockers across the beach, the sight of a handful of policemen in turn pursuing the Mods can only appear somewhat ludicrous and undignified. It only needed one unfortunate policeman's helmet to fall off for the situation to move very far from a successful show of force.

The third source of solidification and polarization was the effect of dramatization. Although, by definition, a show of force has to be publicly demonstrated if it is to have a deterrent effect, it need not be overdramatized. The dramatic techniques described earlier, such as frogmarching two youths to the police station or marching a group through the streets, could only have the effect that Tannenbaum intended in his phrase 'the dramatization of evil'. These techniques effectively polarize the forces of good and evil and solidify by creating the sense of resentment, which is a natural reaction to being exposed to public ridicule. If such effects are combined with a sense of persecution, the whole situation could take on a mythical, chimerical meaning. The activist Mod or Rocker (real or imaginary) could, like Shellow and Roemer's 'Hells Angels' function not only as vicarious exemplars of behaviour that some young people might fantasize but also act as legendary champions who will rescue the persecuted; they quote one motor-cyclist witnessing police harassment: 'Just wait till the Hells Angels hear about this when they come in tomorrow. They'll come down and tear this place apart.'¹³²

That this type of polarization did, in fact, occur, can be seen in the changing attitudes towards the police. In the first series of

events, the crowd, with a few exceptions, maintained fairly good-humoured relations with the police. 'Attacks' on the police were usually disrespectful gestures, such as knocking off helmets. As the moral panic progressed, though, the lines hardened and relationships between the crowd and the police deteriorated. In Brighton, August 1965, a policeman attempting to arrest the apparent leader of a group of one hundred Mods charging across the beach, was immediately stoned and when he lost his helmet in a scuffle, it was pounced upon and used as a football. In Great Yarmouth at Easter, 1966, four policemen were assaulted and one of them kicked about the head. The following incidents illustrate the strained atmosphere and the way in which hostility to authority became generalized:

A policeman walked quite peacefully between two rows of boys near the aquarium. Some of them started whistling the Z-car theme and one shouted out 'Sprachen the Deutsch constable?'

A boy was throwing stones outside a shop under the archway. The owner came out and shouted at him: 'If you come down here you must behave.' The boy retorted (not quite loud enough for the man to hear): 'Or else you'll get your fuckin' army on to us.'

(Notes, Brighton, Easter, 1966)

The role of the courts in the control culture can be seen as reinforcing the tendency towards solidification and polarization. The sentences were seen as not only sanctioning police action, but as being intrinsically harsh and unfair: this was the overwhelming response among the boys in the Barker – Little sample. The use of the remand in custody as a punitive measure was a particularly widely felt grievance. The dramatization effect achieved by the magistrates' pronouncements left little doubt – certainly among the offenders' friends and relatives waiting in the foyer of the Brighton court – that the magistrates were using

their powers for ritual reasons: they were denouncing deviance by making an example of the offender. Such denunciations – combined with the widely held view that the police had been arresting on a 'quota' system – led readily enough to feelings of resentment and martyrdom.

It should be noted throughout that the amplificatory effects of the control culture were fed back into the mass media, which further exaggerated them, thus producing another link in the sequence. If the policemen did not see themselves as 'the brave men in blue' fighting the evil mob, nor the magistrates themselves as society's chosen mouthpieces for denouncing evil, these polarizations were made on their behalf by others.

SUMMARY

Before providing a brief summary of this chapter, two footnotes should be added to my argument about the unintended effects of the societal reaction.

The first relates to the supposed 'inevitability' of the societal reaction. While it is true that each stage of the reaction appears to be a logical product of the prior one, the deviance amplification model is a typical rather than an inevitable sequence. There are no overwhelming technical reasons why it should not be broken or at least re-routed at various points, for example, by creating alternative modes of presenting the news. Even direct intervention by control agents could be different and not produce all the effects I have suggested. Thus – to take examples on an admittedly small scale – one might compare the Mods and Rockers' events with a similar situation where disturbances were, in fact, prevented. Shellow and Roemer have described a case of threatened Hells Angels' disturbances and the polarization of crowds of motor-cyclists arriving at a resort for Labour Day weekend motor-cycle races.³³ They outline three conditions under which exuberance and rowdiness lead to rioting:

- (i) Recreational, service and control facilities 'flooded' by overwhelming numbers of visitors, who were then left at loose ends, ready for any kind of 'action'.
- (ii) Ineffectual, often provocative, attempts at control and expression of authority by police or officials.
- (iii) Development of a sense of group solidarity among members of the crowd.

All these three conditions were present during a typical impact period; in the American resort, polarization was partly, at least, prevented by an educational programme aimed at impressing three facts on the police:

- (i) that motor-cyclists are not essentially different from other citizens and need not be treated as a breed apart;
- (ii) that motor-cyclists are not a homogeneous class but come in a variety of shapes and sizes; some innocuous, some potentially troublesome;
- (iii) that indiscriminate, harsh treatment of all motor-cyclists would confirm the latter's sense of persecution, increase group solidarity among them, and go far towards creating the very polarization we wished to avoid.

For reasons that are not technical, it is unlikely that such methods will be tried very often* nor, of course, are they likely to be successful ways of preventing primary deviation. They need

* Shellow and Roemer also make recommendations which might well apply to British seaside resorts about improving the recreational facilities in order to prevent the milling that precedes crowd disturbances. The Brighton Archways Ventures might be viewed as an attempt in this direction. Another attempt to control a juvenile crowd disturbance, this time by deliberately exploiting the ambiguous nature of the crowd situation, is described in W. Buikhuisen, 'Research on Teenage Riots', *Sociologia Neerlandica* 4 (Winter, 1966-7), pp. 1-21.

consideration, though, in the light of assertions that there is something fixed and inevitable in the way deviance of the sort in question might be controlled.

The second footnote – a theoretically more important one – is that I have tended to consider only the negative or unintended consequences of law enforcement and social control. This should not be taken to mean that police and court action had no deterrent effect or that a certain amount of violence and vandalism was not contained or prevented. A problem, though – as in evaluating all types of social control – is that it is by no means clear what constitutes successful law enforcement, either in its deterrent or preventive aspects. Many claims for such success are difficult to evaluate. For an example of 'deterrence' one may take the fact that some 65 per cent of the boys in the Barker-Little sample said that they would not get mixed up in that sort of thing again and most gave the punishment, and fear of worse, as the reason. Most also believed, though, that they would be the only ones deterred, and even individual deterrence was limited by the fact that each event tended to attract crowds from specific geographical areas; only four of the Margate group had been at Clacton. Their own friends certainly weren't deterred by the punishment: they either thought of it as a joke or, at worst, thought that the mistake had been to get caught.

For an example of 'prevention' we may look at Clacton, Easter, 1965, where, in response to local pressure to avoid a repetition of the previous year's incidents, the police took elaborate precautions including the use of walkie-talkies and the deliberate policy of making things miserable for all scooter riders entering the town. There were virtually no arrests and it was claimed that the show of force had worked. In fact, though, the 1964 incident was quite isolated as far as Clacton was concerned, Margate and the south coast resorts always being more popular with the Mods. The very few Mods who might have set out for Clacton in Easter 1965, were possibly stopped by the weather which, if

anything, was worse than the previous year. The best one can say, then, for these two claims of successful 'deterrence' and 'prevention' respectively, is that the evidence is ambiguous.

In the final chapter, the broader implications of these footnotes will be related to the whole question of de-amplification and how the growth of moral panics and social types ever becomes arrested.

In summary, the societal reaction may be thought to have affected the nature, extent and development of the deviant behaviour during the impact phase in the following ways:

- 1 The societal reaction in general and the inventory in particular:
 - (a) reinforced and magnified a predisposition to expect trouble: 'something's going to happen';
 - (b) provided the content for rumours and the milling process, thereby structuring the 'something' into potential or actual deviance; such rumours and images facilitated deviance by solidifying the crowd and validating its moods and actions;
 - (c) created a set of culturally identifiable symbols which further structured the situation and legitimized action.
- 2 The presence of an audience gave encouragement to deviance and helped escalate violence.
- 3 The mass media in general:
 - (a) operated to publicize the events;
 - (b) led to direct publicity-seeking behaviour;
 - (c) created a triggering-off or contagion effect, whereby the hostile belief was spread and the participants mobilized for action;
 - (d) provided the content for deviant role-playing behaviour by transmitting the stereotypical expectations of how persons in the particular deviant roles should act;
 - (e) together with the commercial exploitation, magnified the Mods-Rockers dichotomy and gave the groups a

greater structure and common ethos than they originally possessed;

(f) together with the ideological exploitation, polarized the deviants further against the community.

- 4 The agents of control:
 - (a) 'created' deviance by applying situational logic to law enforcement;
 - (b) because control was unfair, indiscriminate, ineffectual, based on spurious attribution and overdramatized – or perceived in these terms – repeated the effects of 3
 - (e) and (f), thus solidifying an amorphous crowd into a more unified, hostile and polarized collectivity.

- 38 Goode and Ben-Yehuda, op. cit. p. 104.
- 39 Angela McRobbie and Sarah L. Thornton, 'Rethinking "moral panic" for multi-mediated social worlds', *British Journal of Sociology* 46 (December 1995), pp. 559–74.
- 40 *ibid.* p. 560.
- 41 Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
- 42 *ibid.* p. 306.

1 DEVIANCE AND MORAL PANICS

- 1 For example, Christopher Booker, *The Neophiliacs: A Study of the Revolution in English Life in the Fifties and Sixties* (London: Collins, 1969); David Bailey and Francis Wyndham, *A Box of Pin-Ups* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965); Bernard Levin, *The Pendulum Years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970); and (in a different way) Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (London: Paladin, 1970).
- 2 Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Free Press, 1963), Chaps 7 and 8.
- 3 Joseph Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1963).
- 4 Becker, op. cit. p. 145.
- 5 Howard S. Becker (Ed.), *Social Problems: A Modern Approach* (New York: John Wiley, 1966).
- 6 See Herbert Blumer, 'Collective Behaviour', in J. B. Gittler (Ed.), *Review of Sociology* (New York: Wiley, 1957); Ralph H. Turner, 'Collective Behaviour', in R. E. L. Farris (Ed.), *Handbook of Modern Sociology* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), and Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian, *Collective Behaviour* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1957).
- 7 Orrin E. Klapp, *Heroes, Villains and Fools: The Changing American Character* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962).
- 8 The sceptical revolution can only be understood as part of a broader reaction in the social sciences as a whole against the dominant models, images and methodology of positivism. It is obviously beyond my scope to deal here with this connection. For an account of the peculiar shape positivism took in the study of crime and deviance and of the possibilities of transcending its paradoxes, the work of David Matza is invaluable: *Delinquency and Drift* (New York: Wiley, 1964) and *Becoming Deviant* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).
- 9 Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, op. cit. p. 9.

- 48 Mr C. Curran, Hansard, 23 June 1964, Col. 1219.
- 49 Sir W. Teeling, *ibid.*, Col. 261.
- 50 Mr H. Brooke, *ibid.*, Col. 242.
- 51 A. K. Cohen, op. cit. p. 465.
- 52 Sir W. Teeling, Hansard, 23 June 1964, Cols. 259–60.
- 53 Mr W. Rees-Davies, *ibid.*, Col. 284.
- 54 For further elaboration about vandalism, see Stanley Cohen, 'Who are the Vandals?', *New Society*, 12 December 1968, pp. 872–8.
- 55 Lemert, *Social Pathology*, pp. 65–8. See also Goffman's discussion of the stigmatized person's vulnerability to what he calls 'victimization'; Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 9.
- 56 Lemert, *ibid.* p. 310.
- 57 Erikson, op. cit.
- 58 Peter Laurie, *The Teenage Revolution* (London: Anthony Blond Ltd, 1965), p. 57.
- 59 Lewis Yablonsky, 'Experience with the Criminal Community', in A. W. Gouldner and S. M. Miller (Eds), *Applied Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 71. For a somewhat different notion of the voyeur role, see Laud Humphreys's sensitive chapter, 'Methods: The Sociologist As Voyeur', in *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places* (London: Duckworth, 1970).
- 60 These quotes are, respectively, from: Resolution passed at Moral Re-armament Easter Conference, 30 March 1964; Speech by Mr F. Willey, Labour Chief Front Bench Spokesman on Education, addressing a meeting of the National Association of Youth Service Officers, 3 April 1964; Telegram sent by Women of Britain Clean Up TV Campaign to Director General of BBC, June 1964; Letter to *Tribune*, 10 April 1964.
- 61 *The Times*, 23 June 1966. See also M. Wardron, 'Class, Anarchism and the Capitalist Mentality', *Anarchy* 68 (October 1966), pp. 301–4, who includes the Mods and Rockers in a list of strugglers against authority such as the pacifist movement, Oxfam, the campaign against the destruction of wild life, the Welsh Nationalists and the IRA.

5 ON THE BEACHES: THE WARNING AND THE IMPACT

- 1 See, for example, I. L. Janis, 'Psychological Effects on Warning', in G. W. Baker and D. W. Chapman (Eds), *Man and Society in Disaster* (New York: Basic Books, 1962); S. B. Withey, 'Reactions to Uncertain Threat', *ibid.* pp. 93–102, and 'Sequential Accommodations to Threat',

- in G. H. Grosser *et al.* (Eds), *The Threat of Impending Disaster: Contributions to the Psychology of Stress* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1964).
- 2 Withey, in Baker and Chapman, *op. cit.* p. 114.
- 3 Withey, in Grosser *et al.*, *op. cit.* p. 112.
- 4 Hunter S. Thompson, *Hells Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 122.
- 5 See report in *Daily Mirror* (31 March 1966): 'Spies Warn The Yard of Mods On The Warpath.'
- 6 For example, L. Yablonsky, 'The Delinquent Gang as a Near-Group', *Social Problems* 7 (Fall 1959), pp. 108–17.
- 7 The reports of the *Brighton Archways Ventures*, particularly Volume 3, contain much incidental material describing this atmosphere.
- 8 A highly sensitive portrayal of Brighton some twenty years after *Brighton Rock* – a portrayal which conveys the balance between desperation and release – may be found in the first two volumes of *Generation*, Colin Spencer's projected Quartet: *Anarchists in Love* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963) and *The Tyranny of Love* (London: Anthony Blond Ltd, 1967).
- 9 Erving Goffman, *Where the Action Is* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1969), p. 147.
- 10 Quoted in *Brighton Archways Ventures Report*, Vol. III, p. 64.
- 11 Paul Barker, 'Brighton Battleground', *New Society*, 21 May 1964, p. 10.
- 12 Robert Shellow and Derek V. Roemer, 'The Riot That Didn't Happen', *Social Problems* 14 (Fall 1966), pp. 221–33.
- 13 This type of formulation owes much to the writings of R. D. Laing: see especially R. D. Laing *et al.*, *Interpersonal Perception* (London: Tavistock, 1966), Chap. 3. The possibility of such multiple misinterpretations in regard to gang delinquency is also suggested by Matza. The idea of a commitment to delinquency, he notes, is a misconception both of delinquents and the sociologists who study them. 'Instead, there is a system of shared misunderstandings, based on miscues, which leads delinquents to believe that all others situated in their company are committed to their misdeeds.' David Matza, *Delinquency and Drift* (New York: John Wiley, 1964), p. 59.
- 14 Extract from youth worker's notes quoted in B.A.V. Report, Vol. III, p. 64.
- 15 The term originally used by Park and Burgess. For an analysis of other forms of milling and social contagion, see R. Turner and L. Killian, *Collective Behaviour* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1957).
- 16 The discussion on rumour in the rest of the chapter leans on the standard account in G. Allport and L. Postman, *The Psychology of Rumour* (New York: Henry Holt, 1947) and more heavily, the interactionist approach in T. Shibutani, *Improved News: A Sociological Study of Rumour* (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966).
- 17 Shibutani, *op. cit.* Chapter 4.
- 18 *Ibid.* p. 113.
- 19 John Harrington, 'A Preliminary Report on Soccer Hooliganism' (Birmingham Research Group, Mimeograph, 1968), p. 37.
- 20 Turner and Killian, *op. cit.* p. 118.
- 21 William Westley, 'The Escalation of Violence through Legitimation', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 364 (March 1966), pp. 120–6.
- 22 I am indebted to Arthur Chisnell for drawing my attention to this example. One study, however, that shows the need for caution in interpreting such effects is Jerome A. Motto, 'Suicide and Suggestibility – The Role of the Press', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 124 (August 1967), pp. 156–60.
- 23 See David Caplowitz and Candace Rogers, *Swastika 1960: The Epidemic of Anti-Semitic Vandalism in America* (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1961). A noteworthy feature of this epidemic was that initial reporting indicated other avenues for expressing grievances: at the peak, targets for hostility other than anti-Semitic ones were chosen and, in fact, these general incidents outnumbered the specifically anti-Semitic. This is similar to the widening of the net control of the Moods and Rockers and the ways in which the target changed during the impact. All such processes are heavily dependent on the mass media.
- 24 See, for example, T. R. Fyvel, *The Insecure Offenders* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), and C. Bondy *et al.*, *Jugendliche Stören die Ordnung* (Munich: Juventa Verlag, 1957).
- 25 See Britt-Marie Blegvad, 'Newspapers and Rock and Roll Riots in Copenhagen', *Acta Sociologica* 7 (1963), pp. 151–78, and Paul Rock and Stanley Cohen, 'The Teddy Boy', in V. Bogdanor and R. Skidelsky (Eds), *The Age of Affluence: 1957–1964* (London: Macmillan, 1970).
- 26 It is, of course, far fetched to think that such techniques as a total news embargo will 'solve' many problems. Other suggestions which do put the media in a more general political context are more plausible. For a review and references in regard to recent American disturbances, see William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, *Responsibility and Mass Communication* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), Chap. 6.

- 27 Peter Laurie, *The Teenage Revolution* (London: Anthony Blond Ltd, 1965), p. 105.
- 28 Shellow and Roemer, op. cit. p. 223 and Thompson, op. cit. p. 9.
- 29 See Erving Goffman, *Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings* (New York: Free Press, 1963).
- 30 Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders* (New York: Free Press, 1963), p. 158.
- 31 Lewis Yablonsky, *The Violent Gang* (New York: Free Press, 1962), p. 67.
- 32 Shellow and Roemer, op. cit. p. 226.
- 33 *ibid.* pp. 221–31.

6 CONTEXTS AND BACKGROUNDS: YOUTH IN THE SIXTIES

- 1 See Stuart Hall, Introduction to *The Popular Press and Social Change 1935–1965*. Unpublished MS. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1971.
- 2 One of the few serious attempts in this country to deal with both the creative and commercially responsive aspects of pop music is Dave Laing's *The Sound of Our Time* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969). His Chapters 9 – 'Notes for a Study of the Beatles' – and 10 – 'My Generation' (which deals with the Rolling Stones and The Who) – are important aids to understanding the Mod phenomenon.
- 3 This account is based on the somewhat fuller analysis I have provided in 'Breaking Out, Smashing Up and the Social Context of Aspiration', in *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, Spring 1974, pp. 37–64.
My orientation to the problem is basically the same as those of Paul Goodman in his classic *Growing Up Absurd* (New York: Random House, 1956) and – with particular reference to delinquency in Britain – David Downes in *The Delinquent Solution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).
- 4 This is the perspective on adolescence used in Frank Musgrove, *Youth and the Social Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964). See also the various writings of Edgar Friedenberg.
- 5 Some further comments on the 'Dream Boys' and 'Ordinary Kids' of the fifties can be found in Nicholas Walter, 'The Young One', *New Society*, 28 February 1963. Just about the only commentary on this period, as it drew to a close, is the work of Ray Gosling. See 'Lady Albermarle's Boys', *Young Fabian Pamphlet*, January 1961, and 'Dream Boys', *New Left Review* 3, May–June 1960, pp. 30–5.
- 6 This account derives mainly from the work of Downes, and its elaborations by Peter Willmott, *Adolescent Boys of East London* (London:

