



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Music and Youth Culture by D. Laughey

Review by: Keith Kahn-Harris

Source: *Sociology*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (APRIL 2007), pp. 379-381

Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42856995>

Accessed: 24-06-2021 17:03 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Sage Publications, Inc. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Sociology*

discussions on the causes of revolution are equally successful in not alienating a reader who is perhaps a novice to this area of study. However, I am uncertain as to the relevance of the diagrams deployed in this section. In particular, I would question the significance of the use of 3-D squares (p. 96–7), as taken from a study by Goodwin (2001), as a device to illustrate a) states most likely to produce revolutionary movements and b) states most likely to succumb to a revolutionary overthrow. I am dubious as to whether or not they really add anything to the discussion. They rather oversimplify a revolution whilst, at the same time, and rather paradoxically, potentially serve to confuse the reader, as the diagram's *raison d'être* and descriptive qualities are vague at best.

What becomes apparent as the book progresses is that Sanderson frequently revisits the same particular authors again and again, such as Goldstone, or Skocpol. This constant streaming of particular authors throughout the book is, I would argue, both a positive and a negative attribute: positive in the sense that it builds within the reader a great deal of in-depth knowledge around these individuals, serving to show how their ideas can be applied to the multi-faceted arena of 'theories of revolution'. However, negatively, this could also represent a wasted opportunity to engage the reader in a wider range of theories and ideas in this area.

The book's epilogue focuses on 'The Future of Revolutions' and was, I felt, a very unsatisfactory ending to an otherwise highly enjoyable and constructive book. It was an extremely brief section that concluded the entire work with the clichéd and rather vacuous line, 'A major epoch of world history may have come to an end' (p. 166) in regards to the end of social revolutions. This was followed by an appendix, showcasing the lives of 10 major students of revolution. Whilst these are interesting and informative accounts, I do feel that it is a slightly indulgent exercise that perhaps could have been shorter, allowing the space to be better used for expanding upon the epilogue. I believe a more detailed conclusion of the complex and varied events and themes covered in the book would have been of greater relevance and interest to the reader.

However, despite some areas of weakness, I believe this book is a very well written and vital account, covering important historical moments in an accessible, dynamic and enjoyable manner.

D. Laughey

Music and Youth Culture

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, £50.00 hbk, £16.99 pbk (ISBN: 0 7486 2381 7), x+252 pp.

■ **Reviewed by Keith Kahn-Harris**

The concept of subculture developed in the 1970s by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies has cast an extraordinarily long shadow over subsequent studies of youth. Over 30 years since many of the original subcultural studies

were published, a critique of them is an almost universal point of departure in contemporary research on youth, music and popular culture. In the last few years, a broad genre of 'post-subcultural studies' based on a critique of subculture has developed, which seeks to develop a new paradigm in youth research.

Dan Laughey's *Music and Youth Culture* is not just another work based on a critique of subculture; the book also critiques many alternative approaches to subculture, including post-subcultural studies. Defining himself against what he terms (probably too broadly) 'structuralist' approaches, which for him includes most post-subcultural approaches too, Laughey instead makes a case for an interactionist approach that seeks to 'understand how music interacts with young people's everyday lives' (ibid.). In developing this approach the author draws on an exceptionally detailed study of the relevant literature as well as on original historical research and a substantial contemporary case study.

Laughey rejects the way in which 'Youth subcultures as well as club cultures and – to a lesser extent – post-subcultures have been portrayed as insular units that attempt to conceal and protect their cultural heritages from the threat of parental censure or media amplification' (p. 55). Proposing instead a 'radical contextualist' approach, the author draws on the interactionist tradition derived from the Chicago school and on sociological approaches to media audiences. He emphasizes how music and youth culture activity takes place in a wider context. This context includes other young people and other generations as well as the specificities of a particular locality. More broadly, music and youth cultural activity are situated within the context of 'everyday life'.

Drawing on the work of de Certeau, Bakhtin, Goffman and others, Laughey understands everyday life as performative and in the case of youth and music as 'promenade performance'. The concept of promenade performance is developed through a case study of Mass Observation studies of young people in northern English dance halls in the immediate pre-war period. Laughey uses this case study in two ways. First, to show how what were seen as innovative subcultures in the 1960s, 1970s and beyond drew on earlier traditions of music and youth cultural activity. Secondly, promenade performances in the dance hall are treated as a model for how '...young people transmit to others (not just their peers) certain tastes, styles and values for particular kinds of music and dance' (p. 84).

Important in the author's approach is the way in which '... everyday promenading and dancing blurred the distinctions between consumption and production; spectacle and performance; the local and the global' (p. 84). Instead he proposes a new set of distinctions and conceptual categories in the study of music and youth culture. Laughey draws on extensive qualitative and quantitative interview data, as well as participant observation, drawn from research with young people in Bolton, Salford and Manchester. From this data, he constructs a typology of youth-music interaction based on the interaction of two continuums. One is an 'involvement continuum' that shows how individual and collective media use runs from 'intensive' to 'casual' consumption (p. 131). The other is an 'accessibility continuum' that shows how 'public music practices' run on a continuum from 'exclusiveness' to 'inclusiveness' (p. 170). The resulting model, drawn from the two continuums, typologizes young people as

'drifters', 'surfers', 'exchangers' and 'clubbers'. These categories are contextual and fluid – young people can be situated in different categories in different contexts.

Music and Youth Culture is a highly ambitious and innovative book that deserves to be read and discussed by anyone involved in research on youth and music. However, Laughey tends to be unfairly reluctant to draw on the insights that recent research on youth and music can provide. Although the model he offers is certainly ingenious and complex, he rejects too much. In particular, his rejection of 'resistance' as a paradigm leaves a vacuum where a consideration of power and the political should be. In his emphasis on the local, he also ignores the considerable globally extensive 'scenic infrastructure' that young people and music cultures have developed over the last few decades.

Music and Youth Culture has also been insufficiently edited in the transition from Laughey's PhD thesis to book. The literature review chapters can be turgid and long winded and they extend for nearly half the book. Indeed, the extensive theoretical exegeses tend to overshadow the richness of the book's original research. It is pity then that, in his drawing on the work of the American interactionists, Laughey did not also draw inspiration from their exemplary readability.

Geoff Dench, Kate Gavron and Michael Young

The New East End

London: Profile Books, 2006, £15.99 pbk (ISBN: 1 86197 928 2), 274 pp.

■ Reviewed by Robert Moore, *University of Liverpool*

The New East End is an incoherent book. The incoherence arises from two sources; firstly the research was undertaken over a 10-year period (this reader was surprised that many events associated with this 10-year period were not reflected upon in the book). Secondly, as the authors acknowledge, there was a problem in following up *Family and Kinship in East London* as much of the original monograph is an account of the particularity and uniqueness of Bethnal Green and may in part be an epitaph for a way of life that was disappearing. The authors compensated for this by shifting their focus to other factors unique to this area: that is, the area's long history as the entry-point to the UK for immigrants.

The New East End is also prone to conceptual confusions. In particular, the numerous references to 'new' classes in the area – for example, the middle class, the ruling class, the middle or ruling class, the new political elite, the urban elite, the service class – were rather important to the analysis and were left unexamined. The authors suggest that these groups drive change at the national level and hold the balance of power locally. Other 'new' classes including 'Left wing thinkers', white liberals, 'the urban left' and 'the white urban left' are also included in the analysis, but their relationship to the other 'new' classes listed above is not specified. At the same time, supporting evidence was needed for the remarkable assertion made in the book that the 'white urban left' were important in the formation of New Labour.