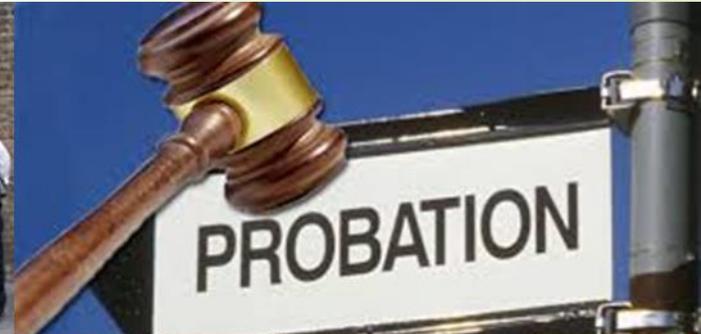


'Why do we Punish? Young People, Crime and the Media' U3A Session 10.30am, Thursday 18th June 2020



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“If trial and punishment are a measure of social attitudes, then that old adage about the English hating their children seems to be true; we'd rather criminalise them and lock them up than deal with their problems.”
Blake Morrison (2009)

- **The social construction of childhood**
- **Public disorder, the media, ‘moral panics’ and ‘folk devils’**



The social construction of childhood

- What is a child?
- Is childhood a 'natural' state of being?

Aries (1962), focusing on medieval France, describes how up until the 18th century, adolescence was confused with childhood. Despite similarities between these two definitions the 16th century account of 'childhood' was not bound up with notions of biological maturity but rather dependence (think about the age of criminal responsibility and how it is determined).

One would leave childhood only by leaving the state of dependence, or at least the lower degrees of dependence. (Aries, P. 1962, Centuries of Childhood)



Further, Aries claims that in the middle ages the family unit as such did not exist; instead the child, a miniature adult, was part of an 'extended' family whose main function was to advance itself through marriage and property.

He argues that "through the 16th and into the 17th century people took great pleasure in pampering or coddling their children, they were only gradually beginning to realise their presence as a distinct way of being in the world." Jenks (1996) speaks of the Dionysian child and the Apollonian child as a way to understand this construction of childhood:



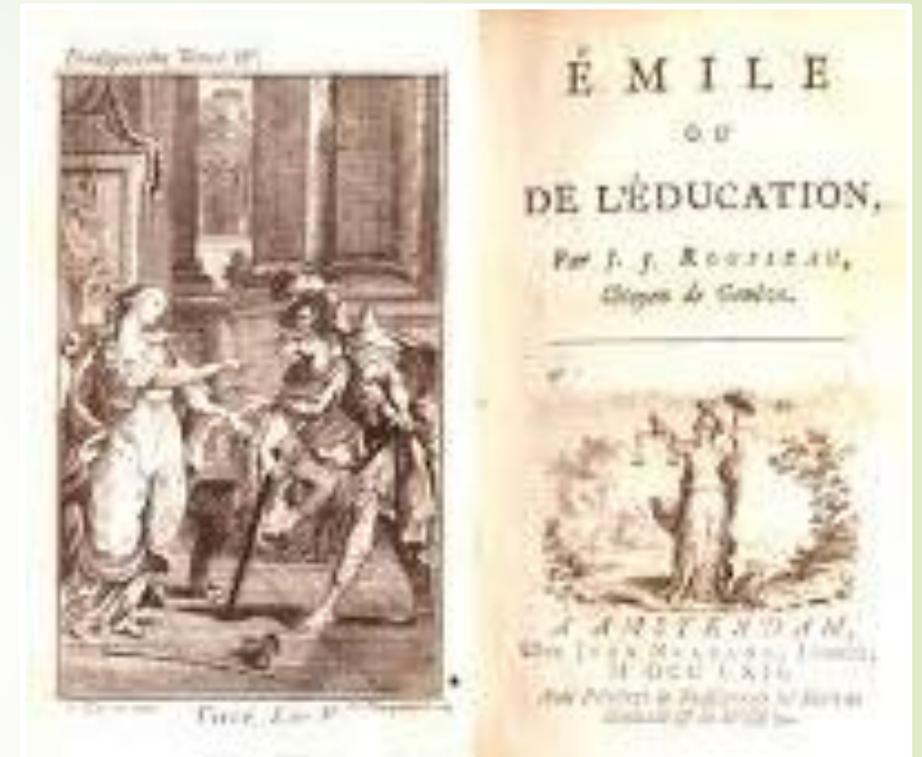
Dionysian child: “The child is Dionysian in as much as it loves pleasure, it celebrates self-gratification and is wholly demanding in relation to any object or indeed any subject that prevents its satiation.” (Jenks, 1996:71, Childhood)

Let's go home now my
little poppet

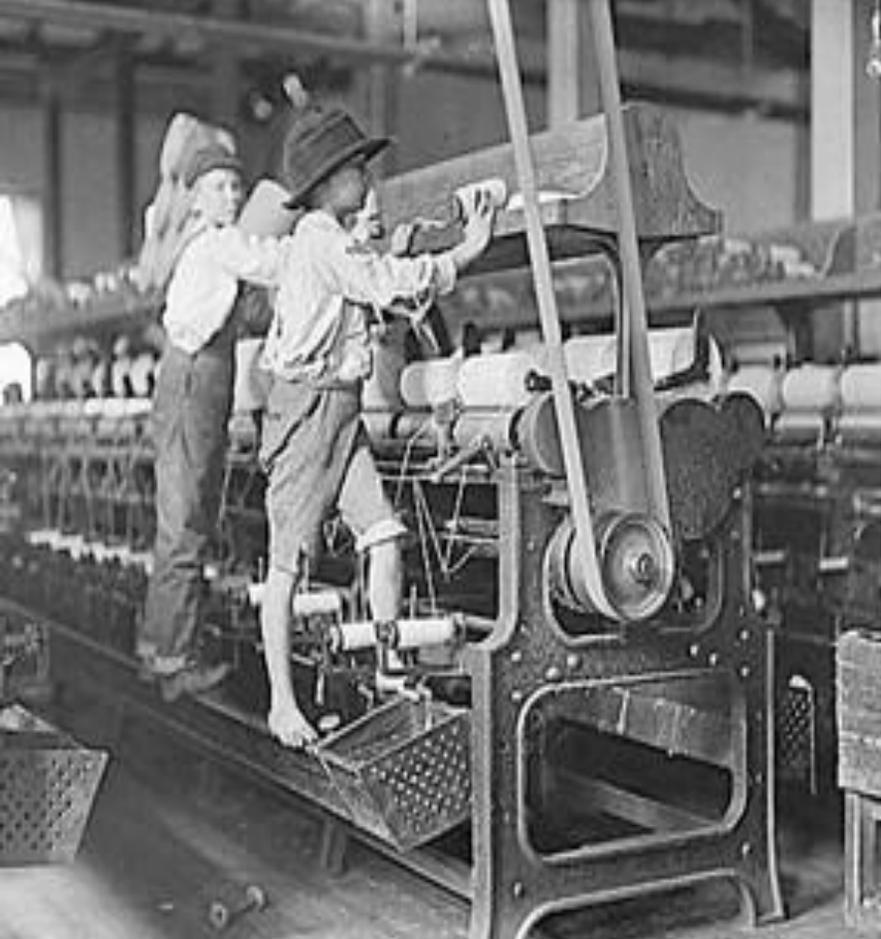
No buy me some more
sweets you witch or I'll
hold my breath until I die



Apollonian child: “Children in this image are not curbed nor beaten into submission, they are encouraged enabled and facilitated. The formalisation of the Apollonian child occurs with Rousseau; he is the author of their manifesto, Emile. It is in this work that Rousseau reveals the child’s innate and imminent capacity for reason and he instructs us that they have natural virtue and dispositions, which only require coaxing out into the open.” (Jenks, 1996:71, Childhood)



“Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man.”





© Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums

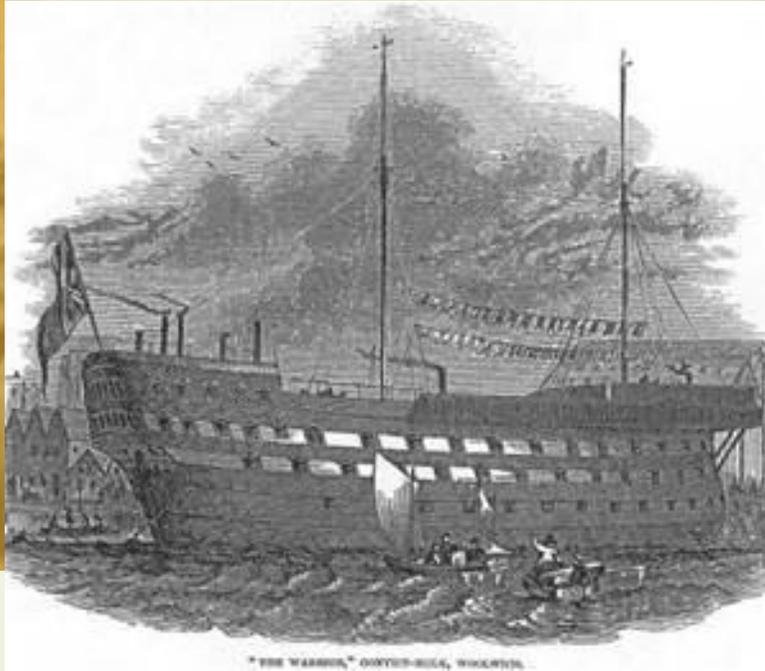
PRISON DIETARY

All convicted prisoners will be given the following food.
Plates and eating utensils must be cleaned and polished after use.

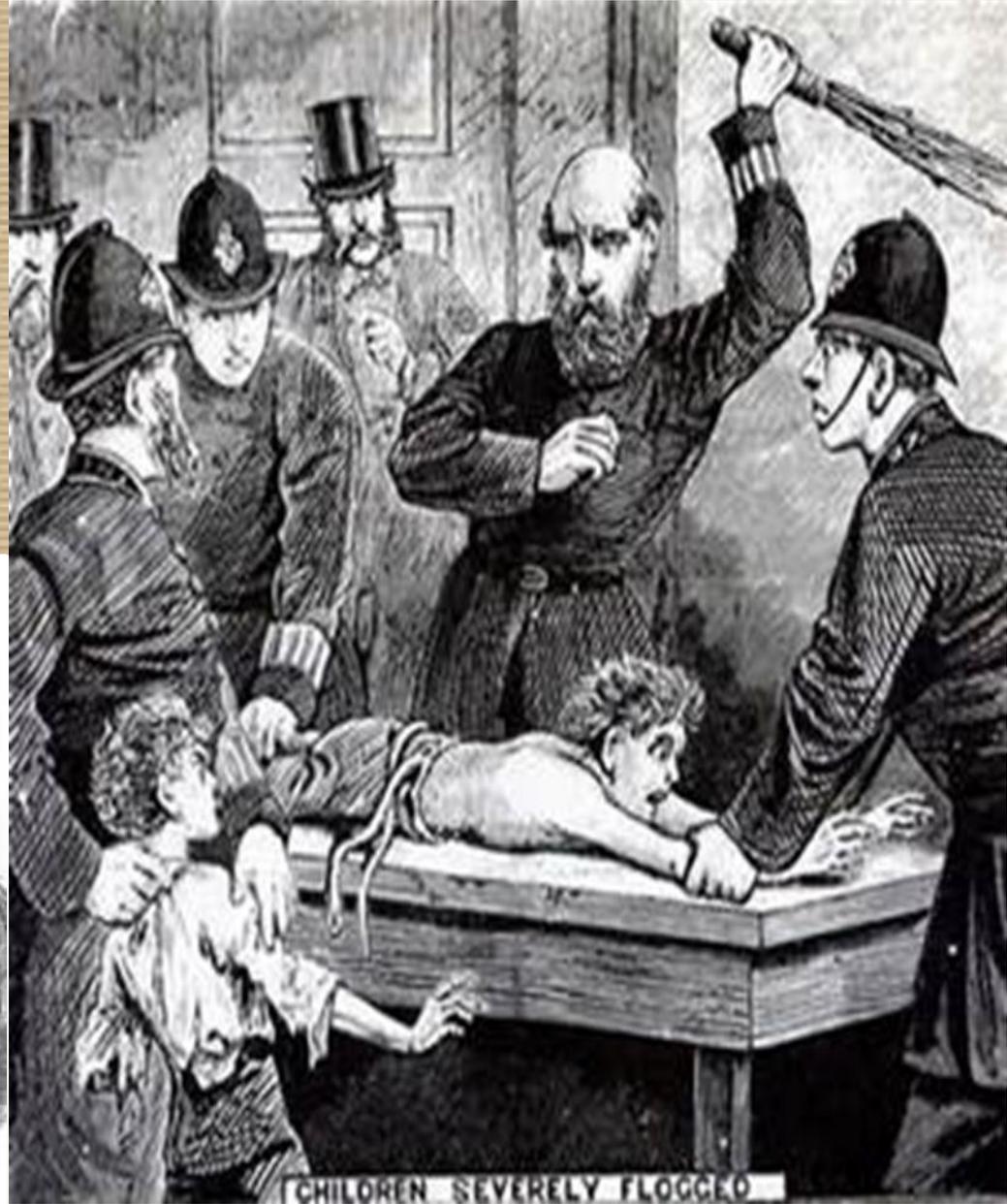
Breakfast & Supper
1 pint oatmeal gruel
& 8 ozs bread

Dinner Sun, Tues, Thurs, Sat
3 ozs cooked meat without the bone
8 ozs bread
8 ozs potatoes

Dinner Mon, Wed, Fri
1 pint soup
8 ozs bread



"THE WARRIOR," DOCKED-BUILD, WICKWICH.



CHILDREN SEVERELY FLOGGED

Victorians 'had a better solution to young offenders'

by TARIQ TAHIR

LONG before community sentences or Asbos, young offenders spared hard labour faced years in the army or enforced apprenticeships.

However, it seems to have worked as child criminals today are three-and-a-half times more likely to reoffend than those in Victorian and Edwardian times.

Just 22 per cent of youngsters went on to reoffend during their lifetime, compared with 73 per cent today who commit another crime within a year, a study suggests.

Essex University professor Pamela Cox analysed the lives of 500 baby-faced criminals of yesteryear.

The difference was partly linked to 'the requirement that all those leaving the industrial and reformatory schools go into some kind of apprenticeship, or the military.'

Prof Cox said: 'This set them up with a skill and gave them the routine of working that stood them in good stead in the future. Even among the 22 per cent or so who did



Early mugshots: Young offenders in Victorian times PICTURES: NATIONAL ARCHIVES

reoffend, only six per cent were persistent criminals.'

Prof Cox focused on seven- to 14-year-old boys in Merseyside and

What's your opinion?

Text the word **IEWS** followed by your comment, name and where you live to **65400**. Standard network charges apply.

Cheshire who committed relatively minor offences such as petty theft, vagrancy or public disorder.

After release from reformatory school at 16 some went into apprenticeships, such as hat or shoe making, railway work or the military.

The research was the first historical analysis of its kind after digitisation of records made it possible to carry out a cradle-to-grave study.





Changes in the perception of childhood led to new ideas about the ways in which the delinquent and vulnerable young should be handled by the state. From the 1880s onwards, campaigners began to call in particular for the introduction of a special court to handle cases involving children and young people. These efforts finally bore fruit in the Children Act of 1908, one of several reforms of the Liberal Governments of 1906-14, which included the provision of school meals, school medical inspections and pensions for orphans. Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary, used the new Children Act to consolidate and simplify a number of existing pieces of legislation, as well as to introduce new features.



The Act had six parts: infant life protection; the prevention of cruelty; the prohibition of juvenile smoking; the refining of the roles of industrial and reformatory schools; the creation of the juvenile courts; and a 'miscellaneous' division which included such provision as the banning of under-fourteens from public houses. While the Act made the law clearer in certain areas, it further extended the power of the state to determine family matters, and it formally introduced the juvenile court to the British legal systems. (Bradley, K. 2008).



Children and Young Persons Act 1933

1933 CHAPTER 12 23 and 24 Geo 5

An Act to consolidate certain enactments relating to persons under the age of eighteen years.

Principles to be observed by all Courts in dealing with Children and Young Persons. General considerations. Every court in dealing with a child or young person who is brought before it, either as . . . an offender or otherwise, shall have regard to the welfare of the child or young person and shall in a proper case take steps for removing him from undesirable surroundings, and for securing that proper provision is made for his education and training.

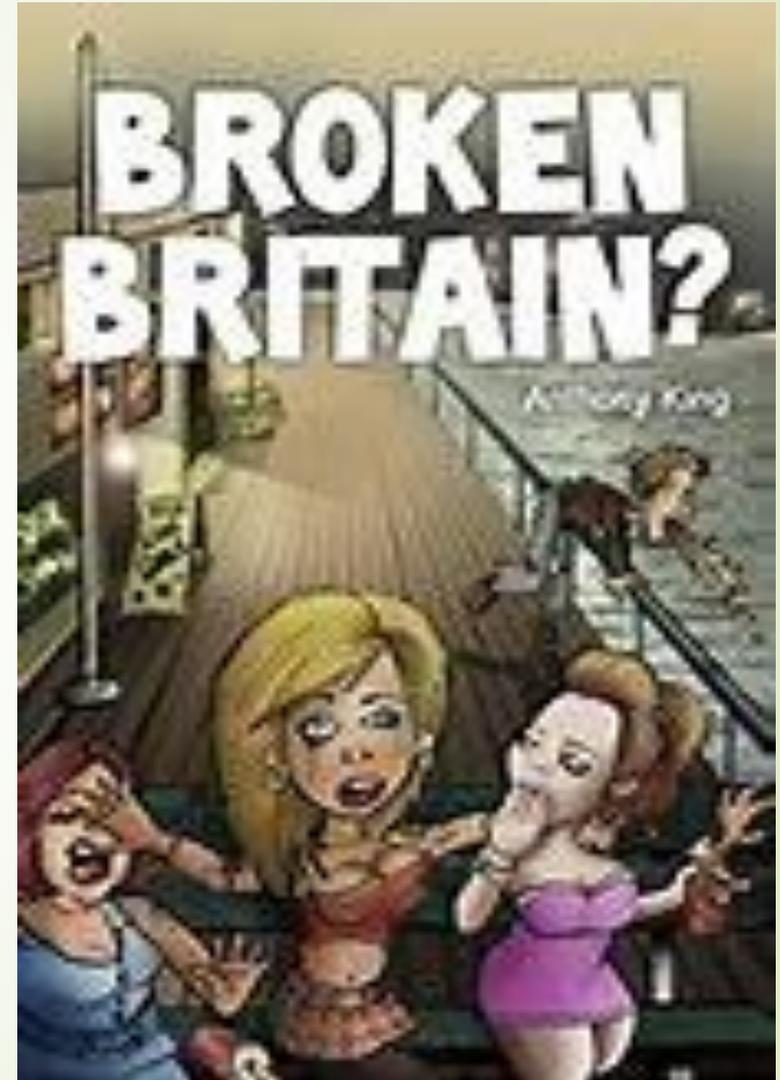
Public disorder, the media, 'moral panics' and 'folk devils'

- Youth and crime are emotive terms, usually of condemnation.
- Terms usually go further than "criminal" to include; Pre-criminal, anti-social and nuisance.
- Policies merge and aim to tackle teenage mothers to pre-gang members. (Community Safety)
- We will now explore both actions and reactions to youth crime.



Conflicting views of youth crime

- For some youth crime is evidence of an increasingly “permissive society” or broken Britain.
- For others it is nothing new; vilification of youth for past 200 years. Yet another moral panic. (Pearson, 1983)
- Alternatively is it a choice made by some in circumstances not of their making?



Street-gang culture, Humphries asserted, "offered working-class youth the opportunity to conquer its feelings of hunger, failure and insignificance and to assert a proud and rebellious identity through which its members could feel masters of their own destiny. "According to Humphries, weapons were possessed by "a small minority" of gangs but were "carried largely as symbols of defiance and resistance" and were rarely used.

In Humphries' account, "serious violence" was most likely to escalate when established street gangs turned against newly arrived immigrant groups, especially in periods of economic decline.

The severity of assaults upon young Jewish immigrants in East and South London during the 1890s, for example, reflected acute anxieties over competition in local labour and housing markets. (Hooligans or Rebels? 1981)



PEAKY BLINDERS

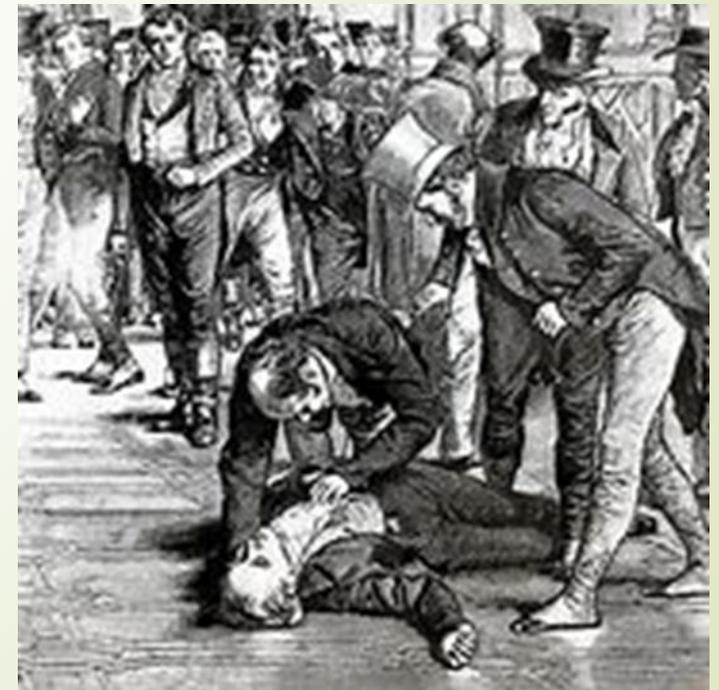


Interpreting the crime problem



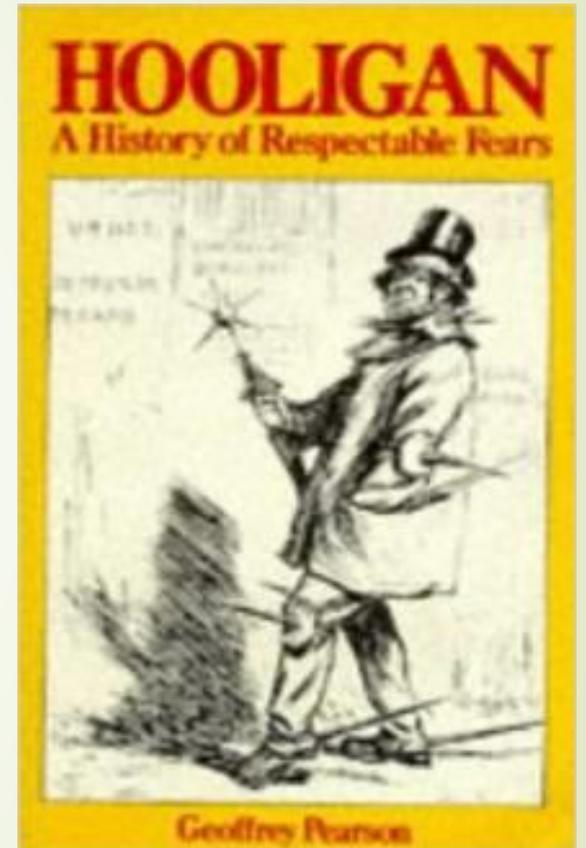
- The Whole City, My Lord, is alarm'd and uneasy. Wickedness has got such a Head, and the Robbers and Insolence of the Night are such that the citizens are no longer secure within their own Walls or safe even in passing their Streets, but are robbed, insulted, and abused, even at their own Doors. The citizens are oppressed by Rapin and Violence. (Defoe, 1730, quoted in Reiner, 1996:2)
- Daniel Defoe in 1730 in a pamphlet addressed to the Lord Mayor of London entitled *An Effectual Scheme for the Immediate Prevention of Street Robberies and Suppressing of all other Disorders of the Night*.

- British society has been plagued by the same concerns and fears about criminal and deviant behavior from time immemorial.
- This highlights the way that each generation tends to characterise the youth of the day and particularly specific youth groups as problematic, anti-social, deviant and so on... (Pearson, 1983)



Geoffrey Pearson – Golden Ageism

- Pearson claims “golden ageism” occurs.
- The idea that society has suffered from a *demoralisation and fragmentation*, a decline in the solidity of social structures and of shared morality and values.
- E.g. Feckless fathers and single mothers, Chavs, dependency culture, benefit cheats...
- “Each era has been sure of the truthfulness of its claim that things are getting steadily worse, and equally confident of the tranquillity of the past.”



Back to the future?

- A Victorian parallel with the more recent crime of mugging was garroting.
- Involved strangling and choking the victim in the course of robbery.
- The press reacted in a way that helped amplify the concerns over this crime.

PUNCH MAGAZINE (1860'S)



- ▶ Observing in your paper of to-day a letter from a gentleman who was nearly strangled and robbed of his watch by this abominable practice, I think it right to say that about a month since I was treated in exactly a similar manner. This was also in a public thoroughfare, and within a few yards of a public house that was open. (Letter to The Times, July 17, 1851)



Punch advert 31/1/1857

The Bayswater Brothers (whose height is respectively 6 feet 4 inches and 6 feet 11, and the united breadth of whose shoulders extends to as much as 3 yards, 1 foot, 5 inches) give, respectfully, notice to the Gentry and Public of Paddington, Kensington, Stoke Newington, Chelsea, Eaton Square and Shepherds Bush, that they will be most happy, upon all social and jovial expeditions, such as dinner and evening parties, as well as tee-total meetings, to escort elderly or nervous persons in the streets after dark, and to wait for them during their pleasure, so as to be able to escort them home again in safety.





Moral Panics

- A moral panic is an exaggerated response to a type of behaviour that is seen as a social problem.
- The term indicates an over-reaction on the part of the media and/or other social institutions.
- Furthermore, this over-reaction magnifies the original area of concern.

WILD ONES

'BEAT UP' MARGATE

40 arrested in all-day clashes



THE GIRLS FIGHT IT OUT A girl Mod and a girl Rocker stage a four-pulling battle outside Margate Station, while their friends stand looking on. The fight lasted about three minutes, with the girls pulling over each other on the ground.

THE Wild Ones self-styled Mods and Rockers picked the Kent resort of Margate to beat up for Whitsun.

All day yesterday the rival teenagers fought and smashed their way around the town. They started with police, who had to call in about 100 extra police to deal with the situation. The police were forced to use tear gas to clear the streets.

Blood

A blood fight broke out in the town centre. A girl Mod and a girl Rocker were fighting. The girl Mod was hit on the head and the girl Rocker was hit on the arm. The police had to intervene and take them to hospital.

Shouting

When the Mods attacked the Rockers, the Rockers shouted and threw stones. The police had to use tear gas to clear the streets. The Rockers were then taken to hospital.

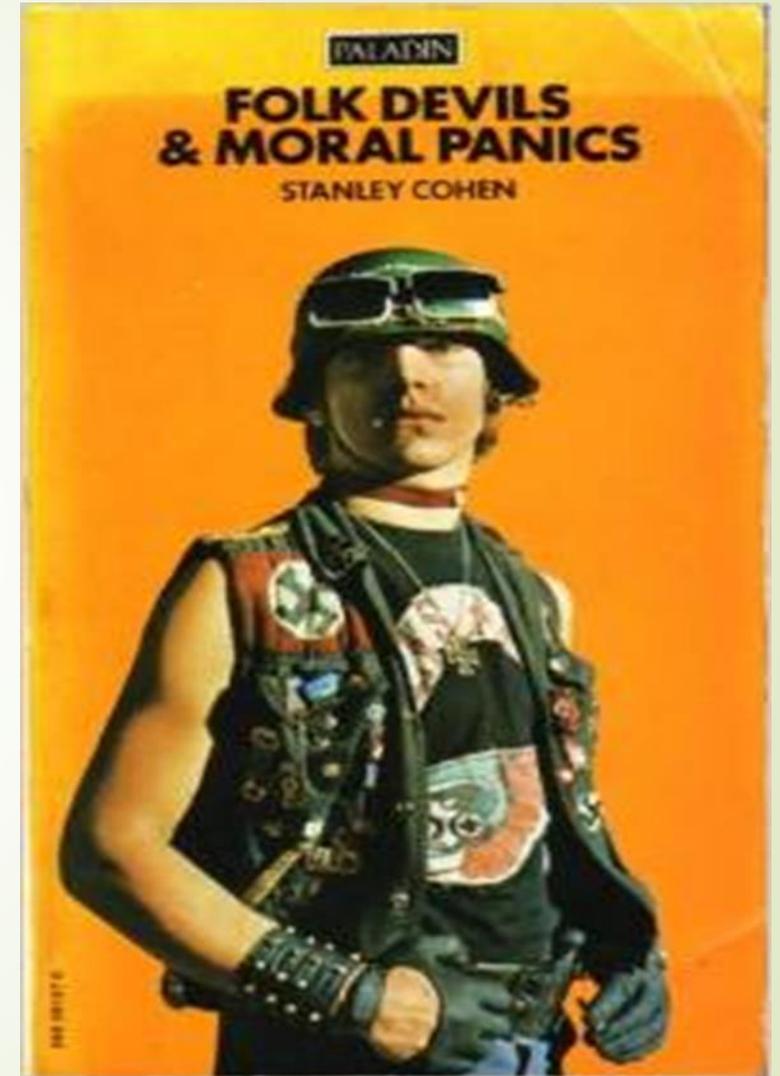
MIRROR REPORTER After Clacton, the town of Margate was the scene of a four-day battle between the self-styled 'Wild Ones' - Mods and Rockers. The clash began on the night of May 15 and continued through the day and night of May 16 and 17. The fighting was particularly fierce in the town centre, where the two groups met to fight. The police were forced to use tear gas to clear the streets. The Rockers were then taken to hospital.



BLACK EYE A youngster with black eye and a swollen face was taken to hospital by Margate ambulance. Although the young man was not injured, he was taken to hospital for treatment.

- Moral panics clearly based on the labelling or interactionist perspective.
- A strong focus on how society labels rule-breakers as belonging to particular deviant groups.
- Once a person or group is labeled, the actions they undertake are viewed and interpreted in terms of this label.
- A key part of the labelling process involves the mass media and its role in defining and shaping social problems.

- Cohen's book on the mods and rockers of the 1960s was titled *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*
- Newburn (2007) argues, has the distinction of containing two terms, *folk devils* and *moral panics*, which have subsequently entered popular terminology.





- Social reaction to the mods and rockers.
- Disturbances Clacton Easter Monday, 1964.
- Cohen shows how media reaction, to small-scale scuffles and vandalism.
- Newspaper headlines spoke of a May of Terror.
- The media's response served only to whip-up a wider public concern about a breakdown in morality. (Stan Cohen, 1973)



Irresponsibility. Selfishness. Behaving as if your choices have no consequences. Children without fathers. Schools without discipline. Reward without effort. Crime without punishment. Rights without responsibilities. Communities without control.

Some of the worst aspects of human nature tolerated, indulged - sometimes even incentivised - by a state and its agencies that in parts have become literally de-moralised. David Cameron, August, 2011.

Can you name this crew?



"Buller, Buller, Buller! Buller, Buller, Buller! We are the famous Bullingdon Club, and we don't give a fuck!" These words, according, to Andrew Gimson, author of *Boris: The Rise of Boris Johnson* (2006), were sung at Bullingdon club meetings by Alexander Boris de Pfeffel (BoJo) Johnson, a direct, albeit illegitimate, descendent of George II, George (nee Gideon) Osborne, heir to the Osborne Baronetcy in Ireland and David William Donald Cameron, a descendant of King William IV and hence fifth cousin once removed of Her Majesty the Queen.



- ➔ Owen Jones (2011) explores how the working class has gone from salt of the earth to scum of the earth.
- ➔ Media and politicians alike dismiss as feckless, criminalized and ignorant a vast, underprivileged swathe of society whose members have become stereotyped by one, hate-filled word: chavs.
- ➔ Where does the word come from? (Suggested Council Housed and Violent!)

CHAVS

**THE DEMONIZATION OF
THE WORKING CLASS**



'Superb and angry' Guardian

'Eloquent and impassioned' Evening Standard

OWEN JONES

Are things getting worse? Deviancy amplification



Leslie Wilkins (1964) coined the phrase 'deviancy amplification' to reflect how agencies like the media can actually generate an increase in deviance. Some view the media's reaction to deviant and many criminal acts as out of proportion to the actual problem.

Youth = Folk Devils....Why?

- More moral panics will be generated and other, as yet nameless, folk devils will be created. This is not because such developments have an inexorable inner logic, but because our society as presently structured will continue to generate problems for some of its members...like working class adolescents ...and then condemn whatever solution these groups find. (Cohen, 1980)

