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abstract In a wide sense, youth cultures refer to the way in which young people's social experiences are expressed collectively through the construction of differentiating lifestyles, mainly in their leisure time, or in interstitial spaces in the institutional life. In a more restricted sense, the term defines the emergence of 'youth micro-societies', with significant degrees of independence from the 'adult institutions', that provide specific spaces and time for young people. This article focuses on the main research traditions that have approached youth cultures from the social sciences since the beginning of the twentieth century: the Chicago School, structural-functionalism, the Italian Gramscian School, French structuralism, the Birmingham School and the post-subcultural studies. It ends with an illustration of the new trends of research in one specific field – leisure and nightlife – and with a critical statement of youth culture studies today and in the near future.

keywords culture ♦ leisure ♦ lifestyles ♦ youth ♦ youth cultures

Introduction: youth cultures as concept

In the last decade, the concept of 'youth culture' has ceased to be a sociological object under suspicion and has become one of the most visited and fruitful ones in contemporary social research. Although the concept was first used in American and German sociology in the 1920s to refer to the emergence of a new adolescent culture in the interstices of the labour and school system (Thrasher, 1963 [1926]; Wynecken, 1927 [1914]), it was not until the 1960s that the concept became naturalized within the social sciences, thanks to the emergence of the consumer society and the contributions of structural-functionalist sociology (Eisenstadt, 1964; Parsons, 1963). In its modern sense, the notion derived from the investigations prompted by the Birmingham School of cultural studies in the 1970s, as well as subsequent adaptations in terms of post-subcultures, neotribes, club cultures, cybercultures, etc. (Bennet, 1999; Maffesoli, 1988; Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003; Thornton, 1995).

At present, almost all the social sciences have approached youth culture: we have overviews in sociology (Brake, 1983), anthropology (Amit-Talai and Wulff, 1995), communication (Fornäs and Bolin,

1995), geography (Skelton and Valentine, 1998) and history (Fowler, 2008) and the number of investigations in this area will not stop growing (Nilan and Feixa, 2006). Since there are many state-of-the-art contributions from the various schools, particularly that of Birmingham (Huq, 2006; Leave et al., 1992), in this text we have preferred to carry out a more conceptual approach. We should also note the contributions from non-Anglo-Saxon traditions, such as the Italian Gramscian School, French and Portuguese sociology and Latin American cultural studies (Feixa, 2012 [1998]; Monod, 1968; Pais, 2004; Reguillo, 2000).

In a wide sense, '*youth cultures*' refer to the way in which young people's social experiences are expressed collectively through the construction of differentiating lifestyles, mainly in their leisure time, or in interstitial spaces in the institutional life. In a more restricted sense, the term defines the emergence of 'youth micro-societies', with significant degrees of independence from the 'adult institutions', that provide specific space and time. They were historically formed in western countries after the Second World

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War, along with the big processes of social change in the economic, educational, labour and ideological areas. Their most visible expressions are a set of 'spectacular' youth styles although their effects reach a wide range of young people. The word 'cultures' (as opposed to 'subcultures', which would be a technically better term) is used in order to avoid the sense of diversion given to the term 'subculture'. The plural term 'youth cultures' (as opposed to the singular 'youth culture', more widely used in literature), is used to highlight their internal heterogeneity. This terminological change implies also a change in the 'way to approach' the object, transferring the emphasis from marginalization to identity, from appearance to strategy, from spectacular events to daily life, from delinquency to leisure time, from images to actors.

On the one side, social articulation of youth cultures can be approached from three scenarios (Feixa, 2012 [1998]; Hall and Jefferson, 1983 [1975]): *hegemonic culture*, *parent cultures* and *generational cultures*. On the other side, the concept of youth cultures includes a variety of peer groupings: (1) the term *subculture* has been an interpretative tool, since it focuses on the structural connections of youth lifestyles and their relationships with class, generation, ethnicity, gender and territory (Feixa, 2012 [1998]; Hall and Jefferson, 1983 [1975]); (2) the term *microculture* can be useful from an ethnographic perspective, since it describes the flow of significance and values of small groups of young people in their daily life, according to specific local situations (Ferreira, 2010; Wulff, 1988); (3) the term *gang*, associated to certain marginal activities, would refer to informal groups of young people from subaltern classes, and would allow a syncretic mixture of different styles (Gordon et al., 2004; Monod, 1968; Thrasher, 1963 [1926]; Uberto et al., 2005; Whyte, 1972 [1943]); and, finally, (4) the term *counterculture* has been used to refer to particular moments in history where some youth sectors have expressed their rebellious will against the hegemonic culture, working in the underground and in institutions aiming to be alternative (Cusset, 2003; Marcuse, 1964; Roszak, 1968; Yinger, 1982).

Attempting to mark age boundaries is deeply problematic because youth culture is in many senses bigger than youth itself. For that very reason, youth culture(s) exist in different cultural arenas (Laaksonen et al., 2010). On the one hand, *institutional youth culture(s)* can be defined as those cultures supported by the public state institutions in a non-profit way; *commercial youth culture(s)* are the result of the cultural industries (media, music, fashion, market, etc.), in a business and consumption way; and *alternative youth culture(s)* are in general created by some civil society actors in order to encourage

social participation, in a non-profit and pleasure way too. However youth culture has also flourished in the contested space between *high culture* and *popular culture* (Fowler, 2008), as they are neither homogeneous nor static: boundaries are undefined and exchanges between the different styles are numerous. Young people do not usually identify with one style only, they rather get influences from many, and they often make up a style of their own. For that very reason, youth cultures can be analysed from two perspectives: from the perspective of *social conditions* (generation, gender, class, ethnic and territorial identities); and from the perspective of *cultural images*, understood as the set of ideological and symbolic attributes (trends, music, language, cultural practice and focal activities) assigned to young people or taken by them. In this article we will travel into the major research traditions that have approached youth cultures from the social sciences.

Street-corner boys: the Chicago School

The gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously and then integrated through conflict. It is characterised by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, *esprit de corps*, moral solidarity, group awareness and attachment to a locality. (Thrasher, 1963 [1926]: 46)

When Robert E Park left his profession as a journalist and joined the Department of Sociology of Chicago University in 1915, subjects that had not been considered scientifically up to then (like social marginalization, delinquency, prostitution and bohemian life) became the core of attention of the emerging school of 'human ecology', which had the aim of analysing the specific behaviours that appeared in the new urban ecosystem. The theoretical basis of Park's approach was based on the concepts of 'social infection' leading to 'moral regions' where 'diverted' rules and criteria prevailed. One of the most visible effects of this process was the proliferation of street gangs in certain areas of the city: their extravagant look, their presumably offending activities and their resistance to authority. The phenomenon soon attracted the interest of many *Chicagoans*, although they were not the first ones to approach the subject with scientific criteria (Hall, 1904; Puffer, 1912, quoted in Hardman, 1967: 6).

For the Chicago authors, the street gang generation was caused by the 'anomy' present in certain 'moral regions' of the big city, marked by social dis-

organization and the disappearance of the traditional systems of informal control. Youth diversion would not be therefore a pathological phenomenon, but the foreseeable result of a determined context that needed to be analysed, as Frederick Thrasher (1963 [1926]) suggested in his *The Gang: A Study of 1313 Gangs in Chicago*. His study was the first trial to systematize the knowledge about gangs from empirical observation of a great variety of youth groups, including gambling groups, mafias, criminal adult gangs, family groups, syndicates, college fraternities and boy scouts. For Thrasher, gangs did not appear indiscriminately, but they were linked to the so-called 'interstitial urban areas'. Almost two decades later, Foote Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (1972 [1943]) focused on two gangs in the Italian *Cornerville* neighbourhood in Boston. According to Whyte, *street-corner boys* emerged in contrast with another type of gang present in the district: the *college boys*. Whyte considered there was a tight bond among the members of the gang through a strong feeling of loyalty to the group, based on mutual help and deep affective identity bonds with the group since their childhood. The group was 'a family', and the nature of the group was mainly not delinquent. The model of urban ecology first established by the Chicago School has permitted the development of further studies on Afro-American, Hispanic, Italian-American youth, etc., and their interactions with white young people and the predominant institutions. The contribution of the Chicago authors to the knowledge about urban lifestyles and the meaning they had for their actors is undeniable, and their influence in later paradigms, like the new criminology, the theory of social labelling or symbolic interactionism, is decisive (Becker, 1970 [1963]; Cohen, 1955; Matza, 1973 [1961]).

College boys: structural-functionalist sociology

The period of youth in our society is one of considerable strain and insecurity ... There is reason to believe that the youth culture has important sensitive functions in easing the transition from the security of childhood in the family of orientation to that of full adult in marriage and occupational status. (Parsons, 1972 [1942]: 145–6)

After the Second World War, the permanence of US young people in education institutions was enlarged, the image of the 'adolescent consumer' appeared and the mass culture spread the image of the North American young people's cinema and music heroes all over the world (from Elvis Presley to James Dean). The anthropologist Ralph Linton (1942)

observed that North American adolescents in that time lived more and more in a 'separated' world, with rules and values of their own. A few years before that, Robert and Helen Lynd had observed the emergence of a college culture in their classical urban ethnography of Middletown (1929). They considered that high school had become the centre of young people's social life: the school wasn't only offering academic culture, but also a space for sociability – scholars share more with their peers than they do with their parents (Lynd and Lynd, 1937 [1929]: 211). In 1942 Talcott Parsons published his influential article 'Age and sex in the social structure of the US', in which the patriarch of American sociology analysed the 'idealization of the youth culture by adults' as 'an expression of elements of strain and insecurity in the adult roles' (1972 [1942]: 145). Twenty years later, he revisited the topic of youth culture in his article 'Youth in the context of American society' (1963 [1961]), focusing on middle-class boys and girls that spent their youth in high schools, and argued that the development of age groups was the expression of a new generational awareness that crystallized in an autonomous inter-class culture focused on hedonist consumption. According to the sociologist, young culture – analysed as a homogeneous whole – was produced by a generation that consumed without producing, that by remaining in educational institutions was not only moving away from work, but also from the class structure. The nominal access to 'leisure time' seemed to cancel the social differences. A 'new leisure class' personalized in the young people then emerged. However, in Parsons' analysis it was: the *college boys*.

In the 1940s and the 1950s these *college boys and girls* generated a microculture of their own expressed by brotherhoods, parties, dances, graduations, fashion, bars and music. Unlike *street-corner boys*, their identity was constructed at school, not in the street, and their rebellion without a cause never surpassed the limits imposed by adults. In parallel with Parsons, Coleman (1961) underlined the emergence of a real adolescent society 'with their own language, symbols and, even more important, system of values ... different from those established in the wider society' (Coleman, 1961: 9). However these authors did not take into account the unequal access to resources and the persisting differences in taste between young people from different social groups. In fact, Parsons pointed out that when young people had their complaints, these came more from excessive expectations about the future than from any injustice lived: 'The general orientation appears to be ... their readiness to work within the system, rather than in opposition to it' (Parsons, 1963 [1961]: 118–19). Expectations

that the breakout of juvenile protests in the mid decade were to contradict (Mead, 1977). In short, college cultures not only played the role of inducing to consensus, but also to dissidence, like other historical contexts have demonstrated.

Ragazzi di vita: The Gramscian Italian school

In fact, old people 'steer' life, but they pretend they let the young steer; 'fiction' is also important in these things. Young people see that the results of their actions are the opposite from their expectations, they believe they 'steer' (or they pretend they do) and they seem more and more uneasy and unhappy. The crisis where the elements for solution cannot develop at the necessary speed makes it all the worse; whoever dominates cannot solve the crisis, but they have the power to prevent others from solving it. (Gramsci, 1975 [1945]: 1718)

At the beginning of the 1950s, Rome was a city of contrasts where the splendour of the *dolce vita* in Via Veneto coincided with the spreading of *borgate* (huts) in the urban outskirts populated by poor people or immigrants from the south of the country. Adolescents and young sub-proletarians from Pier Paolo Pasolini's novels like *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) reveal an image of a world which is only apparently contemporary, 'beyond power and history'. In showing the ties between misery and the country's wider urban and industrial development, Pasolini aimed to rescue a live testimony of a culture becoming extinct: the *ragazzi*, the last residue of 'diverse cultures' that were being annihilated by the process of linguistic and cultural homogenization caused by the change in the 'way of production', what he called 'the disappearance of glow-worms' (Fantuzzi, 1978).

The discovery of Antonio Gramsci by Pasolini (explicit in the book of verse *Le ceneri di Gramsci*) allowed him to contextualize this romantic vindication of the marginalized in a wider 'national, popular' project: it was necessary to give voice to subaltern groups, to 'people whose roar is nothing but silence', composed of peasants, workers, women and young people with cultural traditions and particular values. Here the concept 'crisis of authority' plays a key role in introducing a relevant element in Antonio Gramsci's 'galaxy': hegemony. Understood as the capacity of ethic political steering, more through consensus and ideological control than through force, hegemony has a lot to do with the youth issue: on the one hand, education of the new generations is fundamental for reproducing a hegemonic work (and also for the articulation of anti-hegemonic projects); on the other hand, young people play a

relevant role as paradigms of the 'crisis of authority', which is really highlighting the crisis of hegemony:

Crisis consists in the death of the old when the new can't be born: in this intermediate period the most varied pathologies can be seen. ... This is linked to the so-called 'youth issue' determined by the 'crisis of authority' of the old steering generations and also by the mechanical obstacle over the ones who could steer to carry out their mission. (Gramsci, 1975 [1945]: 311–12)

The diverse forms of youth protest and dissidence can be interpreted as one of the privileged indexes of the 'crisis of authority'. Hegemonic classes will describe it in terms of 'materialistic trend', 'moral dissolution', and the new generations – or the most visible sectors among them – will be identified as responsible, or as a scapegoat for social instability. These are situations that announce 'the possibility (and the need) of forming a new culture' (Gramsci, 1975 [1945]: 312). This new culture would assume a new set of forces for the exercise of hegemony. This innovating character may be one of the distinctive features of youth cultures: while popular cultures have historically been identified by their 'rebelliousness in the defence of tradition', youth cultures have appeared, since the Second World War, as 'rebels in defence of innovation' and have given place to the creation of new cultural forms that respond in different ways to the changing conditions of urban life.

While Gramsci's observations about folklore had a big influence on Italian anthropology, Ernesto De Martino also showed a pioneering interest in the emergence of new youth identities. In his paper 'Furore in Svevia' (1962) the author reflects on the explosion of violence that broke out in Stockholm on New Year's Eve in 1956, where gangs of over 5000 adolescents damaged the urban centre. The protagonists would receive different names: rebels without a cause, teddy boys, mods, hippies, skinheads, punks, hooligans, etc. For De Martino (1962: 231), 'our institutions are incapable of establishing a more adult and responsible humanity'. Actually De Martino took up again the ethnological study of youth gangs, abandoned since Thrasher and Whyte's contributions, and taken up again later by authors like Monod and some Birmingham authors, although these last ones were not acquainted with De Martino's works and only justified their inspiration in Gramsci.

Barjots, bloussons noirs, voyous: French structuralism

Youth gangs constitute the core point around which contemporary youth myths have fixed their paper stars. ... In order to study the primitive we need to leave behind the ingenuous myth that in a global way the civilised man imposes (I) to the savage (the other). In the same way, in this case, it is necessary to begin by shifting the image screen that is imposing a significance on the observer rather than reflecting reality. Besides, in both cases we're talking about limited groups, theoretically thinkable of as one; delimited, visitable, 'habitable', accessible to an 'inner' knowledge. ... And what is ethnology if not a respectful yet passionate reflection about the other? 'The other', whom the violence organised on a large scale by our civilisation, is so worryingly trying to make disappear. (Monod, 1968: 10–12)

In his *Les Barjots. Essai d'ethnologie des bandes de jeunes*, Jean Monod (1968) observed that the social representations of gangs, spread by the mass media, had many similarities with the traditional images about the 'primitive', even in their ambivalent contents: the primitive could be a good savage or a dangerous barbaric, and youth seemed to be alternatively 'the most beautiful age of life' and a symptom of aggressiveness and social degeneration. Monod's aim was to carry out a structural analysis of the gangs' lifestyles and symbolic systems, inspired by the method developed by Lévi-Strauss to understand the mythology of the American Indians. Like Whyte, he focused on a particular *Bloussons Noirs* gang: *la bande de la Place N.* in northern Paris, outlining an interesting comparison with other youth gangs in the Paris of the mid-1960s: *voyous*, *beatniks*, *ye-yés*, *rockers*, *gays*, *dandies*, etc. According to Monod, conflicts and tensions that are envisaged from the outside as pathologic and gratuitous violence are seen as strong ritual situations from the inside. Moreover, behind the apparent heterogeneity of styles, ways of dressing, music tastes and meeting places, there is a common complex subjacent system of binary oppositions that gives body to the myth: *barjots/ye-yés*, *vouyous/snobs*, *young/adult*, *proletarian/bourgeois*, *centre/periphery*, *overcoming/negation*, the 1950s/the 1960s, etc. These oppositions need to be understood as a reflection of the discontinuity between generations and of the discontinuity between the existing subcultural styles in the same historical moment. Moreover, Monod carried out a comparison between the French *Bloussons Noirs* and some North American 'movements' like the Black Panthers and hippies (Monod, 1968). For some authors, this work by Monod offers an outstanding reflection on youth marginality in the context of social breakdown, cultural fragmentation crisis and

crisis of the French welfare state in the earlier 1980s (Dubet, 1985; Lagrée and Lew-Fai, 1985). In that French context, the emerging actors are now the second generation of North African, Central African and Antillean immigrants residing in urban outskirts (*banlieues*), and construct their identities around massive languages, like rai, rap and hip-hop (Bouamama, 1993; Lapassade, 1990). Fascinated by such new 'multicultural' scenarios, Michel Maffesoli, in his *Le Temps des tribus* (1988), reflected on the process of 'tribalization' of social identities in general and of youth identities in particular; a process that could evidence the erosion of individualism in the mass society and the emergence of a new sociability.

Teds, mods, rockers, skinheads: the Birmingham School

'Youth' as a category emerged in the after-war Great Britain as one of the most visible demonstrations of the social change in that period. Youth was the focus of attention of official reports, legislation and public interventions; it was spread as a 'social problem' by the guardians of morals and played an important role as milestone in the elaboration of knowledge, interpretations and explanations about the period. (Hall and Jefferson, 1983 [1975]: 9)

The musical film *Quadrophenia*, where The Who played the leading role, brings back some core elements of the birth of youth styles in the Britain of the 1960s. The film is based on a famous confrontation between mods and rockers that took place with the beaches of Brighton as background in 1964. On 30 March of that year, the *Daily Mirror* wrote: 'The savage invade the beach. Thousands of belligerent, drunk, noisy teenagers on their scooters ... symbol of the moral infection that British youth is suffering from' (quoted in Caioli et al., 1986: 85). A few years later, Stanley Cohen (1972), in his book *Folk Devils and Moral Panic*, explored the 'process of invention' of rockers and mods by British communication media, who labelled them as popular demons (Cohen, 1972: 110). In fact, the emergence of youth street gangs fell within the economic opulence that Britain had seen during the postwar period, which favoured the increase of young people's purchasing capacity, the consolidation of the 'welfare state', the rise of the consumer society, the peak of rock and roll (The Rolling Stones) and the emergence of pop-rock (The Beatles) and *swinging London*. Another relevant factor was the end of the British Empire, together with the arrival in the metropolis of big contingents of immigrants coming from the former colonies, who brought their cultural and aesthetic patterns, and grouped in multiethnic districts. It led to a

'spectacular' emergence of youth styles that later spread to the rest of the country and the rest of the world: from the best known (teddy boys, rockers, mods, skinheads, punks) to the less famous (parkers, crombies). Faced with such a *fascinating* new social and youth scenario, some social scientists began to pay close attention to the youth subcultures that were born in Britain during that time.

In 1964, Richard Hoggart – a social historian formed in the British Marxist tradition, who had studied the relationship between working-class culture and the mass culture – created the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. It was about an academic space in which historians, communicologists, sociologists, anthropologists and linguists met to share common interests in the study of contemporary cultural phenomena. Stuart Hall later took the lead of this centre, and promoted an important number of theoretical publications and field studies about British postwar youth subcultures. In the heterodox tradition of British Marxism (from R Williams to EP Thompson), the authors of the Birmingham School borrowed elements from symbolic interactionism, from structuralism, from semiotics, from counter-cultural literature and from cultural Marxism to articulate a complex theoretical framework that had to explain the historical, social and cultural roots that had given birth to innovating youth expressions in Britain after 1950. For the CCCS authors, subcultures played positive roles not covered by institutions, giving young people everyday spaces of autonomy and self-esteem (Cohen, 1972).

The collective book *Resistance Through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1983 [1975]) exerted a remarkable influence on all the studies about youth subcultures done from then on. Its introductory part must be seen as a criticism of the trendy thesis at the time about youth culture as a homogeneous interclass mixture, analysed only in terms of 'generational conflict'. Youth styles are considered as symbolic trials made by subaltern classes of young people for dealing with the unsolved contradictions in the parental culture, as well as forms of 'ritual resistance' versus the systems of cultural control imposed by the power. A basic distinction is needed between forms of dissidence and youth bohemia proper of the middle classes, and youth subcultures as such, that emerge in different urban working-class strata (although later on, these styles would be appropriated by young people from different social sectors). The concept of class does not simplify the analysis; on the contrary, it makes it more complicated: youth subcultures can be approached from a 'triple articulation' with parental cultures (ecologic means, social networks and values that young people share with

adults from their same social class); with the dominant culture (hegemonic educational and social control institutions in society); and with the group of equals (the areas of sociability and values generated among the young people themselves). In this model, the Gramscian concept of hegemony is central: subcultures are seen as protest rituals 'represented' by young people in the 'theatre of hegemony' to jeopardize the myth of consensus: their emergency is tied to the historical periods when a crisis of cultural hegemony takes place. Just like on the theatre stage, the conflict is expressed at the imaginary level, although it reflects real contradictions. Another key concept is the one of 'style' that Clarke (1983) projects from a classical descriptive use to a much more complex analytical dimension, integrating its material dimensions as well as its symbolic dimensions. This theoretical framework is applied to different case studies of particular styles.

Some outstanding works must be remarked on. While Richard 'Dick' Hebdige (2001 [1979]) proposed to read a 'style' through the symbolic value of daily objects, Paul Willis (1978) carried out a great piece of research about the 'anti-academy culture' of working-class young people, the fruit of a series of group interviews. Willis (paradoxically) concluded that the school accomplishes its social function when promoting low interest among working-class young people, who preferred to abandon school and stay in the streets, where they socialized in masculinity and manual labour skills, values that prepare them for assuming the tasks proper to their social class. Many years later, some authors such as GE Marcus (1992) would underline the great importance of Willis's work:

Willis has the necessary skills to transform the anthropological tradition of ethnography, which he clearly demonstrates in his efforts to establish the theoretical meanings of the contents of his work. The gender mixture established by Willis is one of the ways that ethnography (and anthropology) can find in the future. (Marcus, 1992: 262)

On the other hand, Paul Willis (1990), in his *Common Culture*, suggests that nightlife has become central in the construction of youth identities. This idea must be seen as central in the later evolution of nightlife studies as will be further seen in this text. However, the methodological eclecticism of the CCCS authors has been widely questioned. The most sensible criticism has come from members of the same school, who have amplified the concept of observation to more conventional, middle-class youth cultures and what is more important:

Sub-cultural studies continue to focus more on the diverted than on the conventional; in working class adolescents more than in their middle class contemporaries, and what's more important: in boys than in girls. The absence of adults is another significant breach. In spite of the theoretical importance that parental cultures are given, these are not empirically examined and, as a consequence, the crucial relationships between generations are left to assertion. A global analysis about youth must be capable of explaining, not only the diversion and the rejection, but also the convention and the consent. (Murdock and McCron, 1983 [1975]: 205)

This criticism has given room to a new generation of works, usually within the field of interpreting anthropology and postmodern thinking, that try to overcome the weight of criminalist and functionalist paradigms through experimental ethnographies that portrait the emergence of youth 'microcultures' in a never-ending number of social contexts, adopting forms which are not necessarily forms of protest (Leave et al., 1992). Emphasis is shifting from socialization to the actors themselves, from marginal attitudes to daily life, from hegemonic speeches to youth polyphonies (Amit-Talai and Foley, 1990; Amit-Talai and Wulff, 1995; Wulff, 1988).

Ravers, hackers, floggers: from club cultures to cybercultures

A *hacker* (or a *raver*) moves through and against any national geo-political distinction; any subcultural definition is seen as inadequate, old-fashioned, even a little ridiculous. (Canevacci, 2000: 20)

Saturday Night Fever (dir. J Badham, 1977) narrated the life of a young disco lover, played by the great John Travolta. In the same year in Chicago, Frankie Knuckles, an African-American disk-jockey who had been working in *underground* New York discos, became a resident DJ at 'The Warehouse' club in Chicago, also known as 'The House'. He combined jazz, soul, gospel and funk songs with an electronic basis like the *pop* and the *trance*, played at a repeated rhythm of 120–140 beats per minute with electronic instruments such as synthesizers, equalizers, etc. When *house* started to decline in Chicago, it was 'reinvented' in the UK. Around 1988 the phenomenon *acid house* coincided with the dance culture born in Ibiza (Balearic Islands). Both *clubs* and *raves* happened mainly at night time, and they could go on until the following day (then they are called *after-hours*, a concept connected with the *allnighter mods*). The two types of spaces have given names to two new youth styles – *clubbers* and *ravers* – which have become an emblem of postmodernity (Redhead et

al., 1997; Thornton, 1995). However if there is one singular emblem for the postmodern youth subcultures, that would be those cybercultures born under the internet revolution. In his book *The Hacker Ethic, and the Spirit of the Information Age*, Pekka Himanen (2000) considers the *hacker* as the model of a new type of moral emerging in the digital society. This new ethics, (called *nethics*) is based on a free relationship with time, a *ludic* approach to work, a decentralized organization, the rejection of hierarchy, the value of passion and experimentation, etc. The first hackers, who would later become famous and have ended up working for big companies, were very closely related to the countercultural models supporting the abolition of the family and the creation of alternative communities. With the new century, a new hacker generation has emerged as one of the references of the new anti-globalization movement. Despite sharing anarchist and countercultural ideas, they do not reject their parents' authority or their home: quite on the contrary, they use their home as a space of freedom to resist (Canevacci, 2000; Castells, 2001).

Ravers and *hackers* can be considered as metaphors of the youth cultures in the digital era; they correspond to certain ecological niches (the night, cyberspace) and certain conceptual niches (club cultures, cybercultures). In the two last decades we have seen a deep terminological debate parallel to a process of pluralization, segmentation and globalization of young people's lifestyles. Different authors have developed and questioned the Birmingham School postulates. Authors from a different generation have suggested replacing the concept *subculture* by other terms more in tune with the information era, like *club cultures* (Thornton, 1995), *neotribes* (Bennet, 1999), *lifestyles* (Miles, 2000), *performances* (Díaz, 2002), *post-subcultures* (Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003), *street movements* (Brotherton and Barrios, 2004), *scenes* (Hesmondhalgh, 2005), *nets* (Juris, 2005), etc. There is no consensus yet in the use of these terms, although the underlying idea is to replace the 'heroic' tradition of cultural studies (resistant working-class subcultures, opposing bourgeois countercultures) with a less romantic and more empirical approach (inspired in Bourdieu's theories of distinction, Maffesoli's neotribalism, McRobbie's feminist criticism, Goffman's dramaturgical approach, Beck's post-political reflections and Castells' informationalism). Each one of these concepts, exploring different life worlds, tries to explain the flow, variety and hybridization of contemporary youth cultures (Fornäs and Bolin, 1995), a wider approach to the debate, in relationship with the emergence of a global youth culture, or rather globalized youth cultures, which can be found in Nilan

and Feixa (2006). However, four outstanding works dealing with the *post-subculturalism*: *Club Cultures* (Thornton, 1995), *Emergencia de culturas juveniles* (Reguillo, 2000), *Culture eXtreme* (Canevacci, 2000) and *The Post-Subcultural Reader* (Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003), need to be highlighted.

Sarah Thornton introduced the term 'club cultures' in her book (1995) as a youth emblem in the era of postmodernity. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's theories about distinction, and on the concept of 'subcultural capital', she suggested we look into the internal hierarchies within the youth scenario that the Birmingham authors had put on a secondary stage, behind the external hierarchies (the relationships with parental cultures and, especially, with the hegemonic culture). Thornton remarked that although club cultures are a global phenomenon, they are locally rooted (the dance and body styles are far from transnational). And she offered a new agenda for the newly emerged post-subcultural field of study, whose priority should be to pay attention to how the youth cultures are internally stratified and what are the strategies by which young people gather goods and experience (Thornton, 1995: 163). On the other hand, Rossana Reguillo (2000) offers a new approach to youth cultures as strategies of disappointment in the era of globalization. Based on various ethnographic studies about Mexican youth styles (*anarcopunks*, *grafiteros*, *raztecas* and *ravers*), the author – belonging to the prestigious Latin American School of Cultural Studies, represented by authors such as Néstor García Canclini and Martín Barbero – pays a lot more attention to social class, economic and political differences, the active role of the subjects and the ambiguousness of their relationship with the dominant schemes than European authors usually do. Reguillo exposes the difficulties that youth cultures observers and institutions of social control have when trying to 'fix' subjects and understand the sense of their practices (Reguillo, 2000: 68). The author demonstrates it by focusing on the case study of the so-called *raztecas*, a hybrid of rastafarians and neohippy aztecas who *produce* a new digital religion that overcomes geographical and time borders and brings back a new sense of citizenship, largely connected to the Zapatista movement.

In his *Culture eXtreme* (2000), Massimo Canevacci suggests a reconceptualization of youth mutations in the contemporary metropolis, from ethnographic explorations in cities like Rome and Sao Paulo. By recycling the concept of Generation X, he suggests looking into youth cultures as *eXtreme cultures*, in the sense of opposition (X as a contrary), in the sense of excess (X as extra large), in the sense of alterity (X-File), in the sense of prohibition (classified X); in brief, in the sense of breaking the estab-

lished (symbolic) order. The book's originality consists in an experimental writing that 'deconstructs' fragments of images (logos, photos, graffiti, objects, symbols), oral speeches, hypertexts and polyphonic narrations about ravers, cyborgs, hackers, squatters and many other youth groups that reject labelling.

The works by Thornton, Reguillo and Canevacci explore future paths for the study of youth cultures. Such a new perspective has been recently taken into account together with a process of repoliticization of the so-called post-subcultures. Many authors have redelineated its borders around youth emphasizing the importance of concepts such as resistance, centre and periphery and domination – among others. Rupert Weinzierl (2001) suggested that many members of youth subcultures are not apolitical but engage in self-organized political organizations focused on issues outside the traditional political institutions. This point of view was significantly broadened in *The Post-Subcultural Reader* (Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003). The authors argue that the global culture produces differences due to the different social, political and cultural everyday contexts. Actually this book should be seen as a key milestone in the post-subcultural field. Such a publication brings together new perspectives on – among others – youth, class, music and social resistance given by the politicization of punks (Clark, 2003), and on race, ethnicity and youth diaspora (Huq, 2003). It aims at overcoming the deficiencies in the CCCS analysis to explain marginal subcultures as *heavy* (Brown, 2003).

Finally, the role that the internet has played, and is obviously playing in the configuration of new youth (sub)cultures, should not be overlooked. According to Turkle (1995), the internet creates a 'new social and cultural sensibility', characterized by being able to navigate between an infinite number of potential online identities. Such fluidity of identity, which leads to liberate the 'navigator' from the boundaries associated with social life away from the internet (Poster, 1995), allows individuals to continually construct and reconstruct easier unique individual 'portfolios of sociability' (Castells, 2001). In that sense, David Bell and Barbara M Kennedy (2000) explore the ways in which the internet is reshaping cultural forms and practices at the turn of the century. Subcultures in cyberspace allow to reinforce their boundaries to continue to differentiate youth groups among themselves, as in the case of the British *goth cyberscene* (Hodkinson, 2003; Romana and Smahel, 2011; Whittaker, 2007). Thus *cybergothic* music creates a gateway to the borderland between biological and virtual realities (Van Elferen, 2009).

Youth cultures, leisure and nightlife: a case study

But to arrive at the realization of its strength the proletariat must trample under foot the prejudices of Christian ethics, economic ethics and free-thought ethics. It must return to its natural instincts, it must proclaim the Rights of Laziness, a thousand times more noble and more sacred than the anaemic Rights of Man concocted by the metaphysical lawyers of the bourgeois revolution. It must accustom itself to working but three hours a day, reserving the rest of the day and night for leisure and feasting. (Lafargue, 1883)

There is no doubt that the emergence of leisure in western countries must be thus seen as part of the process of its modernization and industrialization (Burke, 1995; Elias and Dunning, 1987; Marrus, 1974; Veblen, 1973 [1899]). Western middle classes started to progressively have more free time, concentrating their ambitions on leisure (Paterman, 1970). In that sense, nightlife consumption, new sexual expression/experimentation, youth culture and social informality rapidly became emblems of western middle-class values in the 1920s United States of America (Burke, 1995; Cressey, 1932; Erenberg, 1986). The Second World War meant a progressive rupture between two models of nightlife consumption, the modern (selective) and the late-modern (mass) nightlife. Since the second half of the twentieth century, the emergence of 'new' Fordist forms of consumption, the increasing purchasing power of middle classes, the motorization of society and the increasing free time for most of working and middle classes led to the *democratization* of nightlife in western countries – except for those governed by fascist/Catholic regimes as, for example, Spain and Portugal.

The first authors to explore the class-based segregation of nightlife in British cities came from the CCCS at the University of Birmingham (Frith, 1983; McRobbie, 1984; Stahl, 1976, among others). Their works allowed further authors to remark that nightlife had definitively become central in the construction of (postmodern) youth identities (Willis, 1990). In fact, a 'global nightlife' has emerged as a process of westernization, Americanization of nightlife itself. It is about a new nightlife predominantly based on *clubbing* (Thornton, 1995); or in other words, a new form of social exclusion (Malbon, 1999; Thornton, 1995) as a response to the transition to the post-Fordist city. Over the last two decades, bibliographic production on nightlife has been divided into three main areas. One of them focuses on drugs consumption, alcohol consumption and violence as one of the main characteristics in

most of western urban nightscapes (Allen et al., 2003; Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Eckersley and Reeder, 2006; Finney, 2004; Hobbs et al., 2005; Homel and Clark, 1994; Hunt et al., 2010; Lister et al., 2010; Morris, 1998; O'Brien et al., 2008; Recasens, 2008; Winlow and Hall, 2006; among many others). The second is formed by those works dealing with drunk-driving during/after night-time leisure in the US, UK and Commonwealth countries, especially emphasizing their age-differentiated analysis on the higher occurrence of alcohol-related road accidents involving young people (Blomberg et al., 2005; Farmer et al., 2005; Hedlund, 1994; Keall et al., 2004; Massie et al., 1995; Mayhew et al., 1986; Meirinhos, 2009, 2010; Peck et al., 2008; Simpson et al., 1982). Furthermore, many studies on nightlife-related drugs consumption and health problems not only in British cities but also in Eastern and Southern Europe have been published (Calafat and Juan, 2004; Hughes et al., 2008; Tutenges, 2009; among many others).

The third main area of contemporary nightlife studies is mainly based on the spatial approach to the study of nightlife. Such conceptual and methodological approach has gained importance during the last decade, emphasizing the close relationship between the strategy of 'city-securization' led by the inner city's elites, and the promotion of a 'gentrified' nightlife (Chatterton et al., 2002; Thomas and Bromley, 2000). In 2003 Paul Chatterton and Robert Hollands released a very influent book in the field of contemporary nightlife studies: *Urban Nightscapes: Youth Cultures, Pleasure Spaces and Corporate Power*, in which they deliberate on the economic processes that govern the structure of the nightlife in Western European cities and explore the interaction between youth, 'central nightlife', 'marginal nightlife', music tastes, lifestyles and dress codes. According to their suggestions, the post-Fordist nightlife 'is today displacing older, historic modes of nightlife based around the community bar and pub connected largely to Fordist forms of collective consumption in the working-class industrial city, and marginalising more independent modes of nightlife associated with various alternative youths and subcultures' (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003: 20, 43).

Chatterton and Hollands' book has become a key reading for social scientists studying nightlife not only in western countries, but around the world – which is very encouraging. Potuoğlu-Cook (2006) argues in favour of a performance-centred and gender-sensitive examination of urban nightlife-related gentrification in Istanbul; Nofre and Martín (2009) examine the relationship that is closely kept between clubbing and social exclusion as part of the process

of westernization of Sarajevo and a mechanism of self-identity construction for Sarajevo's new Muslim middle classes; Nofre (2009a, 2009b, 2011) also shows how nightlife has recently become one of the main tools for urban transformation and social control not only in Barcelona downtown but also in the working-class suburbs; and Hae (2011) explores the gentrification of nightlife in some semi-abandoned working-class areas of New York City. What has been seen so far should allow a final remark. Very little has been explored about African, South Asian or Indonesian nightlife. All of us, social scientists, have the major challenge of studying nightlife. The very class-segregated nature of western nightlife has little importance in comparison with the 'discovery' of the still, to date, unexplored night-time territories.

Conclusion: youth cultures and beyond

This text has shown a chronological approach to the research traditions of youth cultures. Someone might wonder why most of the references are from authors from Anglo-Saxon countries. The mutual knowledge between different 'national' schools of social sciences is pretty scarce, and it does not operate in an egalitarian way. That is to say, what could the US and UK schools of youth studies say about the German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Brazilian, Chinese, Japanese, Chilean, etc. traditions on youth studies? Nowadays this fact constitutes one of the most important challenges of youth studies, that is: to avoid the *secular* Anglo-centrism that has negatively featured this disciplinary field of social sciences since its emergence in the first third of the twentieth century. Many efforts have been made by the so-called outsiders, and emerging academics from non-Anglo-speaking countries as well. However, reciprocal suspicions have recently been consolidated, maybe due to the increasing 'academic neo-imperialism' emerging since the beginning of the new millennium. A radicalization of anti-North Americanism is currently an increasing stream inside some Euro-Mediterranean as well as Latin American schools of social sciences. In fact, a (post)colonialist perspective continues to flood youth studies by mainly seeing case studies from non-western countries as *exotic*. Some US and UK-based case studies seem to be more global than studies based on non-western youth. This fact is making it difficult to understand new issues on youth by means of a comparative approach.

Along with this, the Marxists' inoperability to contest the newly emerged neoliberal research agenda in social sciences should not be overlooked: dur-

ing these last two decades it has led to the disappearance of concepts such as class struggle or social conflicts, gradually replaced by much more depoliticized notions such as 'negotiation', 'hybridization' or even 'neotribalism'. For instance, Maffesoli's (1988) posture was criticized by some authors, who accused him of having 'produced a one-sided and flattened out image of modernity that cannot account for the possibility of social and political critique' (Evans, 1997: 220). In fact, since the 1980s the western academy has been contributing to deactivate the so-called 'working-class question' in the field of youth studies by displacing and marginalizing class-based works, and prioritizing *exoticized* case studies of youth subcultures by paying no attention to the decline in the living conditions of youth. In line with this, the academy has usually *carnivalized* contemporary youth subcultures, which could be connected with Jürgen Habermas's (1985 [1980]) suggestions about the emergence of (neoconservative) postmodernism.

The depoliticization of the study of youth subcultures has also led to lexical abuses spreading through almost all works in social sciences and humanities (Eagleton, 2004; Feixa, Pereira and Juris, 2009; Moraru, 1994; Pleyers, 2010). With regard to this, Chris Rojek and Bryan Turner (2000) criticize what they call 'decorative sociology', in which 'culture' has eclipsed the 'social', and where literary interpretation has marginalized sociological methods. Finally, several episodes of youth protests have recently spread across the world in what could be seen as a repoliticization of that 'depoliticized youth' blithely pointed out by some post-subculturalists. However, today's youth studies tend to avoid a political interpretation of the recent global revolution of youth by excessively focusing on *exoticized* case studies. Thus, a certain 'disenchantment with youth studies' emerges among many researchers who face the highly fragmented field of youth studies. Never have there been so many publishing companies as today, and never has the academy been so fascinated, and at the same time so overwhelmed, by the global youth revolution.

Last but not least, 'youth cultures' is becoming a flexible and extended concept, that *colonizes* generational and social territories beyond its original homeland (western and urban societies, teenagers and youth, leisure and consumption, the street-corner and the classroom). Today's youth cultures *acculturate* preadolescence (*teens* already feel attraction by youth culture products), emerging adulthood (those in their forties still experience youth lifestyles and trends), non-western and rural young people (youth cultures as a global *esperanto*), non-leisure spaces (the bedroom, the public squares, education, institutions,

the new economy). Are youth cultures dying because of success? Youth cultures without politics? Or youth cultures without youth?

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Annotated further reading

A seminal book

Hall S and Jefferson T (eds) (1983 [1975]) *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. London: Hutchinson.

The foundational book on cultural studies. In addition to a long theoretical introduction widely cited and used, it includes several ethnographic studies on postwar British youth subcultures (teddy boys, rockers, mods, skinheads, punks, etc.) which have subsequently become references on the subject (in addition to Hall and Jefferson, we must mention the contributions of Clark, McRobbie, Frith, Hebdige and Willis). The text first appeared in 1975 as a working paper of the CCCS, University of Birmingham. In 1977 it was published as a book by Hutchinson (reprinted several times). In 1993, Routledge took over publication, and their second edition (2006) contains a new and useful introduction by the editors, which evaluates the impact of the book and responds to criticism.

A recent handbook

Lesko N and Talburt S (2012) *Keywords in Youth Studies: Tracing Affects, Movements, Knowledges*. London: Routledge.

One of the most recent and most successful attempts to trace a map (historical and geographical) of youth studies, in the form of a keywords encyclopaedia. Most of the selected concepts are related to youth cultures: leisure, commodification, culture, peer groups, resistance, subculture, musicking, cultural production, hybridity, street children, style, youth violence, activism, etc.

Readers

Furlong A (2009) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas*. New York: Routledge.

This 55-chapter book, written by established experts as well as emerging academics, is a compilation of contemporary social experiences of youth and young adulthood in some western cities.

Gelder K and Thornton S (eds) (1997) *The Subcultures Reader*. London: Routledge.

This reader is a useful compilation of the Anglo-Saxon contributions to the debate, in addition to the classic texts of the schools of Chicago and Birmingham, including studies on contemporary youth culture (time, space, music, fashion, politics, new technologies, etc.).

Muggleton D and Weinzierl R (eds) (2003) *The Post-*

Subcultures Reader. Oxford and New York: Berg. This book updates the compilation of Gelder and Thornton, and introduces the notion of 'post-subcultural studies' to define new theoretical and ethnographic approaches to youth cultures in the information age.

Nilan P and Feixa C (eds) (2006) *Global Youth? Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds*. London: Routledge.

Unlike other anthologies, this book includes previously unpublished texts by mostly non-Anglo-Saxon authors, documenting the process of globalization of youth culture, with interesting case studies of countries on five continents: Europe (Britain, France, Spain), America (Canada, Mexico, Colombia), Africa (Senegal), Asia (Iran, Indonesia, Japan) and Oceania (Australia).

Disciplinary handbooks

Amit-Tal V and Wulff H (eds) (1995) *Youth Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. London: Routledge.

The first anthology on youth cultures from social anthropology, which can be read as an invitation to cross-cultural comparison using ethnography.

Brake E (1983) *Comparative Youth Culture*. London: Routledge.

One of the first and most complete summaries of youth cultures coming from the discipline of sociology, focusing on the contributions of the Birmingham School, while opening up to other national and theoretical perspectives.

Fornäs J and Bolin G (eds) (1995) *Youth Culture and Late Modernity*. London: Sage.

A compilation structured from mass communication studies and drawing on the Scandinavian countries, that thanks to journals like *Young* have contributed greatly to the dissemination of cultural studies beyond its original scope.

Fowler D (2008) *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, 1920–1970*. London and New York: Palgrave.

Innovative and controversial historiographical approach on the origins of youth culture in Britain, introducing new scenarios and authors (some pre-Second World War), thanks mainly to the handling of original documentary sources.

Skelton T and Valentine G (eds) (1998) *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. London: Routledge.

Compilation of geographical studies on youth culture, focused on entertainment and other significant urban spaces in the lives of young people.

Key books in Spanish, French and Portuguese

Cubides HJ, Laverde MC and Valderrama CE (eds) (1998) *Viviendo a toda. Jóvenes, territorios culturales y nuevas sensibilidades*. Bogotá: Fundación Universidad Central.

The first Latin American compilation of youth studies, which involves the evolution from the notion of gang to youth culture, now widely used throughout the subcontinent.

Feixa C (1998) *De jóvenes, bandas y tribus*. Barcelona: Ariel. (5th edn. 2012).

This essay on youth culture in Ibero-America adapts the principles of the Birmingham School to study

urban tribes (a term used in Spain since 1975, before Maffesoli, author of the prologue). The book includes ethnographic studies of Catalonia and Mexico.

Maffesoli M (1988) *Le Temps des tribus*. Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck.

An essay regarding the notion of urban tribes, which the author develops from the tenets of interpretive sociology. The book has had a major impact on post-subcultural studies.

Monod J (1968) *Les Barjots*. Juillard: Paris.

A landmark yet unfortunately little known study about the youth gangs *Bloussons Noirs* in Paris in the 1960s, inspired by the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss.

Pais JM (2004) *Tribos urbanas*. Lisboa: Imprensa do Instituto de Ciências Sociais – IUL.

This book constitutes the most important reading for researchers dealing with Portuguese-speaking youth cultures. Written by several contributors from Portugal and Brazil, this book provides an outstanding fresh, multidisciplinary approach to informal cultural production/consumption of youth in different case studies, and their spatialities.

Reguillo R (2000) *Emergencia de culturas juveniles*.

Buenos Aires: Norma.

One of the most innovative essays on contemporary youth culture, by an author of reference for Latin American cultural studies.

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résumé Dans un sens large, le terme ‘culture des jeunes’ se réfère à la façon dont les expériences sociales des jeunes de s’exprimer collectivement, en construisant des styles de vie différents, grâce aux loisirs et aux espaces interstitiels de la vie institutionnelle. Plus précisément, il définit l’apparence de ‘micro-sociétés jeunes’, indépendantes des institutions des ‘adultes’, qui fournissent des espaces-temps pour les jeunes. Cet article traite des principales traditions de recherche qui ont étudié les cultures des jeunes depuis le début du XXe siècle: l’école de Chicago, l’école gramscienne, la ligne de pensée structuro-fonctionnaliste, l’structuralisme français, l’école de Birmingham et les études post-subculturelles. Le texte finalise en illustrant les nouvelles tendances de recherche sur un champ spécifique – les loisirs et la vie nocturne – et avec un bilan critique sur les cultures des jeunes aujourd’hui et dans le futur prochain.

mots-clés culture ♦ cultures des jeunes ♦ jeunesse ♦ loisirs ♦ styles de vie

resumen En un sentido amplio, las culturas juveniles se refieren a la forma en que las experiencias sociales de los jóvenes se expresan colectivamente mediante la construcción de estilos diferenciados tanto a través del consumo de ocio como a través del uso de espacios intersticiales de la vida institucional. Más concretamente, el término ‘culturas juveniles’ define la aparición de ‘micro-sociedades juveniles’, significativamente independientes de las instituciones ‘adultas’, las cuales proporcionan espacios-tiempos específicos para los jóvenes. Este artículo expone las tradiciones de investigación más importantes que, desde diferentes disciplinas de las ciencias sociales, han estudiado a las culturas juveniles desde el inicio del siglo XX: la Escuela de Chicago, la corriente estructural-funcionalista, la Escuela Gramsciana italiana, el estructuralismo francés, la Escuela de Birmingham y los estudios post-subculturales. El texto acaba ilustrando las nuevas tendencias con un estudio de caso sobre un campo específico – el ocio y la vida nocturna – y con un balance crítico sobre las culturas juveniles hoy y en el futuro próximo.

palabras clave cultura ♦ culturas juveniles ♦ estilos de vida ♦ juventud ♦ ocio