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BOARDERS, PUNKS AND RAVERS:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF COMMERCIALISED REBELLION

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Abstract

This thesis traces the history of what I call the 'commercialisation of rebellion'. It contextualises commercialised rebellion in the economic, social and political changes of the last 30 years. The most significant economic change in the last three decades has been the shift away from Fordism, a rigid system of mass consumption based on mass production, to a flexible post-Fordist system. Post-Fordism accelerated the development of niche markets and specialised consumption and helped nurture a new Zeitgeist, or social mood, based on individualistic ways of thinking and behaving. The styles, music and activities of grunge youth, punks, ravers and snowboarders all followed these economic and social changes. The Zeitgeist also ushered new political values, attitudes and aspirations, expressed, in the 1960s, by the counterculture, in the 1970s, by punk, and since the late 1980s, by grunge and rave.

The broad social appeal of these youth styles instantly attracted the attention of big business which recognised their commercial potential. The political response, however, was seemingly contradictory. On the one hand, the do-it-yourself philosophies of punk appealed to the newly emerging New Right's social agenda; on the other hand, the New Right was less enamoured with the social tastes and economic independence of the counterculture, punk, grunge and rave. Thus, despite commercial tolerance, governments continue to repress youth groups who express different views to the New Right's social vision. This repression takes many forms: legislation, police surveillance and brutality, and law suits.

Change is a process of resistance, negotiation, opportunism, compromise and adaptation. Hence, this thesis focuses on the reactions of Western youth to the ransacking and looting of their culture by big business and the dilemmas that economic, social and political change poses for youth's vision of the future. Snowboarders reflect these dilemmas perhaps better than any other youth group. Forged by the counterculture, punk and grunge, and co-opted by big business and traditional establishment sporting bodies such as the IOC, snowboarding is, in many respects, the archetypal face of twentieth century youth.
Acknowledgements

Overwhelming gratitude to Doug Booth for encouraging me to start this guiding me funding me correcting me making sure everything was up to scratch planning my future... Thanks Doug, I really appreciate your efforts, but you know, after writing about life for so long I think I might go out and live it...

Also thanks to John Loy for going over my argument and the final draft. Sorry for all the times I gave you such short notice!

Thanks to my folks for bringing me up, to Margaret for putting me up, to my friends for putting up with me. Excellent! Lets go!
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Chapter One

Never Mind the Bollocks, the Sex Pistols are Back

From their first gig in November 1975, the Sex Pistols presented themselves as an alternative, as an anathema, to what they denounced as the boring and staid popular worlds of music and fashion. The group’s primary objective was to challenge and confront convention and social hierarchy, and to ridicule what they condemned as the corrupt conformist nature of society and culture.¹ News of their chaotic live performances and incendiary fashion and attitudes diffused to the public through an ever attentive and hysterical press, and quickly gained the Sex Pistols notoriety. Shocking and outraging polite society with their first single, Anarchy in the UK (‘I am the antichrist, I am an anarchist’), EMI, their first record company, dropped the band after three months. The group immediately signed with A&M and recorded their next single, God Save the Queen (‘and her fascist regime’). A&M delisted the Sex Pistols within the week and refused to release the single. Two years of infamy followed, including arrests for indecency and public disorder, and bans from venues throughout UK and Europe. In early 1978 the Sex Pistols disbanded. Never were the cultivated classes and media so relieved and glad to see the departure of a band.

Nearly two decades later, in June 1996, the Sex Pistols announced a reformation. Pushing 40, the original line up, excluding Sid Vicious, who had died from a drug overdose while on bail, having been charged with murdering his girlfriend, and including Glen Matlock, who the original band had once sacked, embarked on a world tour and released a live album, Filthy Lucre. The Sex Pistols timed their reunion well.

Contemporary society displays a pronounced fascination for non-conformity and rebelliousness in music, fashion and sport. But, unlike the last period of youth rebellion in the 1970s, contemporary rebellion, and its alternative culture, has been assimilated into the mainstream. Today, ordinary people wear tattoos and rings through their noses, eyebrows and belly buttons, dye their hair bright day glo colours, and wear skateboard, snowboard, grunge and punk clothes; the largest commercial radio stations and free-to-air television blare forth grunge, punk and rave music; advertising agencies promote alternative music, fashion and sport; and ordinary youth head for the ski slopes, once the preserve of the upper classes, with boards tucked under their arms. Equally importantly, advertising agencies encourage people to view themselves as individuals; and Western governments promote identical individualistic sentiments. In the early 1970s the mainstream frowned upon non-conformists; twenty years later conformity is an anachronism.

Nothing better symbolises these changes than the Sex Pistols. In a sense, they invented contemporary non-conformity. By preserving and maintaining the philosophies of individualism and non-conformity developed by the adherents of the counterculture in the 1960s, the Sex Pistols changed the Western world, re-revolutionising dissatisfied youth. They popularised the idea that people should celebrate non-conformity, that people should strive to be different and not slavishly follow fashion - they advocated the celebration of difference. They were responsible for punk rock as well as the beginnings of the contemporary independent ‘alternative’ music scene. None of this was lost on EMI which, no doubt regretting its 1976 decision, re-signed the Sex Pistols for a vast sum of money. By the 1990s non-conformity had become the quickest accepted route to a retirement pension!
In the intervening decades, the world which the Sex Pistols had once sneered at, a world they had condemned as rigid, sheep-like, uncomfortable with difference, dull, bland and boring, underwent something of a transition. The world’s most socially unacceptable band of the 1970s is today part of an everyday life that celebrates cultural diversity and difference. Or does it? Are alternative subcultures and movements accepted with open arms and free to live and express themselves as they see fit without fear of harassment?

Arguments and Approach

This thesis sets out to answer this question by describing the relationships between those who in Western, English speaking societies, have traditionally produced and reproduced mainstream cultural forms and those who, since the Second World War, have produced and reproduced alternative cultural forms, including sport. In the first instance, in chapter two, these relationships are analysed in the context of the development of capitalism since the Second World War, and in particular, the development of niche markets and the change from Fordism to post-Fordism. In chapter three I analyse the response of alternative groups to commercial co-optation and in particular the dilemmas that commercialised rebellion poses for disciples and members. Formerly constructing themselves as ‘outsiders’, disgusted with the philosophy and lifestyle of the mainstream fashion, music and sporting worlds, they now find themselves as trendy ‘insiders’. Their styles and activities have been hijacked by post-Fordist big business as a means of making money, and by individuals who care nothing about their philosophies, but only about what is ‘in’ this season. The styles, politics and philosophies of these groups have become incorporated, and through this process, lost
any notion of an opposition to, or an alternative to, the mainstream. For example, where anarchism was once a viable political outlook and way of life for many alternative youth, it has now become little more than a market cliché to describe rebellious youth. Furthermore, these groups view themselves as rebellious because they try to exist independently of society, yet it is their very ‘separateness’, and uniqueness, that appeals to the market. Chapter three explores how different groups, mainly snowboarders and punks, have responded to this commercial co-optation.

The appropriation of the symbols of rebellion, minus their philosophies, highlights an important aspect of contemporary Western society. Karl Marx complained that anything becomes morally permissible if it is economically profitable. Likewise, it seems that as formerly alternative and ostracised subcultures and lifestyles gradually merge with the mainstream, the only universal social taboo remains living outside of the market. Indeed, Marshall Berman believes that ‘under the pressure of the market, modern men and women are forced to grow in order to survive. But their growth is channelled and twisted into narrow, strictly marketable, directions’. Markets structure and determine life: rebellion is only sanctioned in the commercial sphere - what is actually subversive is trying to live life separate from the competitive commercial world. The reactions of governments toward rebellious groups show that those who try to survive outside the market are either incorporated through commodification, or they are suppressed and forced to rely on the market. Often the two processes occur

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2 Anarchism is a political and philosophical stance that works towards the abolishment of government and other institutions in favour of individuals governing themselves in a co-operative milieu. It is popular especially amongst punks.


simultaneously. Chapter four will detail the status of rebellious politics and philosophies, and its interactions with New Right governments.

In the final chapter, I attempt to bring all this together in a tentative theoretical explanation of the links between youth culture, New Right politics and the economy.

Methods

My framework derives from post-Fordist theory and a periodisation of post-war society proposed by Jeffrey Alexander. Superimposed over this is a socio-cultural history of punk, rave and snowboarding, three exemplars of youth culture. Here I set out to capture the flavour, colour, hopes, dreams, boils and scars of these youth and their activities. This thesis is as much an argument for, and justification of, a way of life as it is a mere ‘exploration’ of alternative youth and their relation to the mainstream. Many of the styles, activities and politics contained herein I follow and respect. It is also an attack on those styles, activities and politics that, for reasons apparent within, I find problems. In many respects this thesis reflects my life and attitudes. However, I have chosen to let others tell the story, where possible with their own words, which are much more eloquent than mine. My sources come from both ‘within’ the activity or subculture, and from the general media. They include broadsheet newspapers, glossy magazines, small circulation zines, interviews, press releases, and internet home pages, newsgroups and news lists. I cannot stress how critical the internet was in this research. The internet draws a large number of diverse people with wide-ranging opinions. It consists of dozens of sites, newsgroups and email lists which provide perfect tools for the social historian interested in contemporary Western culture.

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Two interrelated problems stand out. What is, or who precisely constitutes, the mainstream? Conversely, what is, or who are the ‘alternative’? Any one with a slightest interest in contemporary culture can identify examples of alternative practices and thoughts, yet just as it is difficult to define the ‘normal’, it is equally hard to define what makes up ‘alternativeness’. One clue comes from punk, whose whole identity is formed around the rejection of the mainstream and the mainstream’s rejection of them. The worst insult that one can bestow upon punks is to accuse them of ‘selling out’, of ‘going mainstream’. Here, then, ‘alternativeness’ resides in the rejection of society. However, this raises more issues. Which parts of society do punks reject? Does the rejection of a one part of society give some punks ‘cred’ over others? For example, in rejecting society some punks refuse to buy from mainstream record or clothing stores. To them ‘selling out’ means conforming to popular senses of fashion. Another set of punks argue that such ‘resistance’ misses the point. The real issues lie in the political domain and concerns for human, animal and environmental rights. But again punks differ in their responses. Some become vegans and refuse to consume anything harmful to the environment or that produced by companies with poor labour practices. Some reject commercialism and give up their property for itinerant lifestyles, on the street or hitchhiking around the country. Others are active in political projects such as feeding and sheltering the hungry and homeless, fighting racism, boycotting and protesting ‘bad’ businesses, or documenting civil, animal and/or environmental rights abuses. Some try to work for change within existing institutions, others are anarchists and claim that ‘the system’ is the basis of inequality. Some punks take a puritanical ‘hard line’ when it comes to their lifestyle; they reject drugs, alcohol and sex as corrupting influences and ‘opiates of the masses’. Others embrace drugs, alcohol and sex as sources
of freedom. Not surprisingly then, even defining alternative groups such as punk is
difficult. The majority of punks consist, in traditional terms, of white, middle class,
heterosexual males. However, punk also attracts every kind of socially and culturally
defined minority. Punk is seen as a movement where minorities are celebrated for their
difference. These minorities are more vocal and active than many white, middle class
male punks, and enjoy the support of a large number of punks. Therefore they have a
strong influence over punk philosophy and politics. Thus defining punk in traditional
class, ethnic and gender based terms is very tricky and loses sight of the diversity of
punk. However, although constantly changing and in turmoil, punk, like most
alternative youth, do share some common ground often. I have tried to reflect alternative
youth’s diversity while teasing out the general themes that do exist in thought and
behaviour. Readers should be aware of the seemingly contradictory nature of finding
such homogeneity in diversity.

Here, I use the words ‘alternative’ and ‘underground’ interchangeably to reflect
a state of mind, or a conscious positioning in society, rather than any single fixed
definitive characteristic. In short, alternative is a ‘feeling’. Alternative depends on the
individual and the context. For example, those raised in a religious environment
consider blasphemy as rebellious, yet there are those who wouldn’t think twice about
spitting on a crucifix. Alternative is a relative term. It is relative to, and also dependent
on, how one views the mainstream, whether one goes snowboarding as opposed to
skiing, or listens to punk bands as opposed to the Spice Girls, or gets their tongue
pierced as opposed to their ear, or raves as opposed to dancing in a bar, or takes illegal
drugs as opposed to drinking beer, or eats vegetarian as opposed to eating meat and
three vegetables, or protests against McDonalds as opposed to eating there, or chains
themselves to trees as opposed to buying furniture made from native forest wood, or fights for workers’ rights as opposed to ‘managing’ workers. Thus ‘alternative’ is a position statement - positioning the individual in relation to others, usually separate from the mainstream. Obviously this can easily become an elitist position. If someone takes the same positioning as you, the exclusivity and individuality of your positioning is diminished. Furthermore, just as selling out is relative, individuals’ behaviour is not black and white. Alternative youth constantly shift in and out of the ideological ‘pure’ zone, some live in a constant state of contradiction. Therefore, such positions are not fixed.

It should be noted that with so many different shades and shapes of youth culture, it is easy to confuse different groups’ motives. The public, especially those not familiar with youth culture, often conflate all difference with ‘nastiness’. I think, in general, people fear difference. What amazes me in these circumstances is that someone, who by merely carrying a skateboard, can be instantly suspected of all kinds of heinous acts, while football teams, typically held up as paragons of virtue, can get away with public drunkenness, vandalism and gang rape. Many outsiders also confuse punks with skinheads and their right wing philosophies. In this thesis, alternative is a relative social position that views mainstream society as a bastion of inequality and discrimination; where right wing groups seek to enforce hierarchies, the alternative seeks abolition.

Some may complain that my thesis has no regard for regional or cultural differences. The focus of my thesis is not so much in culturally different expressions of an alternative youth culture or activity, but the (often debated) unifying themes of these

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youth in relation to outsiders. Furthermore I would argue that this is the way the world is becoming. Like the alternative youth I write about, my focus is less national, more international. The world, to these youth, is seen as less a collection of nations and more a collection of cultures. Our identities no longer reside in nationality but in consumption and recreational practices.

Indeed, in Western consumer society, individuals now have the power of self-definition. As little as sixty years ago people were labelled according to their religion, occupation, or address. Today, identity depends more on how one consumes - the sort of clothes someone wears, their leisure activities, their taste in music. Not surprisingly then identities can change at will. Paul Little, editor of the Listener, makes this point well:

I don’t know where I belong anymore. I seem to have become a man outside the market, adrift in a Bermuda triangle of demographics. Some nights I’m an elitist Anglophile TV1 habitué; the next I’m boring the kids with my enthusiasm for that new Prodigy video ... The wonder of free-to-air TV - or radio for that matter - is that we can market hop. You can be a member of the Concert FM cognoscenti one day; or a listener to the ‘alternative’ strains of 96.1 the next ... All of which is good news indeed because it confirms that humans in the age of electronic media remain perverse and cussed creatures who refuse to fit into prescribed categories.  

Does this make contemporary research an impossible task? Not at all. Despite Little’s claims of flexible identity, in reality people have multiple identities. Mostly one’s identity depends on who they are with and what they are doing, or trying to achieve, at the time. ‘Snowboarders’ write to snowboarding magazines; punks argue the merits of punk bands; ravers dance at raves. It is possible to do all three things in the space of an hour.

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Chapter Two

Niche Markets: From Alternative to Mainstream

Although Henry Ford introduced his new system of manufacturing to his automobile factory after the First World War, it wasn’t until after the Second World War that Western economies, which had been formerly based on heavy industrial manufacturing, increasingly adopted these ‘Fordist’ manufacturing techniques which were better suited to ‘consumer’, or late, capitalism. Fordism was a system of standardised mass production based on mass consumption. Andy Warhol once described Fordist mass consumption using Coca-Cola as an example. Under a system of mass consumption,

the richest consumers buy essentially the same thing as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you can know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke too. A Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good.

Marketers in the early Fordist period viewed the Western world as one single, mass, market. Manufacturers made products with universal appeal. For example, ‘Coca-Cola and the Model T Ford were conceived as the best possible answers to market needs in their respective product categories ... Coke was ... perfect for everyone. There was no need to devote special attention to one group or another’. Similarly, Henry Ford explicitly conceived of the Model T as the ‘universal car ... There was no reason, in Ford’s view, for anyone to buy another model’. Thus early Fordist marketing was characterised by the development, promotion and exploitation of mass markets

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dominated by national brands. In his history of marketing, Richard Tedlow argues that after this universal phase, marketers began to target specific sectors of society in what amounted to a process of market segmentation. Initially market segmentation was based on economies of scale but characterised by segmentation according to demographics, such as age and gender, and psychographics, that took into account the different cultural and psychological elements of individuals’ lifestyles. Slowly, the mass market began to split into smaller and smaller niche markets.

Coinciding with, and boosting, this process was the emergence of a conspicuous youth market in the 1960s. Once described as a ‘stage’ between adolescence and full-time work, youth is a recent phenomenon. Prior to the Second World War most people over 16 years were considered adults or full time workers. As a school girl in the 1950s, one New Zealand woman eagerly anticipated becoming a teenager: ‘teenager was a new thing, a postwar thing ... Teenager meant fun ... My parents didn’t have a teenage experience ... Kids were at school as children then out to work as adults. There was no in-between’. Even in the 1950s, mainstream society still judged youth by adult standards:

teenage activity was organized and supervised by adults through school sports, dances, and the like; pop music was created, manufactured, and distributed according to formulas and tastes established by adults ... Defiance of adult authority existed, but it was expressed largely through overt disdain for academic achievement ... and through experiments with adult hedonistic prerogatives - getting drunk, driving fast, smoking, petting.

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4 Tedlow, New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America, pp. 5-8.
6 Flacks, Youth and Social Change, p. 10.
8 Flacks, Youth and Social Change, p. 51.
After the Second World War youth gained greater freedoms. By the 1960s parents placed considerably ‘greater trust in the peer group’ and ‘require[d] less adult supervision for both their sons and daughters’.\(^9\) With increasing liberalisation of attitudes, combined with post-war prosperity and the development of mass higher education, youth emerged as a social category in their own right.\(^{10}\) With the post-war ‘baby boom’ youth occupied an increasingly larger segment of the population. Combined with larger amounts of free time and disposable income, youth also became an important market segment.

The 1960s also saw the rise of political activism and the emergence of a social conscience amongst some youth. These youth provoked what many thought was a fundamental split in Western society. The ‘Generation Gap’ had arrived. Instead of following adult prerogatives and mainstream culture like their predecessors, this new generation of youth developed their own political and cultural forms:

the revival of student radicalism and bohemianism, together with an apparent increase in various kinds of sexual experimentation, seemed, in fact, to reverse the trend of the previous 50 years and to restore something of the social and political independence of youth that had been a feature of the nineteenth century.\(^{11}\)

The various subcultures that developed in the post-war years played vital roles in forging new commodities. Clarke et al describe this process well with respect to the late 1960s:

the revolutions in ‘lifestyle’ were a pure, simple, raging, commercial success. In clothes, and styles, the counter-culture explored, in its small scale ‘artisan’ and vanguard capitalist forms of production and distribution, shifts in taste which the mass consumption chain-stores were too cumbersome, inflexible and over-

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\(^{10}\) As higher education played an important part in constructing youth as a social role, ‘youth’ was initially a middle class phenomenon that spread through society to include the working and lower classes.

\(^{11}\) Gillis, *Youth and History*, p. 186.
capitalised to exploit. When the trends settled down, the big commercial battalions moved in and mopped up.\(^\text{12}\)

Youth provided capitalism with a source of continually changing styles. Prompted by youth’s new spirit of independence, marketers started to view the Western world less as an amorphous mass, and more of a collection of individuals with different consumer needs and desires. Instead of being split into traditional religious (for example, Protestant or Catholic) or geographic (for example, rural or urban) groups, ‘consumption communities’ became the foundation of Fordist society.

Invisible new communities were created and preserved by how and what [people] consumed. Nearly all objects from the hats and suits and shoes [people] wore to the food they ate became symbols and instruments of novel communities. Now [people] were affiliated less by what they believed than by what they consumed.\(^\text{13}\)

Marketers invested commodities with meaning according to what segment of the population they tried to reach and, consequently, as Richard Flacks notes, ‘increasingly, self-worth and the worth in the eyes of others [became] organized [around] one’s style of life and one’s consumption patterns as ... one’s occupational status’.\(^\text{14}\)

The youth-led social revolutions of the 1960s meant that the ‘world of the universal cola - the one brand perfect for anyone, anytime, anywhere\(^\text{15}\) had evaporated. With the development of market segmentation came diversification in products in order to appeal to different types of people and their different lifestyles. For example, using Coca-Cola again, in the 1930s it was only available at the soda fountain or in the six and a half ounce bottle. By the mid 1980s North American consumers could purchase Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola Classic, Diet Coke, Caffeine Free Coke, Caffeine Free Diet Coke and

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\(^{14}\) Flacks, *Youth and Social Change*, p. 22.

\(^{15}\) Tedlow, *New and Improved*, p. 23.
Cherry Coke, not to mention all the other Coca-Cola ‘flavours’ such as Fanta, Sprite and Mello Yello, all of which came in a huge range of sizes, in cans and bottles.16

Under Fordism markets had to be large enough to preserve economics of scale, yet the market continued to diminish into smaller and smaller niches. Ultimately, this contributed to the end of Fordism which proved overly rigid and unwieldy. The economic crisis of 1973, sparked in a large part by the Arab oil embargo, prompted a reconfiguration of Fordism and the emergence of a highly flexible post-Fordist system. The system that once emphasised high volume, standardised mass production changed to one based on ‘rapid and often highly specialized responses, and adaptability of skills to special purposes’.17 ‘Economies of scope’ superseded ‘economies of scale’,18 and capitalist production began to rapidly respond to, and take full advantage of, quick changing fashions. Increasingly, culture and cultural activity, especially leisure and recreation, became ‘cultural industries, that is, commodities sold in the market to individual consumers who, in turn, increasingly identify cultural gratification with consumption’.19 Post-Fordism coped with rapidly and continually changing lifestyles and fashions. Additionally, it capitalised upon them no matter how short term or limited their influence.

Market segmentation reached its apogee under post-Fordism. Whereas Fordism was based on mass consumption, post-Fordism utilised not only ‘specialized consumption’20 but competitively individualised consumption.21 The sports domain,
especially sports fashion, provides a good example of such competitive individuality. Buying clothes or shoes became, 'a compulsive pursuit based entirely around the cult of newness ... The whole process of buying and consuming sports fashion has become a competitive act in itself, a world where what's important is to be seen as the first to embrace and reject a look'. The end result of post-Fordist niche marketing is, firstly, that individuals now distinguish and differentiate themselves by different arrangements of commodities, and secondly, a social mood that celebrates individuality based on consumption choices. Under post-Fordism a new identity is only the next shop away.

The Popularity of the Ostracised: Alternative Becomes the Mainstream

_I never really thought that being obnoxious would get me to where I am right now._

Billie Joe Armstrong, lead singer of US punk band Green Day

In the 1980s, consumerism emphasised the pursuit of distinction through symbols of the elite. This was the decade of the Yuppie. They embodied a form of competitive individualised consumption through their conspicuous consumption of cell phones, expensive European cars, quality wines and overseas ski holidays. But, in the late 1980s, consumerism became based on non-conformity instead of these conformist symbols of the elite. Paradoxically, this non-conformity conformed to the laws of the competitive market. Under post-Fordism the nature of the niche market had changed; the niche market was no longer simply based on different or idiosyncratic lifestyles and

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22 Cliff Jones, 'This sporting life', _The Face_, August 1995, p. 56.
consumption - it also accommodated previously threatening alternative and non-conformist styles and behaviours. The origins of this non-conformity derived from an underground music and fashion subculture called grunge.

Grunge emerged around 1987, at the time of the stock market crash. It started as a musical style, a combination of punk and heavy metal musical styles, utilising amplified and distorted guitar sounds from which grunge got its name in the music press. Grunge bands, such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden and Mudhoney were also part of the independent, or, more colloquially, the ‘indie’ music scene. ‘Indie’ bands released records through labels and distribution networks independent of the major corporate music businesses. The independent music network grew in the late 1970s with punk and the ‘do-it-yourself’ philosophies. Punk’s do-it-yourself philosophies and methods are grounded in a rejection of mass-produced culture. They believe that personal forms of culture involving individual creativity are far superior to those handed by big business to sheep-like consumers. Do-it-yourself is also a form of political protest. By doing things for themselves, punk reject the greed of the business world in preference for smaller, co-operative businesses that renounce excessive profits and hyper competitive business practices. Do-it-yourself also means that artists do not have their artistic visions compromised by traditional business people whose primary concern is to make their ‘products’ attractive to the maximum number of consumers. It also means that punk bands, irrespective of their talents, can distribute their music to an audience. Post-Fordist small businesses also assisted the independent music scene. Some indie labels, such as SST, maintained distinctly punk anti-big business philosophies. SST T-shirts declared that ‘corporate rock sucks’. Of course, in reality,
independent networks often provided the only avenue for punk and grunge bands to get air time and establish themselves.

In 1991, against all expectations, sales of the first single, 'Smells Like Teen Spirit', from Nirvana's new album skyrocketed to the top of the charts. The media and businesses involved in the production of youth styles realised grunge's potential and, accordingly boosted, incorporated and mercilessly exploited it for commercial gain. Paradoxically, grunge's status as a new youth subculture meant that it attracted the very industry it despised. Grunge became commodified and mediated: 'alternative' and 'independent' captured the social mood. Grunge music videos played constantly on MTV and led to the dissemination of non-conformist styles among the public. Instead of constructing lifestyles around symbols of the elite, individuals started to appropriate aspects from ostracised sectors of society. Body piercing and tattooing boomed in the early 1990s. Grunge musicians, such as the hugely popular Nirvana, acknowledged punk as the source of their inspiration and openly professed their love for punk rock. Thus record, and fashion, companies took a new look at punk, abandoned not long after its inception in the mid 1970s. Grunge fashion exploded, as did the revived punk fashion and music. Formerly socially unacceptable concepts became commodities and fashion labels. Examples include Anarchy and Dirty Dog sunglasses and Psycho, Insanity, and Counterculture clothing labels.\textsuperscript{25} Items formerly associated with socially unacceptable attitudes and behaviours now made fashion statements in the marketplace. The corporate world managed to give such individualistic symbols an Orwellian twist. For example, Nike employees showed their allegiance to their company by wearing tattoos depicting the Nike swoosh. The alternative became mainstream.

\textsuperscript{25} New Zealand MP Tau Henare's favourite brand of sunglasses are Dirty Dog!
As well as being given a boost by grunge, this new ‘alternative’ mood helped popularise punk. Following the top five success of Green Day’s album ‘Dookie’ in 1994, a US band, the Offspring, released ‘Smash’, the first album on an independent label (Epitaph) to sell over a million copies. Punk was commercial, and very hot property: ‘what was once the province of mosh pits and foul-smelling fanzines’, one observer at the time commented, ‘now jostles for rotation with Whitney and Mariah’.26

In the mid-1970s, punk had shocked and outraged the general public. One incident, in particular, ‘proved’ punk’s depravity. In 1976, on British television during ‘family viewing time’, members of the Sex Pistols called journalist Bill Grundy a ‘dirty fucker’ and a ‘fucking rotter’. The shock of such words supposedly drove one truck driver to kick in his television! Ten years later punks still concerned society’s moral watch dogs. In 1986, California governor George Deukmejian’s Gang Task Force designated punks as part of a ‘special category’ of gangs that ‘desecrated graveyards, worshipped Satan, and committed various other evil deeds’.27 Among the American public, punks were little more than ‘thugs, junkies, racists, and morons with weird hairstyles’.28 To be a punk meant to live outside the mainstream. Nonetheless, punks are a diverse group with many different and conflicting cultural and political aims. The only unifying tenet is an opposition to the norm; punks exhibit an ‘extreme distrust’ of the world into which they were born and an ‘intense desire to reject it before it rejects them’.29

This is not to say that the big fashion houses and large record companies did not flirt with early punk. Both carefully watch alternative youth for styles ripe for potential

28 Zero, ‘Imagine that’.
29 Charles Young, ‘Skank or die’, Playboy, June 1984, p. 190.
exploitation. Record companies constantly search for new sounds or images that can ‘ignite’ the market and entice consumers into record shops: ‘the whole industry can explode if a new sound suddenly arrives on the scene that starts driving sales’.30 Among mainstream record companies, punk was the potential ‘next big thing’. Punk, however, split the music industry with some, radio stations for example, determined to smash it. There was also ‘a more general social and state harassment involving exceptional media hostility and many acts of censorship and banning’.31 Record companies had more commercial success with ‘new wave’ bands, such as Devo and the Police, who, although inspired by punk, were less extreme in their fashions, music and attitudes. ‘Some musicians’, writes Dave Laing, ‘were encouraged to dissociate themselves from “punk” and re-classify their work as “new wave”, thereby hoping to evade the stigma and hoping to get airplay and live performance spaces’.32 Similarly, although celebrated in the parasitic world of high fashion, mainstream fashion designers watered down punk style for popular consumption.

Yet, despite its unacceptability, punk gradually took on an air, albeit partial and incomplete, of the familiar and commonplace. Through repetition and exposure, punk’s power to shock receded. Instead of shock and outrage, the mainstream received punk with begrudging tolerance. Furthermore, as Dick Hebdige explains, the media set about minimising punk as a threat to social and moral order. Parts of the media, such as some women’s magazines, tried to restore punks to the family! They reassured the public that ‘boys in lipstick are “just kids dressing up”’, and that ‘girls in rubber dresses are

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"daughters just like yours".33 Through these processes of assimilation and normalisation, punks simultaneously became 'dangerous aliens and boisterous kids, wild animals and wayward pets'.34 Slowly, punk became a 'toothless postcard image':

it was thought that, after punk, short of amputating limbs there was very little you could do to excite, shock or in anyway miff in the world of fashion. In some ways this has seen to be the case. A cycle of outrage and acceptance is now so ingrained into the sludge of youth culture that it's treated as entertainment not news. Indeed any sartorial innovation out on the fringes is now copied and mass-marketed so quickly that those with a taste for a bit of flair and individuality are ... left crying in despair into their Polo Sport and old-school Adidas sneakers.35

By the 1990s, although punks still retained an ambience of unacceptability, they were less able to shock or outrage.

Hence in the 1990s, punk's 'toothless postcard image' was ripe for appropriation by big business and the commercial sphere that celebrates rebellious individuality. Punk became popular in the same way that a so-called 'authentic black culture' like 'gangsta' rap, which celebrates shoot outs, drug dealing, abuse of women, and 'street life', appealed to white suburban youth.36 The music and fashion of both subcultures became acceptable symbols of youthful individuality and non-conformity. As punks became more offensive and individualistic, so their popularity grew.

Similarly in the 1990s, an underground dance form, rave, and an accompanying drug culture surfaced. Although unauthorised raves and drug culture remain mostly illegal, big business will assimilate any stylistic advancements mainstream opinion and the law will accommodate. As the chairman of EMI, Sir John Read, argued when his company signed the Sex Pistols in 1976, 'the recording industry has signed many pop groups, initially controversial, who have in the fullness of time become wholly

acceptable and contributed greatly to the development of modern music. Big business is moving in on the rave scene to exploit its popularity. As independent dance artists, such as the Chemical Brothers and the Prodigy, complete with anti-establishment lyrics and record cover art, moved up the charts, record companies started subsidiary dance labels run by popular DJs. In addition, the commercial sphere has adopted, if not drugs themselves (due to their illegality), then all other facets of the drug experience ranging from drug-inspired psychedelic imagery, graphics and language to rave events, music and fashion. Rave and drug-inspired symbolism and imagery has begun to invade popular culture. Breweries, initially afraid that they would lose a generation to drugs, were relieved to discover that youth did not consider drugs to be the ultimate in pleasure, but were 'pick 'n' mix' consumers. Youth would 'as readily smoke a spliff or drop some amphetamines on a Friday night as down a designer drink or buy a round at the pub'. Nonetheless, breweries started adding caffeine and guarana (society's legal drugs) to their alcoholic beverages to appeal to the rave generation.

In the sports world, individuality became associated with so-called 'extreme' sports. Extreme sports, such as snowboarding, skateboarding and rock climbing, involve a high level of perceived danger. They also embody the new social mood of rebellious individuality. For example, Timmy Fairfield, a top rock climber, argued that climbing is 'packaged radicalism'. Some extreme sports, especially snowboarding and skateboarding, have been greatly influenced by punk. This influence helped further attract commercial interest. Extreme sports were commodified and rapidly gained popularity. In the 1990s the number of participants in rock climbing, windsurfing, and

37 Quoted in Hebdige, Subculture, p. 160.
snowboarding grew threefold. The number of wakeboarders went from 100,000 in 1991 to 750,000 in 1995. Concomitantly, traditional sports declined in popularity. For instance, sales of tennis and skiing equipment fell by eighteen percent between 1991 and 1997. As *Forbes* magazine smugly described the new trend: ‘play hard, dude, but no uniforms’. Mainstream team sports, in order to keep up, focused on individuals. The NBA, for example, promoted Charles Barkley’s bad attitude and, more recently, it has featured the multi-pierced, tattooed, dyed haired, grunge listening Dennis Rodman. The European Champions League employed the services of Mike Frost, a sky surfer, to appear at stadiums in order to boost football’s youth appeal. As a result of these efforts mainstream sport has,

broken free of its former dreary modesty and is now veering off into the thrilling reality of dynamic, aggressive and unapologetically competitive personae ...

Nike loves Eric Cantona precisely because he is a sophisticated *bad* boy, and no doubt rubbed its hand in glee over the infamous kung fu kick. When Agassi blew the taboo over coloured kit at Wimbledon, Nike rejoiced ... With its built-in aggression and thrills, sport now has far more outlaws and rebel characters than good old rock’n’roll.

Mainstream sports are also busy redefining themselves. For example, the provincial Otago, New Zealand, netball team are now the Otago Rebels. The team’s sponsor? Forsyth Barr - a very conservative form of stockbrokers and investment consultants! In the 1990s, post-Fordist niche marketing produced a culture that celebrates individualistic alternative forms. These forms, complete with their own music, styles and activities, can be called ‘commercialised rebellion’ - a term that describes well the

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45 Jones, ‘This sporting life’, p. 57.
market’s competitive pursuit to appropriate symbols of rebellion.

**Corporate Commercialised Rebellion**

Commercialised rebellion meant that the alternative became *the* mainstream. One youth, interviewed by *Time*, agreed, complaining that, ‘the ability to howl at the moon has been lost. The counterculture has been absorbed by the [mainstream] culture. The blue hair and pierced nipples are trite and no one pays them any mind. Nothing is outside the fold’.46 However, as Kim Thayil, a member of grunge band Soundgarden states, this counterculture has no substance, ‘it’s a really strange counterculture because it’s the counterculture as referenced by MTV. There are no wars, no race riots, no woman’s liberation or gay liberation - its a counterculture based on successfully marketed radio songs and snowboarding’.47 Thayil thus identifies the crux of the paradox of commercialised rebellion. It is a matter, like many things in fashion, of image over substance. Obviously, commercialised rebellion is rich with irony. A prime example of this irony lies in a band called Rage Against the Machine.

In 1992 Rage Against the Machine released their self-titled album which included the hit song, ‘Killing in the name of’. The central refrain of the track states, ‘fuck you, I won’t do what you tell me’. *Rage Against the Machine*, and its successor, *Evil Empire*, released in 1996, both went to the top of the album charts. A statement appeared on an internet homepage devoted to the number one band detailing Rage Against the Machine’s politics:

*Rage Against the Machine is a people’s movement everywhere to try and push back the corporations, the governments, the empowered moralists from controlling our lives. Rage Against the Machine is about enlightening people,*

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and changing minds and attitudes towards a brighter future for all people of the world.\textsuperscript{48}

Paradoxically, although apparently not to Rage Against the Machine, the band signed with Sony Music, a division of Sony Corporation, one of the biggest corporations in the world. In 1996 Sony Music generated an estimated US$6 billion in revenue, with US$650 million in profits.\textsuperscript{49} This signing attracted considerable criticism. One critic wrote,

\textit{it’s an admirable thing that they’re trying to do, to wake up the kids and all that. It’s how they go about it that causes the problem. The simple fact is that they are hypocrites of the worst kind. As one of the band’s biggest critics, [punk band] Suicidal Tendencies’ Mike Muir commented, they rally against corporations while being signed to one themselves ... they are prisoners of their own moral compromises.}\textsuperscript{50}

The aggressive Rage Against the Machine actively promote violent uprising. Their reward was to be appropriated by one of the world’s biggest corporations which distributed their message to the far corners of the world, making millions for both the band and the company. Rage Against the Machine, like other forms of commercialised rebellion, only sing about subversion. While music has the potential to promote change, it is doubtful whether this is true of $30 CDs sold at Kmart! The hegemony of such commercial arrangements is powerful, as one anarchist astutely argued, ‘the magic of capitalism is that it has ways of enticing those who would be canny enough to spark true revolution to work within the system, instead of against it’.\textsuperscript{51}

Commercialised rebellion and its shallow non-conformist message is not limited to youth commodities. It is also reflected in the mainstream corporate marketing sphere.

\textsuperscript{51} Quoted in Aregorn! ‘Re: defending propaganda further... sigh...’, \textit{Anarchy List} (anarchy-list@cwi.nl), 22 May 1997.
Here, commercialised rebellion reflects the anti-rules, pro-impulse, and non-conformist notions that alternative youth, such as punk, take as guiding philosophies. In fact, the closest thing punk has to a unifying belief is based around freedom of the individual, i.e. promoting the belief that people should do what they want to do and not what society expects. Many corporate slogans reflect these sentiments. The classic being Nike’s ‘Just Do It’. Alongside Nike is Pepsi-Cola with its ad campaign of 1996 instructing television viewers to ‘write your own script’. At the same time Diet Coke proffered calorie counters to ‘do what you want to do’, while Cherry Coke insisted that individuals should ‘do something different’. Burger King argued that ‘sometimes, you gotta break the rules’; Don Q rum asserted that ‘when you have a passion for living, nothing is merely accepted. Nothing is taboo ... Break all the rules’. Shoe company Easy Spirit stated that their shoes ‘conforms to your foot so you don’t have to conform to anything’ and Drum tobacco reasoned that smokers should ‘drum your own rhythm’. It seems that as well as appropriating alternative music and fashion, the mainstream world has also taken over their subversive philosophy. However, many punks advocate a ‘do-it-yourself’ philosophy, in a co-operative community milieu. Hence these punks do not rely on others to provide life. To them, mass cultural forms, even those produced for niche markets, are poor substitutes for individual creativity. Buying cultural forms produced by big business is a form of conformity; some even see it as slavery to popular fashions and the popular way of doing things. To some do-it-yourself is also a political rejection of a market that promotes and relies on greed and social hierarchies. Therefore commercialised rebellion is a paradox. It celebrates non-conformity yet it is based on fashion - a very big and influential mechanism for producing conformity. Moreover, this
non-conformity and rebellion is based on the highly structured market. Chapter three examines the response of alternative youth to commercialised rebellion in more detail.
Chapter Three

Snowboarding and Punk:

The Alternative Responds to Commercial Co-optation

Of all the ‘extreme’ sports, snowboarding has made what seems to be the most spectacular, and sudden, entrance into the public eye and popularity. The snowboard industry predicts that by the year 2005, half of all ski field patrons will be snowboarders.¹ Already 45 percent of first time visitors to ski fields in the US are snowboarders.² Yet, just fifteen years ago most ski fields banned snowboards.

Snowboarding’s growth resonated with the current social mood of competitive individualism and the rise of commercialised rebellion, discussed in the previous chapter. But many participants in extreme sports have not welcomed commercial popularity. The majority of snowboarders, like participants in related activities, such as tow-in surfing and skateboarding, and in music-based subcultures, such as punk, reject widespread commercial co-optation. The basis of this rejection resides in an artistic philosophy that values freedom and self-expression, but which, ironically, is responsible for increasing the popularity of snowboarding. Initially, however, this philosophy led to managers banning snowboarding from the ski fields.

This general ban came about for two main reasons. In the late 1960s and early 1970s snowboarders symbolised ‘snow surfers’. Like soul surfers who chased waves, ‘snow surfers’ embodied the counterculture and became seen by the public as misfits, subversive nomads, ‘rotten, long haired, unwashed drug addicts’³ and disciples of

obscure Eastern religions. Secondly, negative images of skateboarding also contributed to the general dislike of snowboarding. As journalist Charles Gant explains, 'America views skaters as social pariahs. Castigated as profane, degenerate, dangerous and criminal, skaters are the most pervasive manifestation of the nation’s outlaw culture'. Fearful of such unsavoury characters ranging over middle class, family ski resorts, ski field managers banned snowboarders.

The first major field to open its doors to snowboarders was Stratton Mountain (Vermont) in 1983. Other fields quickly followed. By the end of the decade the majority of ski fields allowed snowboarders. But there was an ulterior motive. Skiing had reached a growth plateau and snowboarding offered ski fields a new youth market and ongoing economic prosperity. Ski magazine summed up the importance of snowboarding when it described it as one of the 100 greatest things that had ever happened to skiing: 'it attracted a whole new generation of young riders to the ski resorts, giving the ski world a much needed shot in the arm'.

'The New Sensation': Exploitation and Opposition

A major turning point in the acceptance of snowboarding was the decision by the governing body of skiing, the Federation Internationale du Ski (FIS), in 1993 to include snowboarding in the 1998 Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan. While the decision was an attempt to control snowboarding, it also played a major role in its 'legitimation'. The editor of Transworld Snowboarding, Billy Miller, argued that, 'there's a lot of money in [the Olympics], enough to change snowboarding's public status from fad to

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5 'The 100 greatest things that ever happened to skiing', Ski, January 1993, p. 84.
legitimate sport forever". In 1997 Park City (Utah), and several other large fields, announced that they would repeal their bans on snowboarding. Previously they had continued to ban snowboarders arguing that customers were ‘overwhelmingly opposed’ to riders, and liked the field because ‘there are no snowboarders’. Today, Park City is the location for the 2002 Winter Olympic snowboarding events.

Ten years after gaining access to the slopes the skiing community recognised snowboarding as ‘the new sensation’. Ste’en Webster, editor of NZ Snowboarder, argues that snowboarding has followed surfing in its development:

Ten or twenty years ago surfers were seen as ratbags, but now you have surfers as models for clothing. You can buy surfing product three thousand miles from the ocean. In the seventies it was underground, now it is accepted ... Snowboarding is mirroring that growth.

However, like surfers, snowboarder’s debated these developments. The International Snowboarding Federation (ISF), the original snowboard governing body formed in 1991 from individual national administrative organisations dating back to 1987, believe that the FIS usurped power to exploit snowboarding for short term profit. The ISF charges the FIS with having no long term interest in snowboarding, and accuses it of stepping in to control snowboarding only after the activity started to show commercial profits. Mark Fawcett, a ISF negotiator and boarder, argues that the ‘FIS’s focus is obvious, they want to make money from this ... they want to rob it’. John Bache, president of the New Zealand Snowboard Association, remembered the resistance early snowboarders faced from the skiing establishment. For him it is,
hard to deal with organisations that told you to piss off because they ‘knew’ snowboarding was a passing fad... Now that they’ve seen the continuing decline in skier numbers, and the continued growth of snowboarding, FIS wants in. They are being driven by greed.12

Others fear for snowboarding under FIS mismanagement which, for example, was largely responsible for the cancellation of the 1995 FIS World Skiing Championships.13 ISF coach Rob Roy wants ‘to make sure that those who take over the sport don’t kill it because they don’t know any better’.14 Victoria Jealouse, a ISF rider, argues that ‘the ski industry will bend over backwards for snowboarders right now. Eventually they’ll go back to their past, to what they know. No matter what the FIS says, they’re going to fuck up competition and the industry’.15 Moves by the FIS to use non-snowboarding fields like Park City, that rejected snowboarding for so long, and those surrounding Nagano, which still ban snowboarders, and to use non-snowboarding manufacturers like Phenix (a popular Japanese ski wear manufacturer) to clothe the FIS US Snowboard team, give credence to the ISF view. As one commentator put it,

while the world watches snowboarding make its official debut [at Nagano] as a socially acceptable and mainstream sport, what they won’t see are giant-slalom competitors getting escorted off the mountain after their race is done, and halfpipe competitors looking up from their contest playpen at all the mountains they’re still not allowed to ride.16

These moves also anger those snowboarders who don’t care about sporting competitions, much less the Olympics. In an article entitled ‘Getting FISted’, the authors of Flakezine, an on-line commentary of the snowboarding industry, spat,

the bottom line is FIS doesn’t give a lump of faeces for snowboarding, snowboarders, or snowboarding culture. They simply see snowboarding as

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12 Ste’en Webster, ‘The Olympic question’, *New Zealand Snowboarder*, July/August 1997, p. 28.
14 Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’
15 Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’
another way to sell sponsorships, gain power, and control another winter sport. Anything they say to the contrary is a bald-faced lie. They are a bunch of unethical, evil cretins set on destroying snowboarding as we know it.  

Although representatives from the FIS claim they want to help snowboarding develop and grow, it is not hard to see that behind their justifications lies the healthy profits snowboarding offers. Hanno Trendl, head of FIS snowboarding, sees the FIS as putting snowboarding on the ‘next level’: ‘everyone respects the Olympics as the highest level of sport. We are the second wave; ISF has been doing this for years. Our goal as a winter-sports association is to get people in the mountains enjoying winter sports instead of going to the Caribbean’. As the ‘new sensation’, and compared to the stagnating sport of skiing, snowboarding currently offers the FIS, as the umbrella body of the competitive, recreational and industry sectors of skiing, a viable means to attract people to the ski fields, and hence to maintain ski industry profits.

However, the majority of snowboarders want to control their own activity. Snowboarders follow different lifestyles to skiers. Their styles have their roots in skating, punk, grunge and in the bans that ski fields placed on snowboarding. As ISF negotiator and rider Mark Fawcett puts it,

some people choose to do the FIS tour because that’s how they can compete [at the Olympics]. In the long term, what are you doing to the sport? You’re giving control to skiers, and calling your sport a discipline of skiing. Snowboarding was developed by surfers and skateboarders, not skiers ... And now everything we’ve all worked for, you’re giving to them on a silver platter. You’re jumping on your knees in front of the dictator."

In reality, most snowboarders have ignored the Olympic squabble. According to Ste’en Webster, ‘competitive snowboarders ... are Olympic athletes’ and ‘a different

17 ‘Rant-o-rama: Getting FISted’, Flakezine, no. 2.3, 18 November 1995. users.aol.com/angerine/rant23.htm
18 Quoted in Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’ Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’
breed ... Most snowboarders couldn’t give a hoot. But such acceptance by the ski federation and the IOC is symptomatic of an activity becoming mainstream. Tom Sims, snowboarding pioneer and manufacturer, has no problem with snowboarding’s Olympic status and increased popularity,

now that it’s allowed everywhere, I think it’s more fun than ever. But it’s true some people are bummed because they think it makes snowboarding uncool. It comes down to why you snowboard in the first place. Do you want a cool, underground sport or something that’s fun? The overwhelming majority of snowboarders desire. Prominent New Zealand snowboarder Aaron Bolt argues that now snowboarding has established itself, riders will have to be wary because ‘if it becomes [too] mainstream ... it will stifle the creativity. It’ll become like skiing’.

However it is the underground that the overwhelming majority of snowboarders desire. Prominent New Zealand snowboarder Aaron Bolt argues that now snowboarding has established itself, riders will have to be wary because ‘if it becomes [too] mainstream ... it will stifle the creativity. It’ll become like skiing’. The authors of *Flakezine* agree:

in the hands of the ‘mainstream’ ... snowboarders, snowboarding companies and the snowboarding media will make a lot more money ... but it will be in exchange for their souls, creativity, and individuality ... Snowboarding will become exactly like skiing, golf, in line skating, NASCAR and tennis - boring, dull and staid.

These anti-commercial sentiments derive from an ‘artistic sensibility’ that snowboarding shares with other activities such as surfing, skateboarding, parachuting and rock climbing. These activities emerged with the co-operative new leisure movement in the 1960s, and all are currently undergoing a resurgence as ‘extreme’ sports in the individualistic 1990s.

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20 Interview, Ste’en Webster, 25 June 1995.
21 Farber, ‘Snowboard nation’, p. 81.
22 Interview, Aaron Bolt, 13 June 1995.
Artistic Sensibilities in Youth Culture

The artistic sensibility in the new leisure movement involved a transfer of an abstract ‘art’ to the physical realm. Art represents creativity, innovation, freedom of action and expression in every sphere. It is a non-commercial philosophy at odds with capitalism. Good art represents ‘human expression’. It is ‘the product of genius’, and hence, by definition, ‘original and innovative’.24 New leisure movement activities, while recognising the brilliance of ‘geniuses’, those people who lead the way through originality and innovation, and who are admired, followed and mimicked, also celebrate a more democratic view of expression. As art historian Arnold Hauser explains, the French revolution brought democracy to art - artistic freedom was ‘no longer a privilege of the genius, but the birthright of every artist and every gifted individual ... All individual expression is unique, irreplaceable and bears its own laws and standards within itself’.25 The social revolution of the 1960s introduced this philosophy into leisure.

In the 1960s, disciples of the counterculture reacted against what they saw as the overarching conformity and stifling nature of society and the mass market. This reaction was epitomised by student spokesman Mario Savio who called for a rebellion against a world which treated people as ‘cogs’ in a machine. The counterculture followed the Beats’ philosophy that ‘every person is entitled to act and believe as he wants to’.26

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26 Howard Becker, ‘The professional dance musician and his audience’, American Journal of Sociology, vol. 57, no. 2, 1951, p. 138. Forerunners to the counterculture, the Beats of the late 1950s to mid to late 1960s held the notion of gaining ‘individual enlightenment through the rejection of bourgeois society and the embracing of a rootless lifestyle, literary romanticism and experimentalism, elements of Eastern religions, and in many cases the use of drugs and alcohol’. They also identified with café society, modern jazz and modern art (Tony Thorne, Dictionary of Popular Culture: Fads, Fashions and Cults, Bloomsbury, London, 1994, pp. 20-21).
counterculture inspired individuals to see themselves as original works of art and to act accordingly - to be true to one's self.

The new leisure movement also embodied this philosophy by rejecting the unplayful and un-expressive and 'overly rationalized, technologized, and bureaucratized' world of traditional sport, preferring activities that were free, fun, co-operative, and individualistic. For example, the philosophical tenets of rock climbing advocated 'liberty, individualism and a lifestyle independent of the conformist and reactionary middle classes'. Not surprisingly then, new leisure movement activities are often referred to as art. As one skateboarder puts it, a lot of skaters 'are really involved with artistic endeavours ... it's a kind of freedom of expression ... How do you express yourself playing football, playing basketball? When you are skating it's ... definitely ... a way to express yourself'. Many athletes, and indeed sport sociologists, claim that players express themselves in traditional sports. However, the point is that the lack of formal structures convinces skaters that they have more creative freedom than that available in codified traditional sports, with its compulsion, rigid rules, codification, institutionalisation, competition and training. One skateboarder summed up the new leisure movement's attitude to competition in the following remarks: 'who's to say what trick is better? I like to do stuff that feels cool, that gives me butterflies in my stomach'. The philosophy of music has many parallels with the artistic sensibility of

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the new leisure movement. As a member of Gus Gus, a group consisting of nine musicians, put it, ‘there is no leader in this band ... there is never a problem of competition ... This is art, and you never compete in art’.32

In the 1970s and 1980s punk further influenced the artistic sensibility of the new leisure movement. Punks appropriated the principle tenet of the counterculture philosophy, a principle as stated by Yippie leader Jerry Rubin: ‘people should do whatever the fuck they want’.33 The political failure of the counterculture to deliver the promised Utopia disgusted a large majority of punks.34 Malcolm McLaren, manager of the Sex Pistols, summed up this disgust when he declared that ‘the philosophy of the Sex Pistols ... was never to trust a hippie’.35

In the eyes of these punks, distrust stemmed, not so much from the failure of the counterculture’s social agenda, as from the fact that many of its disciples appeared to renege on the values they once vociferously espoused. It seemed to many youth that the 1960s generation had performed a philosophical and political about face, abandoning the Left for the New Right. Yippies, including Abbie Hoffman, became yuppies; communists, such as David Horowitz, became neo-conservatives; everywhere materialism replaced idealism.36 Those who dismantled the welfare system in the 1980s were part of the same generation who had exploited it to drop out in the 1960s. Determined not to fail like their countercultural parents, these punks built their value system around personal honesty and integrity. Furthermore, although post-Fordism

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32 Grant Smithies, ‘Gus Gus: Don’t eat the yellow snow!’, Real Groove, August 1997, p. 35.
35 ‘Young, loud and snotty’, The Story of Pop [Radio serial], British Broadcasting Corporation, part 30. Written and researched by Paul Kent, narrated by Aaron Freeman.
brought greater choice to consumers, they retained the countercultural critique of late capitalism - that mass communication and mass consumption produced a blandness in the quality of life. As a result, many punks emphasised originality, arguing that people should be innovative in every sphere of daily life. Punk found a succour and philosophical ally in the art world. Their politics and philosophies - both based on personal honesty and non-conformist innovation - were best explored and articulated through the tenets of art. In a sense, their very lives were art. Yet, the same punks rejected art as a class based and elitist institution.

The majority of punks did, initially, celebrate the counterculture’s democratic philosophy. But as early as the late 1970s, their high ideals about non-conformity meant that punk norms shifted to those found in the elitist world of art which they had previously rejected. Punk quickly became a competition about individualism, and, as Gavin Hills argues, it became ‘one of the most discriminating youth cultures ... Punk was obsessed with its own authenticity’. Where the counterculture celebrated universal free expression, punks emphasised an individuality based on truly original expression. This meant that doing what you wanted, in punk terms, often required being as socially different and offensive as possible, even to fellow punks. American journalist Charles Young captures the essence of the punk attitude towards clothing:

true punk fashion is determined by your attitude toward the apparel, not by the apparel per se. If you wear it to conform to other punks, you’re an asshole. If you wear it to offend other people - even other punks - you’re really an asshole, and that’s cool.

This was a world where the ‘best’ art was the most original; original to the point that it

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39 Charles Young, ‘Skank or die’, *Playboy*, June 1984, p. 190.
alienated people. An example of this attitude comes from Holger Czukay, a member of the German band Can: ‘I remember once we played in a big hall and made it completely empty. When we finished there was nobody anymore. No housemaster, just total silence. I thought it was a great success’.40

Later, in the early 1980s, a ‘post-punk’ movement emerged. By this time punk had divided along two main, general philosophical and political lines. Pioneer punks continued to equate their lifestyle with ‘artful’ offensiveness; new punks saw themselves as vehicles for social change. Penny Rimbaud, a member of Crass, a post-punk band which took the Sex Pistols anarchist tenets literally, says, ‘when Johnny Rotten proclaimed that there was “no future”, we saw it as a challenge to our creativity. We knew there was a future if we were prepared to work for it’.41 Crass was,

crucial in drawing a large contingent of post-punks towards the idea of punk as a way of life, rather than a mere lifestyle: pro-squatting, nuclear disarmament, feminism and animal liberation. Following their inspiration, punks were taking on board sixties ideals, and slowly mutating into the hippie continuum.42

Both of these punk strands affected the new leisure movement which became an uneasy mix of democratic countercultural beliefs, boosted by politically anarchist post-punks and the high individualism of the ‘art’ punks. Interestingly, both versions of the artistic sensibility fuelled an almost universal opposition to commercialism, and even to popularity.

Selling Out: Punks

To contemporary artists, art which has ‘sold out’, or, gone ‘commercial’, is ‘inauthentic,
... lightweight and insubstantial and, by definition, not worth serious consideration. Similar judgements are made of the artist or artists who created it'.

This concept influenced both schools of punk and the new leisure movement. Among punks, 'selling out' denotes an over-dependence on capitalism to support one's lifestyle. More specifically, to pioneer punks it means a lack of innovation with respect to music, fashion or attitudes; to post-punks, selling out means to give up punk politics and philosophies. Among the latter, capitalism does more than create blind followers of fashion: it fosters greed and causes rifts in society. One anarchist describes capitalist social relationships as conniving with 'coercion ... You don't want that Jeep Cherokee anymore, you need it, and therefore you will step on anyone that gets in your way ... Capitalism is not about desires, but about compulsions and control'.

Both coercion and excess materialism are deemed abhorrent. Describing rampant materialism, punk, hip-hop and skateboard photographer Glen Friedman pointedly declares,

I don't care if you are an artist, a stockbroker, a musician, I don't care what you're doing, no one deserves a million dollars a year ... If you're a pro athlete and the owner's making that much, yes. You should take a smaller wage and force him through your union to lower ticket prices. It makes good business sense: these greedy fucks are going to make the people who support them go broke ... and soon their fans won't have any money left to spend on these diversionary, mind dulling games. Maybe we should just watch it eat itself."

It should be noted that such a stance is very idealistic. A 'pure' stance is very difficult to maintain in reality. Many individuals, even 'holier than thou' punks, live in a fluid, sometimes contradictory space. Punks who decry capitalism often live off the side benefits of the same regime: for example, relying on the welfare system or squatting in buildings built through capitalist economics. This stance is also very elitist. It provides a

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43 Ryan, Making Capital from Culture, p. 53.
44 srini, yeah, 'nobody here but us capitalists', Anarchy List (anarchy-list@cwi.nl), 22 May 1997.
social position separate (and, from the holder’s point of view, superior) from those who do not.

In the wake of these developments ‘punk rock’ became an adjective to describe the ‘purity’ of one’s actions. It expresses punks’ condemnation of the ‘materialist superficiality’ of life under capitalism. It emerges in comments such as ‘Oh, you bought new shoes, that’s not very punk rock...’, and in public criticisms of those who are, for example, distributed by a major label or interviewed in a mainstream music magazine; even those who eat at McDonalds are said to be supping ‘with the devil’.

In addition to these criticisms of capitalism, artists and punks both consider the commercial sphere bland. They reject it because, as Bill Ryan argues, ‘the conservative bias in marketing ... pressures artists to temper the type and degree of their originality, to create upon themselves and in their work, signs drawn from the languages of style already spoken in the market; i.e. to develop a commercial idiolect’. Ryan says, ‘transcend[s] the earthly, utilitarian realm ... It offends the supposedly finely-tuned sensibilities of artists, critics, collectors and audiences to speak of their subject in the same breath as they speak of money’.

Given punks’ condemnation of capitalism, its subsequent incorporation into the commercial realm, in the wake of grunge, sent shockwaves through the punk community. The commercial success of punk bands and popular acceptance of their styles weighs like a nightmare on the minds of punks:

the very same segment of society that inspired the wrath of punk rock is now embracing it as their own ... MTV can’t get enough of it. Record-company weasels are scouring the countryside in search of that spiky, commercial vibe.

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47 Ryan, Making Capital from Culture, p. 224.
48 Ryan, Making Capital from Culture, p. 53.
Ageing anti-establishment bands ... are getting back together to cash in on the phenomenon. It’s enough to force the counterculture to start hating itself.⁴⁹

Brian Zero, a columnist for punk zine Maximumrocknroll, sums up punk’s point of view:

I see all around me people who dress in ways that would have once identified them as belonging to the scene, but these people are different: there is no understanding between them of what it means to be excluded by the entire ... society. Their piercings and tattoos don’t identify them to me as members of the underground. They walk by oblivious to how the superficial expressions of rebellion that they now wear once said something, once identified them as belonging to a group at war with the superficial ... With our attire, our character armor, torn away and turned into a commodity, we have been forced to look deeper at ourselves, to ponder about our identity. Do we have one?⁵⁰

Punk stood in opposition to the absence of creative individuality in society, as well as the shallow, greedy, destructive and super-competitive capitalist system. Punk used shock and outrage both as a means of drawing attention to their politics and as a strategy to prevent the commodification of their lives. But, paradoxically, big business found punk’s oppositional stance commercially viable. To punks the appropriation of their fashion and the popularisation of their music, threatened the independent and underground nature of the punk scene; as part of the popular, punk became impotent, it became part of the superficial.

In order to minimise the damage to their ‘scene’ and its philosophies, punks closed ranks. They rejected any band, label, zine or person who ‘sold out. In this purge, independent punk labels like Lookout!, Epitaph and Fat Wreck Chords, home of popular punk bands such as Rancid, Offspring, Nofx and Screeching Weasel, became scapegoats. In one article, a punk savaged Epitaph for employing ‘major label tricks-of-the-trade to monopolize and institutionalize punk culture ... The same type of

propaganda and business tactics Disney deploys to exploit the legendary Pocohontas for profit, are being used by Epitaph to desecrate punk for profit'.

Bands such as Green Day (who were signed by Lookout! before they moved to Warner) and Nofx tried to minimise the harm, as well as deflect the blame. Green Day refused to define themselves as punk. Bass player Mike Dirnt argued that,

we are not a punk band, we're a rock band, a rock band of today. Anyone playing arenas or 5,000 seater clubs and calling themselves a punk band is only fooling themselves. You can have all the punk influence you want, but there's not a punk show I've ever been to with 5,000 other people. I don't think there's that many punks.

Nofx, on the other hand, distanced themselves from the institutions that boosted their popularity. In the liner notes of their 1996 album *Heavy Petting Zoo* they wrote, 'no thanx to: MTV - quit bugging us. Major labels - quit bugging us. Commercial radio stations - quit playing us. We've been doin' just fine all these years without you so leave us the fuck alone'.

Punk icons such as Henry Rollins, former lead singer of Black Flag, who started appearing in films also defended himself: 'instead of using the pay-cheques to buy a Ferrari, I buy software and publish books. It's like taking Satan's dollars and turning them into little angels. It’s punk rock. It’s totally subversive'.

In response to the popular invasion, punk divided along its two philosophical lines. Punk's popularity only really mattered to fashion disciples who lost their source of uniqueness and ceased to offend capitalist sensibilities and mores. Political punks were more concerned with how the pursuit of profit would disrupt punk's anti-

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51 Veracitor, 'Epitaph needs an enema', *Maximumrocknroll*, July 1996.
commercial philosophies. As one punk put it, describing what he saw as the effect of such popularity on the punk movement,

maybe we’ve lost a generation who see punk as nothing more than fashion ... but I hope the next generation of punks will be able to transcend all that bullshit. In the meantime, it’s easy to see which bands, promoters, labels and zines stayed true to their ideals and which did their damnedest to make as much money as possible.54

Many also feared that punk was becoming too wrapped up in fashion and too superficial, worrying, for example, about who was ‘real’. Punk seemed to be losing sight of the important issues. One punk philosophised:

we’ve all gotten insecure about being kidnapped by green Martian corporate fiends from Planet Major Labela and have set up rules to protect ourselves. Rules that say where you’re supposed to live - how poor you’re supposed to be - how you’re supposed to dress - how many bands you’re supposed to have heard of - what bands you’re supposed to have heard of - the list goes on and on ... I thought that punk is about smashing all these rules and stomping on them ... And that it’s about challenging everything and not following other people’s rules and setting stupid meaningless ones for yourself.55

In an attack on such rigid definitions, Kristen, singer in punk band Naked Aggression, argued for a sense of perspective: ‘somewhere a mother and a baby are lying, dying on the street. Somewhere someone else in this country is going to jail for reading or speaking. Somewhere a woman is being raped. And what are you doing? Arguing over what record label a band is signed to!’56

The different strands of punk clashed over this issue, sometimes violently. Jello Biafra, former lead singer of the Dead Kennedys, refused to criticise and ostracise popular punk bands, pointing out that they were good publicity for the punk movement, and that they might act as a political springboard for individuals, formerly ignorant of

54 Editorial reply to a letter to the editor, Maximum Rock n Roll, October 1996.
55 Mike Hayes, Letter to the editor, Maximum Rock n Roll, October 1996.
punk. Critics assaulted Biafra and broke his legs outside a punk club.

Selling Out: The New Leisure Movement and Professional Boarders

While punk influenced the philosophies of the new leisure movement, punk's philosophical outlook is much more politically motivated and confrontational. Remaining separate from the commercial mainstream constitutes the core of punk identity. Hence boarders and other disciples of the new leisure movement followed punk's anti-commercial sentiments, but did not respond to commercialism with the same intensity and vehemence. For example, in 1992, a visiting Swiss snowboarder attracted criticism after he won a New Zealand competition, because he returned his prizes complaining that he came to win money, not T-shirts. *New Zealand Snowboarder* responded, 'if you ever start thinking this way I suggest you take up pro golf or tennis'.57 Furthermore, the quasi-religious views of countercultural soul surfers are still present in some sectors of snowboarding. Soul surfers saw surfing as a religious experience, some viewed it as a means of getting back to nature.58 Similarly, one correspondent to *Transworld Snowboarding* described snowboarding as 'a spiritual act ... When one is snowboarding they’re not simply manipulating the snow and the mountain, they’re trying to become one with the large being of the mountain'.59 Clearly, in these contexts money and spirituality do not mix. Snowboarding is about fun, self expression and getting back to nature, not making money. Obviously this philosophy is idealistic and it raises critical issues about the opportunities that snowboarding provides for professionalism. These issues will be discussed later.

58 Booth, ‘Surfin’ 60s’, p. 277.
According to this perspective, if snowboarding is perceived as becoming too mass produced and embroiled in commercialism, it loses its ‘soul’. It would be seen as ‘typical and conventional, rather than as innovative and original’. Snowboarding would ‘appear instead as an object of no particular uniqueness and of relatively little artistic significance’.

This explains why snowboarders and skateboarders believe that activities like skiing and rollerblading have sold out. For example skiing, as well as resisting snowboarding for so long, is seen as a symbol of the elite. It is also seen as rigid. One ski racer turned snowboarder argued that snowboarding rejuvenated her passion for winter sports, ‘I love snowboarding so much because there is not all these rules. There’s still a little of a young feeling to it’. Skiing is also seen as an impersonal money making machine: ‘the ski industry stagnated because they became so wrapped up in the carbon paper of business that they forgot who was even on their skinny planks’.

Rollerblading has also sold out because of its popularity among the wrong types: it has been embraced by the body beautiful lycra set as a means of aerobic exercise, as well as being used as a training tool by participants in traditional sports such as ice skating, and cross country and downhill skiing. Although young adherents perform tricks, skaters sneer at them. As Craig Harris, owner of a Wellington, New Zealand, skate-snowboard shop says, rollerblading is ‘stupid because everything that they are doing has been done on rollerskates and skateboards ... it’s pathetic, it’s a stolen sport. It seems to me that it’s just trying to make money. They will never get respect from skateboarding’.

Rollerblades ‘are like Billy Ray Cyrus or Beverly Hills 90210, popular with no class’.

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60 Ryan, Making Capital from Culture, pp. 53-54.
61 Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’
63 The discipline is known as ‘aggressive’ rollerblading to differentiate it from the less street credible disciplines.
64 Interview, Craig Harris, 16 June 1995.
On the other hand, skateboards may not be popularly respected but are ‘cultural classics nonetheless’. 65

Debates over selling out pervade the new leisure movement, and especially its professional wing. Rockclimber Tim Fairfield claims that climbing is ‘packaged radicalism. It’s anti-police, anti-ranger, anti-land management. It’s anti-authority. But it’s not anti-money. That’s why we have to learn how to sell it’. 66 However, this is not a commonly held, or at least expressed, view. Andrew Morrison, a former New Zealand skateboard professional, recalls the dilemmas of being paid to ride: ‘even though I didn’t feel like going, I still did, because it was my job, and the better I got, the more money I got, which is a shit way to look at it. You should skate for fun. That’s why I am so happy now, not being a pro skater’. 67 The sentiments of this new leisure movement philosophy recall the purist idealism of the Victorian amateur sportsmen. Yet, while the amateurs had old money to rely on, the majority of contemporary new leisure movement participants do not.

Here is the paradox of the new leisure movement professional. No matter how esoteric they believe their activity to be, professionals cannot not separate themselves from the reality of capitalism: ‘there’s all this talk about selling out, but what have snowboarders gained? Their own home? Ability to support their families? Yeah, real big sellout’. 68 In order to follow a credo which, in Craig Harris’s words, ‘is doing what you want to do and not being restricted’, 69 professional snowboarders still have to rely on financial support from commercial manufacturers, film makers, photographers and the

65 Daniel Ting, ‘Why we dislike rollerblades - theories’, www.clark.net/pub/len/dan2.htm
69 Interview, Craig Harris, 16 June 1995.
like. This creates a fine line between credibility and sell out. Snowboarders deemed ‘too commercial’, who over-actively search for money, or who receive support from the ‘wrong source’, like a traditional ski company or a business that breaches the punk code of ethics, are sell outs.

However, unlike most professional surfers, professional snowboarders do not have to compete. Success in competition is not a necessary prerequisite for skate or snowboard professionals. The latter can promote their sponsors, and themselves, through videos, photographic shoots, snowboard camps and simply by riding at their local mountain. Unlike professional surfers who had to be photogenic and articulate well to gain public acceptance, the majority of snowboard professionals did not have to change their image. Professional snowboarders do not have to promote a clean and healthy image because they rarely deal directly with the public. Their primary interaction is with other snowboarders. Furthermore, the Professional Snowboarders Association (PSA), which formed in 1990, recognised the problems that had occurred in other activities such as surfing. Riders set up the PSA in order to ‘promote and protect the rights and personalities of its members’. Hence, to a significant degree, snowboarders could promote whatever images took their fancy.

However, the sponsor-professional relationship is ultimately an employer-employee relationship. Employers demand that employees satisfy their needs. Professionals must deal with the concrete world of commercialism, as opposed to the abstract, idealistic world of art. Ultimately, professionals in the new leisure movement find it increasingly difficult to indulge in endless play. A similar problem occurs when

musicians become successful, and therefore, in a sense, ‘professional’. Jazz historian Andre Hodeir argues that,

the history of both jazz and jazzmen is that of creative purity gradually corrupted by success ... First, the young musician expresses himself freely, breaks the rules, disconcerting and even shocking his listeners; then the public adopts him, he attracts disciples and becomes a star. He thinks he is free, but he has become a prisoner.  

Nonetheless professional snowboarders, like jazz musicians, still enjoy substantial freedoms. Howard Becker, in his study of professional jazz musicians in the 1940s and 1950s, concludes that no one could tell them how to play, and ‘logically ... no one can tell a musician to do anything. Accordingly, behaviour that flouts conventional social norms is greatly admired’. Indeed, as one young musician said, ‘the biggest heroes in the music business are the biggest characters. The crazier a guy acts, the greater he is, the more everyone likes him’. Becker concludes that, ‘people with such gifts cannot be subjected to the constraints imposed on other members of society; we must allow them to violate the rules of decorum, propriety, and common sense everyone else must follow’.  

But what happens when such freedoms are taken to the extreme? A letter, reprinted in Transworld Snowboarding from the manager of a motel used by professional snowboarders, suggests one common answer. According to the manager, ‘from the minute they arrived, it was total chaos’,  

they were rude to all of the employees, and showed absolutely no respect for our hotel ... The following day, I was bombarded with complaints of obscene and illegal acts that were committed by a few of the boarders ... Why they need to conduct themselves in such a manner is incomprehensible ... If the professionals

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73 Becker, ‘The professional dance musician and his audience’, p. 137.  
cannot act like adults, how can we expect all the young kids learning the sport not to do the same?\textsuperscript{76}

Similarly, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* recently painted a disturbing picture of the darker side of such attitudes in skateboard professionalism: Josh Swindell was awaiting trial for murder, Jeff Phillips committed suicide, and Mark Rogowski was in jail for rape and murder.\textsuperscript{77}

As these examples demonstrate, philosophies of unbounded freedom are impossible to contain within specific activities. And while they may be the basis of artistic freedom, and hence contribute to greater innovation within an activity, when extended to public behaviour they can be irresponsibly and dangerously anti-social. Violating the rules of decorum, propriety and common sense is one thing; damaging people and their property is another.

**The Olympics or Exploring Mickey Mouse’s Sexual Preferences: Which Way Snowboarding?**

Snowboarding’s inclusion in the Olympic Games represented a new high in the commercial appropriation of the activity. The games, which embody traditional modernist sport, pose additional problems for new leisure movement and punk influenced snowboarders. The long term impact of the Olympics on snowboarding will emerge slowly. Prior to the Nagano Olympics, snowboarders had four main concerns. First, the Olympics advocates rigorous competition. Although Todd Richards, a leading ISF halfpipe contender, is a seasoned competitor, his experience in the sphere of the

\textsuperscript{76} Letter to the editor, reprinted in *Transworld Snowboarding*, January 1995, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{77} ‘Hell on wheels’, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, May 1994, reprinted in *DansWorld Skateboarding*. 

www.cps.msu.edu/~dunhamda/dw/guardian.htm
relatively relaxed snowboard competitions did little to prepare him for the high competition of the Olympics. Before Nagano he predicted that: ‘it’ll be way weirder than we’re used to dealing with. It’s going to be super serious and not as much fun as it has been. Training has always been a joke to me, but now I’m thinking about lifting weights, running, training’. Even though Richards was competing against the same people who take part in ISF events, the very structure of the Olympics imposes intense competition on snowboarders. Additionally, professional snowboarder Dave Downing argued that, ‘after the Olympics I think a lot more focus will be on contests. The world is going to look at snowboarding as racing or halfpipe riding and confine it to those areas, instead of about just going riding’.

Second, some snowboarders fear the rigid rules that inevitably accompany such competition. Paul Trapski, a New Zealand snowboarder is afraid that, ‘by putting [the halfpipe] in the Olympics ... it’ll become a structured event with strict guidelines ... Hopefully it won’t end up like freestyle skiing or something, with people telling you want trick you can or can’t do’. Flakezine also expressed these fears, those who think the Olympics are actually cool should remember what happened to ‘freestyle’ skiing, which garnered the same kind of media attention in the 70s as snowboarding is enjoying presently. The mogul competitions have turned into a race where the only way you can win is by looking just like everyone else. Not only that, but skiing with style and personality means a loss of points.

Third, many snowboarders feared that their governments would use them as tools to promote excessive nationalism. Fourth, there was the problem of conflict between sponsors, for example, between uniform suppliers and personal sponsors. One well known case involved the United States Olympic basketball team at the 1992

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78 Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’
79 Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’
81 ‘Rant-o-rama: Getting FISted’, Flakezine
Olympics.\textsuperscript{82} It is a problem which has not been fully resolved. Also many snowboarders oppose the conformity that uniforms, not to mention a set of competitive rules, represent. As ISF coach Rob Roy puts it:

I have this image of some of the best snowboarders in the world riding in uniforms in a halfpipe. The youth of the world seeing their heroes giving in to conformity. If that’s the one image they see, it would be devastating to the sport. That’s not why the youth of the world has embraced snowboarding. The youth of the world will say, ‘Uh-oh. Our parents have a hold of this sport now’.\textsuperscript{83}

World halfpipe champion Terje Haakonsen sums up the feelings of these snowboarders: ‘snowboarding is about fresh tracks and carving powder and being yourself and not being judged by others. It’s not about nationalism and politics and money’.\textsuperscript{84} Haakonsen refused to compete at the Olympics, in part because this would have compelled him to compete at FIS run events. Interestingly, Haakonsen also likened the IOC to the Mafia, that is to ‘people who take over control but never let anyone have an inside look at what they are doing ... The fact is that the big wigs ride in limousines and stay in fancy hotels while the athletes live in barracks in the woods’.\textsuperscript{85}

While Nagano has finished, and it seems that Olympic snowboarders have taken the games in their stride, the problems are long term and will only unravel slowly. The antics of the competitive snowboarders at Nagano proved that no matter how smooth the transition to competitive snowboarding appears, competitive snowboarders are leagues removed from traditional athletes. For example, an Austrian snowboarder was sent home after causing US$4,000 worth of damage to a hotel room after a party. When

\textsuperscript{82} Reebok supplied the team uniform while Michael Jordan was personally sponsored by Nike. Jordan did not want to be seen wearing Reebok and so, at the medal presentation he wore a towel over his shoulders to cover the Reebok name and logo.
\textsuperscript{83} Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’
asked what level of drug testing there was the during pre-Olympic qualifying rounds, American Adam Hostetter replied, ‘testing? I say try them all! They’re all great!’ Indeed, the very first gold medal ever awarded to a snowboarder, Canadian Ross Rebagliati in the giant slalom, was removed after drug testers found traces of marijuana in Rebagliati’s urine sample. Although the IOC reinstated him, the event caused some snowboarding commentators considerable mirth considering the IOC and FIS’s push to have snowboarding included in the Olympics and their stand on drugs in sport. As one commentator laughed,

perhaps it’s karmic justice that the gold-medal winner is a pot smoking fool ...

The money-grubbing soul-less peons of FIS ... [stole] snowboarding from behind the sports back before the snowboarders could put down their collective pipe and figure out what happened. It’s sweet revenge that the rebels of snowboarding have had the last snickel.

Whatever the effect of the incident on the IOC and its campaign against drugs, it will not affect snowboarding’s burgeoning popularity: ‘there might be a few more figure skaters turning up their noses at those peasants in snowboarding’ but ‘in fact the whole incident will probably spawn a great advertising campaign for Pepsi or some other hipper-than-thou brand’.

In the short to medium term at least, the Olympics will exert little influence on snowboarding because it has essentially broadened the gulf between competitive and ordinary snowboarders. World champion snowboarder Michele Taggart sees a split: ‘it’s almost like there’s going to be a different sport - freeriding is one thing, and training and

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67 Whilst some claim Rebagliati was reinstated to placate snowboarders, the official line is that the IOC has no rules against the use of marijuana in competition. Rebagliati was, however, interviewed by Japanese police.
competing and now going to the Olympics is going to be another’. Yet, snowboarding’s acceptance by the FIS and inclusion in the Olympics show just how popular snowboarding has become. Not surprisingly, snowboarders have responded to this ‘crisis’ of popularity along the two different philosophical lines of punk. The first group lament snowboarding’s popularity because, by definition, when snowboarding was new, snowboarders were innovative and trendsetting. But, as snowboarding became more popular, participants lost their source of individuality. Today, few people notice snowboarders or consider them abnormal. Some snowboarders responded by moving on to new, less popular, activities or by trying to make snowboarding more individualistic. The latter typically involved offensive behaviour. A letter to *New Zealand Snowboarder* in 1993 complained about the lack of unity amongst snowboarders and warned of the dangers posed by image-conscious snowboarders: ‘until last season there was a kind of common bond between boarders; all happy to meet other boarders and share stories. But this seems to be ebbing away with time, and being replaced with the “I’m sooo cool,” bad attitude syndrome’. The response was vitriolic: ‘what the hell is this shit about ... manners on the mountain?’, wrote one correspondent to *Transworld Snowboarding*:

I thought snowboarding was about tattoos, body piercing, and punk music, not being all nice and shit. What is this, the Brady Bunch girls with snowboards? We should be able to cuss and smoke anywhere we want. And I like pants so big you can carry Greyhound buses in your pockets and no one knows it.

A similar reaction occurred in skateboarding after its commercial appropriation: ‘as the mainstream absorbs rebel sportswear, rebel sportswear is busy running, kicking and screaming away from the mainstream’. Various skate companies’ exploration of themes

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90 Miller, ‘Who’s afraid of the FIS?’
(printed on shirts and boards) 'as diverse as female masturbation and Mickey Mouse’s sexual preferences', in other words, skateboarding’s ‘adoption of outrage and bad taste is in some ways an attempt ... to make something the mainstream can’t simply snap up in its next summer fashion special spreads’.

The second group genuinely care about the detrimental effect of over-commercialisation as well as the obnoxious and offensive behaviour promoted by ‘image’ snowboarders. Unfortunately, they have become bogged down in political disputes and, paradoxically, contributed to the institutionalisation of boarding. Ironically, it was the absence of institutionalisation that first attracted this group to snowboarding. New Zealand professional Dani Meier’s fears are well founded: ‘the more we worry about these politics, the more we’ll become involved in them and the less we’ll be snowboarding. What a shame our sport has to become so prostituted by office jerks’.

In a similar process to the one explored above, at times boarders, in the pursuit of ‘eternal hedonism’, have inadvertently increased the mass production and commercialisation of the activity. Invariably, they are disappointed with what they have wrought. For example, professionalism, instructing, equipment manufacture and sales, journalism of various kinds, competition, accepting sponsorships, all, if poorly managed, end up leaving too little time to participate, and to greater numbers of participants which reduces the former exclusivity and underground nature of the activity. Thus it is precisely snowboarders’ desire to live doing what they love that has, to a certain extent, resulted in the destruction of what it is they love about snowboarding.

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93 Gavin Hills, ‘Sympathy for the devil’, The Face, August 1995, p. 73.
There has also been a third reaction. Although these boarders appear overtly apathetic to traditional forms of politics and protest, they too are concerned about capitalism’s negative impact on snowboarding. However, they have no confidence in interventionist strategies which they believe capitalism will only subvert. In this sense, they see of commercialisation as an inevitable process. Thus, they refuse to get involved in the politics and administration of snowboarding, and concentrate on maintaining their own personal space through ‘soulboarding’ (riding for intrinsic pleasure). Soulboarders apply the punk ‘do it yourself’ ethic, and prefer to ride in the backcountry, or at small, low key, club fields. DIY soulboarding meets the high ideals of the artistic sensibility as the back country is removed from the world of commercialism and pcpularity. In this manner this group follows the sentiments of Craig Kelly, a top professional with Burton, who, when asked what he considered his favourite trick retorted, ‘avoiding all public snowboarding’.95

In the current individualistic social mood it seems that this is the only real option available to snowboarders who wish to keep their activity, or at least their physical space, underground and unsullied by commercialism. Snowboarding is no longer new or shocking. By trying to preserve snowboarding with its original philosophies, especially with respect to competition, the second group of snowboarders have become more involved in administration, and have less time to ride. The fact is that snowboarding is no longer a small activity, enjoyed by a few enthusiasts who all know each other, but a multi-million dollar, front-cover fashion magazine, over-hyped commodity.

Nonetheless, snowboarders have changed the face of skiing forever. No longer are snowboarders in revolt against snotty upper class skiers. The latter still exist, but

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they are no longer the raison d'être of ski fields. Ski fields must now appeal to two markets: those who can afford outrageously priced day lift tickets, and regulars who capitalise off cheap season passes. Snowboarding revived skiing spiritually; it reminded skiers that the rationale of skiing is to have fun, and they injected a healthy dose of street fashion style to the mountains. Overall, snowboarding has, and will continue to maintain its philosophies. Snowboarding has appeared on the British television show *Absolutely Fabulous*, and dozens of corporations use snowboarding images to promote their winter products. As Aaron Bolt says, 'it will destroy its underground cool image, but it will always be there. Just like skateboarding. Just like surfing'.
Chapter Four

Anti-Commercial Politics, the New Right, and Rave

_We will get tough on rapists, tough on armed robbers and tough on squatters._¹

British Home Secretary Kenneth Baker in 1992

If capitalism has appropriated punk style and music, punk politics remains a powerful anti-establishment force. And the threat posed by punks is not taken lightly by the establishment. While punk bands play on MTV, the police and city councils continue to harass punk co-operatives; while youth buy coloured hair dye from the supermarkets, moral crusaders sue punk record labels. In 1997 the Philadelphia police union took Jello Biafra’s Alternative Tentacles to court for using police photographs in a Crucifucks record containing anti-police lyrics. A spokesperson for the police, Richard Costello, said that the union hoped to get ‘every last dime these people have, up to the penny in their loafers if we can get it’.² (In 1986, Biafra’s band the Dead Kennedys were charged with obscenity. Although dropped, the cost of successfully defending charges effectively broke up the band.) While youth are having their noses pierced in greater numbers, political charity groups such as Food Not Bombs, who cook and distribute free food to the poor and homeless using the unsold, unwanted left-overs from supermarkets, face intensifying harassment. In the last two years police have arrested over 700 Food Not Bombs activists for distributing free food in San Francisco. According to Hugh

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Mejia from Food Not Bombs, the problem is that, we don’t merely distribute free food, we make political and social statements in public places. We try to make people aware of their basic human rights. To them [the police and city council] we are just a bunch of anarchists who pose a great threat to the prevailing economic and political system.5

But it is not just those who make overt political and social statements who are harassed. House truckers, who reject ‘city living, materialism and the trappings of a consumer society’ for an itinerant lifestyle on the road4 and who fail to conform to the dictates of the capitalist economy, have also been subjected to violent suppression.

In late May 1985, a group of house truckers (known in the United Kingdom as ‘Travellers’) made plans for the annual Stonehenge Festival at Solstice, in contravention of a High Court order banning them from the area. On the 1st of June, as a convoy of 140 vehicles arrived at Stonehenge, 1,000 police herded the house buses and trucks into a nearby beanfield, where they launched a savage attack on the Travellers, beating them mercilessly and burning their homes. Nick Davies, an Observer reporter, wrote from the scene,

there was glass breaking, people screaming, black smoke towering out of burning caravans and everywhere there seemed to be people being bashed and flattened and pulled by the hair ... men, women and children were led away, shivering, swearing, crying, bleeding, leaving their homes in pieces ... Over the years I had seen all kinds of horrible and frightening things and always managed to grin and write about it. But as I left the Beanfield, for the first time, I felt sick enough to cry.5

The BBC screened a police video of events, while the only impartial film footage appeared on ITN’s evening news heavily edited with a voice-over replacing the impassioned reporting from the scene. Strangely, or perhaps not so strangely, the edited

footage disappeared, as did scant photographic evidence from various newspapers' files. The mainstream media closed ranks, siding with the police, and referred to prominent local aristocrat and conservative Lord Cardigan, who witnessed the events and testified in court against the police, as a 'loony lord'. As part of the media's effort to counter the weight of his testimony, an editorial in The Times claimed that being ‘barking mad was probably hereditary’. Lord Cardigan consequently successfully sued The Times, The Telegraph, the Daily Mail, the Daily Express and the Daily Mirror for claiming that his allegations against the police were false and for suggesting that he was 'making a home for hippies'. Lord Cardigan later said,

on the face of it they had the ultimate establishment creature - land owning, peer of the realm, card-carrying member of the Conservative Party - slagging off police and therefore by implication befriending those who they call the powers of darkness. I hadn't realised that anyone that appeared to be supporting elements that stood against the establishment would be savaged by establishment newspapers. Now one thinks about it, nothing could be more natural. I hadn't realised that I would be considered a class traitor; if I see a policeman truncheoning a woman I feel I'm entitled to say that it is not a good thing.

Politicians lent full support to the police action. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told the nation that her government was 'only too delighted to do anything we can to make life difficult for such things as hippy convoys'. Jim Carey, in his excellent investigation of events surrounding the 'Battle of the Beanfield', as the brutality became known, noted, 'if the coercive policing used during the miners strike was a violent introduction to Thatcher's mal-intention towards union activity, the Battle of the Beanfield was a similarly severe introduction to a new era of intolerance of Travellers'.

Ten years after the Battle of the Beanfield, police involved said that the

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6 Quoted in Carey, 'Assemblies of celebration, assemblies of dissent'.
7 Quoted in Carey, 'Assemblies of celebration, assemblies of dissent'.
8 Quoted in Carey, 'Assemblies of celebration, assemblies of dissent'.
9 Carey, 'Assemblies of celebration, assemblies of dissent'.

Stonehenge festival, which attracted 30,000 people in 1984, had grown ‘too large and out of control. The Battle of the Beanfield was just the beginning of the process of dealing with it. The laws that came after were even more effective’. Explanations given by Travellers concurred with those of the police. They saw themselves as ‘pied pipers, ‘leading Thatcher’s children out of the inner cities and into alternative lifestyles’. Furthermore, ‘their ideas of rural self-reliance were gaining ever greater mainstream acceptance’, ideas that the government felt it had to destroy. The police and government went about dealing with these ideas by destroying the Traveller’s independent economy. The Stonehenge festival was part of a larger free festival circuit that not only served entertainment, but constituted the economic foundations of permanent itinerancy. ‘By selling crafts, services, performance busking, tat and assorted gear, Travellers provided themselves with an alternative economy lending financial viability to an itinerant culture’. ‘Entirely unlicensed, unpolicied and free from the profit motivation that drives modern day commercial festivals’, writes Carey, such festivals were ‘one of the great people-led social experiments of modern times’. Thatcher’s government were opposed to such social experiments, on the grounds that they undermined the mainstream economy, were beyond bureaucratic and police control, and because, simply, they dissented from the New Right vision. Traveller Alan Lodge recalled, ‘as soon as they scared away the punters it destroyed the means of exchange. [Conservative minister] Norman Tebbit went on about getting on your bike and finding employment whilst at the same time being part of the political force that

10 Carey, ‘Assemblies of celebration, assemblies of dissent’.
11 Collin & Godfrey, Altered State, p. 185.
12 Carey, ‘Assemblies of celebration, assemblies of dissent’.
13 Carey, ‘Assemblies of celebration, assemblies of dissent’.
The government rejected a lifestyle based on barter; so much so that it even preferred to destroy this economic mode and force the Travellers to survive on welfare.

**Corporate Politics: ‘The Bars To Our Cage’**

The philosophy underpinning the Traveller lifestyle and punk’s anti-big business politics is now at the fore of non-traditional political thought. Political activists increasingly recognise the overarching power of big business in government and everyday life. As Cornel West writes,

> American society is disproportionately shaped by the outlooks, interest, and aims of the business community - especially that of big business. The sheer power of corporate capital is extraordinary. This power makes it difficult to even imagine what a free and democratic society would look like.15

The inability to envisage a truly democratic society constitutes what Ward Morehouse calls the ‘bars to our cage’.

The bars to our cage are not the harms that corporations do to people and the environment, although they are very great and must be stopped. Nor are the bars to our cage the structures of power created by giant, globe-encircling corporations now larger than most nation states, although those structures must ultimately be replaced by institutions that disperse rather than concentrate wealth and power. The bars to our cage lie in our own minds that have become colonized by the sheer dominance of huge corporations over our lives and our communities. These corporations increasingly determine not only who will do what kind of work and what we eat and wear but what we think as well. One result of the corporation domination of our culture is the TINA phenomenon: There Is No Alternative.16

Indeed the TINA phenomenon has provoked a shift away from traditional politics. Voter apathy, especially amongst the young is high. For example, forty percent of people aged

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14 Carey, ‘Assemblies of celebration, assemblies of dissent’.
16 Morehouse, ‘Greening the corporation’. 
17-25 did not vote in the 1992 UK general election. There are three reasons for this. First, the main political parties throughout the Western world formulate and advocate essentially the same policies. Even supposedly Left parties are more Right today than the Right was twenty years ago. In this case, it is not so much that youth has rejected politics; rather, politics has rejected them. Second, the 1980s saw the formation of new social movements. These movements directed their efforts at corporations which control governments, cultures and societies. Environmental and health activist Peter Montague expresses the logic of this strategy:

> why do we keep trying to tweak government, to pass one more law that either won't be enforced or won't change anything that matters? Instead why don't we focus our attention and resources on the institutions that give the business class the undemocratic power to dominate government (as well as to dominate our vision of what's right and good)?

Montague continues,

ninety percent of the media is owned by fewer than 20 corporations that therefore dominate public discussion and debate; these corporations determine what people will talk about and the limits of the public discussion. The elected government is controlled by corporations through campaign contributions (which are required because expensive media exposure is the key to election) ... Corporations control government; government greases the skids for increasing corporate control. People are disrespected and cut out of the decision-making loop. Democracy is hollowed out - the democratic forms remain, but the substance is missing. We can all vote, but voting seems to change nothing, at least not at the national level.

These movements have brought together wide ranging political interest groups. For example, co-ordinators of last years ‘International Month of Action to End Corporate Dominance’, claimed to have joined labour, human rights, indigenous resistance, peace, social justice, and environmental groups from around the world to challenge corporate

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domination.20 These groups aim to curtail the individualistic, consumerist driven society. They want more sustainable, co-operative environments, free from what they see as the greedy, overpowering and damaging corporate influence. They argue that the prevailing strong corporate influence derives from New Right philosophies and politicians that have dismantled all social, political and legal blocks in the way of the ‘free market’. In the process, the competitive individualism of the social mood and the New Right has splintered society, turning it into a world of inequality where, Montague argues,

cynicism, depression and ennui are rampant ... racism is increasing ... as more people compete for crumbs from a shrinking slice of the pie ... the system is stuck in a vicious circle in which power and wealth are relentlessly siphoned off into the pockets of a smaller and smaller fraction of the people. Forty percent of the people are doing well enough to continue to support the 1% who are becoming filthy rich - and the other 60%, who are hurting, nurse their wounds alone, disengaged, numbed by drugs or beer or television, or simply too tired to fight back.21

In this splintered society New Right politicians castigate the poor for being lazy. Yet whilst they blame single mothers who survive on welfare benefits for retarding the economy, their concessions to big business, in the form of tax cuts and waives, costs far more. Similarly, in 1995 while burglary and robbery in America cost US$4 billion, white collar fraud cost US$200 billion.22 Despite such figures governments world wide constantly invoke fears about rising crime and violence and manipulate these fears to increase powers of surveillance and the police. Critics argue that fears about law and order are misplaced, and that they are an excuse by governments to rid their societies of undesirables - the poor, homeless, minority ethnic groups - and political activists that

don’t agree with the New Right’s philosophies and economic programmes. As Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques noted in 1989, ‘while it speaks the language of choice, freedom and autonomy, Thatcherite society is increasingly characterised by inequality, division and authoritarianism’.23

Although 1990s youth have been presented in the media as Generation X, as apathetic slackers, Mark Ratcliff, a youth marketing consultant, states, ‘it’s just not true that youth are less rebellious than they were 20 years ago ... It’s just that now, intolerance of the establishment and disrespect for authority is spread right across society, instead of being concentrated in one small group’.24 Contemporary social movements indicate the spread of distrust of authority across social boundaries. As The Times reported with some mirth about several recent protests,

some of those campaigning against live animal exports at Brightlingsea harbour had accents as cut glass as any at Cowes. Previous protests against road developments at Twyford Down or Newbury saw the blue rinse brigade and the no rinse for days division standing together ... The middle classes of Mobberley, who would have imagined Vegans were characters from Star Trek until they met the eco-warriors, are now cooking macrobiotic picnics. My enemy’s enemy has always been my friend but the anti-airport alliance may presage something broader - the rediscovery of rebelliousness among Britain’s bourgeoisie.’25

Youth’s Big Idea

The third reason for the decline in voting is that many youth now believe that all they can change is their own personal lives. Miranda Sawyer, writer for British youth magazine the Face, elaborates:

there’s plenty of liberal guff spouted about young people’s unconcernedness, their Nineties’ apathy and apparent lack of passion. But we’re not living in the Sixties: we no longer believe that we can change the world, overthrow monopolies and governments and established old-boy orders by rising up as one

with Youth’s Big Idea. We know how things work. Conspiracy theories proven, adulterous priests outed, sportsmen caught cheating, officials with their knickers down: these don’t shock; they’re expected. We’re happy to see them humiliated, but don’t tell us that the next lot will be any different. This might sound resigned; it’s not. We’ve read about punk: we’ve seen its hard-core politics, its anarchy and confrontation seep down into the mainstream. Distrust of authority and intolerance of the establishment; everyday attitudes, these days. So what will be the Nineties legacy? ... Sure, there’s a wanting, a need to believe in something. But when you see through society’s deceits, the flimsy moral constructs and useless, dated, vile goals, then what is there left to believe in? Only yourself, your friends, your humour, your obsessions, your idea of a good time, your idea of what matters.26

Often in these self-defined worlds, traditional politics and laws don’t apply. Rave is an example of such a youth defined and regulated world. In talking about rave and how it embodies a rejection of traditional decision making and enforcement, Gavin Hills argues that, ‘you don’t have to put two fingers up when the government legislates against music with “repetitive beats”; you just simply refuse to abandon your lifestyle. You simply change your state of mind as opposed to the State’.27 Ravers celebrate psychedelic drugs for their ability to break down social conditioning as well as to create a new, albeit temporary, world: ‘drugs just make worlds within the world, altered states within an unchanging State, exclusive spaces that cut off outsiders but unite those who visit’.28 Not surprisingly, this approach to life draws criticism, even from within rave spheres. As one contributor to the Dance UK list spat in the lead-up to the 1997 UK general election,

it’s true about the chemical generation being true Thatcher children isn’t it? Based on some of the contributions to this list, you could safely assume that our only objectives are the next party and getting our drugs legal. Well, I’m sorry but I thought there was more to the culture than that - after all, we don’t exist in a vacuum and we all form part of a wider community - there are other issues for fucks sakes ... 60% of 18-25 year olds probably won’t vote in this election and

26 Miranda Sawyer, ‘Where were you when the Nineties happened?’, The Face, January 1997, pp. 49-50.
27 Hills, ‘Never mind the bollocks, here’s the Sex Pistols’, p. 138.
28 Sawyer, ‘Where were you when the Nineties happened?’, p. 49.
they deserve what they fucking get, which may well be a fifth term of repression by the old school tie contingent. 29

Although many ravers distance themselves from traditional politics and do not have an overt political manifesto, it is clear that raves oppose the system. As one raver argued:

I see raves as TAZs [Temporary Autonomous Zones], where we can practice living as if we are free ... where we learn to live and take care of ourselves ... In addition, gathering together to create healthy communities in a culture that seeks to ... give us a false sense of community based on MTV and consumption is a radical and political act. Creating art and play outside of the marketplace ... is a radical and political act. 30

Raves became a melting pot of interests and causes, including hedonists, who cared only about having a good time, politically tinged anti-commercial groups, who saw rave as part of a way of life separate from extraneous consumption, and entrepreneurs, who identified a good opportunity to make money by organising events or selling drugs.

Whether raves are overtly political or not, many began to see rave music as ‘the new folk music, the voice of the culturally dispossessed’. 31

To the British government and the respectable classes, rave and its many associated offshoots of alternative anti-commercial culture were the biggest threat to law and order since punks, twenty years earlier. As one political British: rave organiser put it,

The government know ... that it’s dangerous for a lot of like-minded people to come together in something which is totally opposite to their value system. Their value system is money, and ours is nothing to do with money, it’s free. That’s as opposite as you can get. 32

29 Marc Dauncey, ‘The apathy and the ecstasy’, UK Dance Newslist (listserv@tqmcomms.co.uk), 23 April 1997.
Rave and Recreational Drugs

Judge: 'What is acid house music?'
Inspector Brown: 'I have seen it on Top of the Pops. It is just a din, a noise which goes on and on. No rhythms, no words, but it seems to be the current trend'.
Judge: 'If he had played country or Beatles music, would it have made a difference?'
Brown: 'Probably'.
Judge: 'What do you intend to charge them with?'
Brown: 'After I heard what kind of music was being played, I intended to charge them under the Misuse of Drugs Act'.

From the trial of party organisers in Dundee, UK, 1989.33

Confounding matters for the establishment was youth's flagrant disregard of the consequences of 'hard', 'mind altering' chemicals like Ecstasy and LSD. In the space of a decade drugs had replaced sexuality as the most pervasive 'symbol of disorder and diminished social control'.34 Numerous studies in the mid 1990s found a high acceptance of drugs and high usage amongst youth and even children. One British study found that 51% of youth between the age of 14 and 16 had taken illegal drugs, whilst half of those who had not tried drugs expected to do so in the next year.35 Often the authors of these studies urged authorities to recognise drugs as 'a normal part of the leisure-pleasure landscape'. They also warned that wholesale prosecutions of 'otherwise law-abiding citizens ... will do little for this generation's respect regarding the authority of the law'.36

33 Quoted in Collin & Godfrey, Altered State, p. 113. Acid house was the precursor to rave.
Such suggestions, however, outrage the State and society’s moral guardians. A classic example was the reaction to Brian Harvey, of the UK chart topping pop band East 17, who publicly claimed that Ecstasy was safe and could make you a better person. East 17 immediately expelled him, and in scenes reminiscent of the moral chaos caused by punk, radio stations throughout the UK banned East 17 from their playlists. Several radio DJ’s even smashed East 17 records live on air, encouraging listeners to do the same. Rather than promoting reasoned discussion about the use of Ecstasy, politicians launched a hysteria. Nigel Evans, Secretary of the Parliamentary Drugs Misuse Group described Harvey’s comments as ‘unbelievably irresponsible’. Harvey, he added was ‘an idol to many young and impressionable fans’, and ‘may have just condemned some of them to death by his talk’.37

The main thrust of most governments’ anti-drug education campaigns are morally simplistic - and politically naive - ‘just say no’ campaigns which incorrectly tell youth that all drugs are ‘evil’. Moreover, when a first time marijuana or Ecstasy user discovers that everything they had been told about drugs is wrong, they began to question what authorities and educators tell them. Thus, an introduction to drugs becomes a political experience, encouraging the user to question aspects of society. As Irvine Welsh, author of *Trainspotting*, points out,

prohibitionist drug policies have led to the growth of an outlaw culture which, while lending the night out a vicarious buzz, serve to alienate more and more people from the mainstream. Government (and Parliament in general) is seen by many as, at best, a bit of a sad joke and at worst as a force of vicious opposition. As the state loses moral authority, it becomes more oppressive.38

37 Roger Hannah, ‘Shamed Harvey is now one-man banned’, *Scottish Daily Record*, 17 January 1997, p. 4.
Another consequence of the lack of objective information on drugs is that the first time user, after discovering that everything they had been told about marijuana is wrong, assumed the same to be true for crack and heroin. The heavy handed approach to drugs does not frighten youth away from drugs, rather it contributes to addictions and overdoses. Furthermore, it prevents the free exchange of information. Health workers are not taking truly preventative steps because they fear being seen as contravening government drug policy. In a similar vein, a New Zealand drug reference text for counsellors provides an example of the narrow line health workers feel they have to tread in regard to drug education. In doing so the text shows a seemingly paradoxical attitude to drug information. The authors state the book aims to be, 'truly educative with no “propaganda” or deletion of delicate information on drugs'. But, as the authors continue, 'therefore it cannot be published and distributed through bookshops, or otherwise generally available to the public'.

This strict, ‘just say no’ attitude to drug education even prevents the free exchange of information in the underground. One raver said that he didn’t want to be seen as saying he was anti-drugs, because ‘then you seem like part of the right-wing, puritan thing’.

Among the middle aged and middle classes, drug use by their ‘impressionable’ children is their number one fear, a fear fuelled by both respectable broadsheets and tabloid newspapers. Nor is this panic confined to the UK. In New Zealand, the Evening Post recently told horror stories of teenage drug use on its front page. The paper quoted one fourteen year old as saying, ‘I tried my first mushroom during interval and I started hallucinating during English’.

Not wishing to be seen as soft on law and order issues,

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governments have introduced stiffer penalties for drug dealing, as well as for those who threaten the social and moral fabric of society. In 1994 the British government passed the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. As well as banning unlicensed raves (rave music being legally defined as ‘amplified music including sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats’\(^\text{42}\)) and public gatherings, the Act also removed the right of the individual to remain silent. Civil libertarian groups saw the Act as a means to suppress diversity and dissent. Rave historian Matthew Collin agreed, adding that the goal of the bill was to ‘strengthen the property rights of landowners, to quell dissenters, to usher people back into licensed leisure patterns, and to proscribe lifestyles that were anathema to the Tory vision of a compliant, consumerist country’.\(^\text{43}\) Across the Atlantic, the US government also implemented tough anti-drug laws. Eric Sterling, President of the Criminal Justice Policy Foundation, claimed that the government’s long standing war on drugs has reached such a repressive level that the laws and tactics used violate every one of the Bill of Rights’ Amendments.\(^\text{44}\) In New Zealand, fears over drug use have also reached excessive levels. For example, at Whakatane High School sniffer dogs now randomly search school buses for drugs.\(^\text{45}\) The battle over drugs is part of a war by governments against what they define as undesirable. Youth, in turn, see such measures as proof that New Right society is becoming more authoritarian: the war on drugs is a war waged against youth.


\(^{43}\) Collin & Godfrey, \textit{Altered State}, p. 221.


Amongst youth the war on drugs is a morally bankrupt assault in light of the commercialisation of other narcotics such as alcohol, nicotine, and Valium. The number of deaths caused by drinking or smoking, not to mention other social problems caused by both drugs, far outweigh the dangers of recreational drugs. Many of the latter are safer than the socially accepted alternatives. The medical establishment’s prescription of Prozac, a powerful anti-depressant, exposes the extent of the hypocrisy. Of course, socially sanctioned drugs are those that help maintain the status quo, a point well made by the British youth magazine *The Face*. Prozac, it argued,

is the pill for the people who’d prefer to embrace society, not reject it. Indeed, at a time when society itself seems to be unravelling, then perhaps it’s no surprise that the most popular new drug of the decade (eight million American users at the last count) is the one that promises to make you feel normal not strange.46

Ultimately the war on drugs is doomed to failure. Indeed, Alexander Shulgin, the re-discoverer of Ecstasy and one of the world’s few psychedelic researchers, says that,

it’s such a sad use of the term ‘war’. One of the operating principles of the military is never engage in a war you cannot win. This is a war that cannot be won. As long as there are people, the drive for altering consciousness, for intoxication, for flaunting authority is in there and drugs will be here forever - you’re not going to eliminate them.47

If the huge numbers of young people taking recreational drugs today are any indication of future trends, the war on drugs will be lost, if not to the forces of reason, then to time, as a newer drug-familiar generation replaces an older resistant generation. But in the meantime, important questions remain: what will the effects of such repressive measures be on social freedoms, how will a repressed generation gain respect for the authority of the law, and what does the future hold for rave, the movement which legitimised recreational drug using amongst contemporary youth?

Rave has the potential to effect genuine changes on society. Such change, by definition, can only come through popularisation. At present, although rave is nurtured largely by groups with anti-commercial philosophies, commercial interests are well aware of its popularity. Such popularity, whether fostered by anti-commercial sentiments or not, entails a large amount of money. For example, one estimate in 1993 valued the British dance scene at £1.8 billion. The economy of small Mediterranean islands, such as Ibiza, are now largely based on travelling ravers visiting the island’s famous nightclubs. Top dance DJ’s can command as much as one thousand pounds for two hours work. Even literature relating to rave culture - academic and non-academic, fiction and non-fiction - is proliferating at a remarkable rate with publishers scrambling for ‘rave authors’.

The Criminal Justice Act enabled the commercial appropriation of rave. The Act drove raves out of muddy paddocks and open warehouses into licensed, government certified night clubs. This led to the ‘superclub’, night clubs which signed deals with brands such as Pepsi and Sony.

What was originally intended as an alternative to the ‘mainstream’ ... had generated a new mainstream ... The Saturday night dance session - and house music itself - was no longer considered in any way subversive or extraordinary, merely the natural thing to do if you considered yourself hip. Drug use excluded, there was no leap of faith involved, no huge commitment necessary. Mainstream house clubbing, with its closed-circuit security cameras, registered door supervisors and council-imposed procedural guidelines, had become the regulated opposite of its illicit origins.

On the one hand, the Criminal Justice Act had imposed order on a powerful potential source of change. Inside the commercial, regulated structures, rave was seen by some as impotent. Rave politics revolved around creating art and play outside the

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marketplace. Commercial arrangements went against all the anti-commercial and anti-profit tenets of rave philosophy. One raver likened the commercial rave movement to ‘a capitalist kraal’, adding that, ‘club culture used to talk a lot about “freedom”. It’s turning out to be the freedom to be farmed’.50 Another writer commented that ‘the commercial [dance] festival scene offers little more than another shopping experience, where an attendant wallet is valued and encouraged far more than participation’.51 Like punks, some ravers resented the popularisation of ‘their’ music. One raver argued that the commercialisation of rave would destroy the artistic quality of music:

by removing the constraints on our subcultural social lives, they will actually destroy the very subcultures that make British cities so vibrant. Sounds crazy? Well, consider: hasn’t British subculture always thrived on secrecy, on being forced underground? Haven’t its practitioners always defined themselves by their opposition to mainstream society? The Continent may well be more relaxed about night-time socialising, but it hasn’t generally produced the same variety and quality of music, clubs and street style as the UK, has it?52

On the other hand, by driving raves into the commercial sphere, the Criminal Justice Act may have helped promote drug use more than any psychedelic prophets such as Tim Leary. In order to be more than just a fashion for those at the cultural vanguard, rave has to become popular. In the commercial structure the power o7 rave lies in its promotion of drugs. According to one raver, drugs are ‘an integral part of the scene - almost a religion’.53 Certainly, drug seizures in the UK have increased since the popularisation of rave. Between 1988 and 1995 the numbers of drug seizures in the UK rose 500 percent.54 Furthermore, although not all ravers approach the scene with a view to taking drugs, it is clear that the majority do. A 1996 survey of two large commercial

50 Quoted in Collin & Godfrey, Altered State, p. 271.
53 Nick Thorpe, ‘Drugs remain all the rave for Scots clubbers’, The Scotsman, 4 April 1997, p. 11.
54 Collin & Godfrey, Altered State, p. 280.
raves in Scotland showed that 96 percent of ravers had taken drugs at some point, while 93 percent had taken drugs in the last six months. Moreover, the survey also provided statistics to show that rave, and drug taking, is no longer supported solely by a underground, alternative movement. The survey found that 61 percent of dancers at the two raves had jobs.\(^55\) Although statistics are scarce and less than reliable, it seems that during the first drug ‘revolution’ in the 1960s relatively few people tried psychedelics; by contrast today’s youth could rightly be called the ‘chemical generation’. While anti-drug campaigners of the 1960s, in the course of promoting a hysteria, claimed that 3.6 million Americans were taking LSD, Timothy Leary guessed the number to be around 100,000.\(^56\) Police drug statistics in 1997, although almost always overblown, show a large amount of Ecstasy use. They estimate that two million tablets are sold every week in the UK.\(^57\) Even allowing for gross over-estimation, and for users taking multiple doses at one time, this is a large number of Ecstasy users.

Hippies hoped that drugs would change the shape of society by short-circuiting years of social conditioning. LSD historian Jay Stevens argues that after immersion in LSD one couldn’t,

> go back to the 9-to-5 world of sales managers and upward mobility ... For most, the psychedelic experience dealt a serious blow to their desire for power, and all those buttresses to the power urge that go by the name ambition. Suddenly they had nothing to motivate them, particularly when they backed away from the rigours of the ancient pursuit of Mammon.\(^58\)

Lack of numbers, however, hampered the hippies. But in the 1990s, a commercially supported ‘scene’, paradoxically, introduces vast numbers to potentially subversive life-changing drugs. Irvine Welsh believes that the ‘Ecstasy generation’ has blown

\(^{55}\) Thorpe, ‘Drugs remain all the rave for Scots clubbers’, p. 11.


\(^{58}\) Stevens, Storming Heaven, p. 496.
away the idea of careerism and cash accumulation as the be-all-and-end-all. Sod the trinket-like consumer durables, people fancied having a life instead. Loads of ordinary people were just saying ‘yes, thank you’ to the [Ecstasy] vibe and, by implication, ‘just saying no’ to the approved lifestyles on offer.\

If Welsh is correct then rave and drug taking offers a significant opportunity to change some fundamental ideas in society and narrow minded approaches to recreational drugs will only exacerbate the extent of change.

However, Welsh is naive. In the current social mood, raves and drugs are fashion statements. Where the underground valued drugs for the very reason that they removed individuals’ emphasis away from commercialism, it is the commercial sphere that has adopted, if not drugs themselves (due to their illegality), then all other facets of the drug experience ranging from drug inspired psychedelic imagery, graphics and language to rave events, music and fashion. Raves and drugs have shifted from being a tool of anti-commercial politics and of psychedelic self-realisation to being one mainly of commercial hedonism and profit. In the commercial sphere rave is an approved lifestyle, with drugs losing all revolutionary potential. The consumption of drugs is taking place in an environment that celebrates the system, instead of an oppositional underground. In these conditions recreational drugs fit in nicely with contemporary life as it stands, acting like the ‘soma’ of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, which served as a holiday from responsibility, keeping the populace happy in the weekend, ready for work and consumption on Monday. Rave may have revolutionary potential, but most likely it will rearrange mainstream fashion, rather than mainstream politics. Whether commercially supported raves and drug taking will introduce neophytes into the underground, and help diffuse rave politics and anti-commercial philosophies, or whether it will be limited to the popularisation of drug use remains to be seen. In the concluding chapter, I offer a

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tentative theoretical explanation of the links between the economy, youth culture, and New Right politics.
Chapter Five

Capitalism and Culture: Towards a Theory of Youth Style and Politics

One of the most far reaching economic changes since the end of the Second World War has been the emergence of late, or 'consumer',\textsuperscript{1} capitalism, which signifies a shift from an economy based on heavy manufacturing to one reliant on consumption. Although hotly debated, there is an emerging consensus amongst social theorists that changes in late capitalism since the 1970s represent a transition in capitalist development. Although economic turning points are impossible to date precisely, David Harvey characterises late capitalism prior to the sharp recession of 1973 as Fordist.\textsuperscript{2} As explained in chapter two, Fordism was based on mass production driven by mass consumption. The recession introduced a highly flexible post-Fordist system, based on 'specialised consumption'.\textsuperscript{3}

Criticism of post-Fordist theory centres mainly around the nature of this transition, in other words, 'whether the emerging new [post-Fordist] trends represent a radical break with the past or a refinement or modification of old trends'.\textsuperscript{4} Indeed, Harvey warns against overemphasising the impact of post-Fordism on late capitalism. He discusses the changes in terms of superficial appearances: 'these changes, when set against the basic rules of capitalistic accumulation, appear more as shifts in surface

\textsuperscript{2} David Harvey, \textit{The Condition of Postmodernity,} Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 124. Late capitalism is differentiated as Fordist (prior to 1973) and post-Fordist (after 1973).
appearance rather than as signs of the emergence of some entirely new post-capitalist or even post-industrial society'. However, as Krishan Kumar observes, the shift to post-Fordism has brought about substantial changes and, just as Taylorist scientific management and the Fordist assembly line introduced changes in the 1920s, it is difficult to deny their significance. Kumar argues that whilst 'neither marks a fundamental break in the order of capitalist industrialism', 'both sets of changes are important'. He adds,

the danger ... is to harp too much on the theme of continuity and to refuse to acknowledge that new things are afoot. At the very least we should protest again at the comprehensiveness of categories of 'capitalism' or even 'industrialism', and to insist that changes 'within the system' - when was there a change of the system? - should not be treated as trivial. In any case, changes within the system, if they continue, presumably modulate at some point into changes of the system. Although it is probably too early to judge the epochal impact of these economic changes, their impact on the social and political environment is anything but superficial.

In late capitalism, culture should not be viewed as part of the superstructure. Instead, as Scott Lash suggests, culture is 'part and parcel of the economy'. Stuart Hall agrees:

if 'post-Fordism' exists, then it is as much a description of cultural as of economic change. Indeed, [the base-superstructure] distinction is now quite useless. Culture has ceased to be, if it ever was, a decorative addendum to the 'hard world' of production and things, the icing on the cake of the material world.

Certainly, the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism has had an impact on the Zeitgeist, the social mood or experienced tempo of the times. Changes in capitalism, such as the move towards post-Fordism, are accompanied by shifts in social and political conditions.

- Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, p. 64.
- Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, p. 64.
- Quoted in Amin, 'Post-Fordism', p. 31.
Youth, an increasingly important sector of the population since the 1950s, are particularly responsive to these changes, because they 'have yet to form stable vocational and social attachments, because they receive most directly and fully the socializing efforts of established institutions, and because they are future-oriented'.\footnote{Richard Flacks, *Youth and Social Change*, Markham, Chicago, 1971, p. 6.}

Certain sectors of youth, and their response to changes, have helped profoundly alter the *Zeitgeist* several times since the Second World War. Jeffrey Alexander identifies four distinct moods in the post-Second World War era: modernism, anti-modernism, post-modernism and neo-modernism.\footnote{Jeffrey C Alexander, 'Modern, anti, post and neo', *New Left Review*, no. 210, 1995, pp. 63-101.} In the 1960s counterculture and anti-modernism dominated the social mood; in the 1970s it was punk and post-modernism. Since the late 1980s the mood has been dominated by grunge, the continuance of post-modernism and the emergence of neo-modernism. Different moods generally co-exist, further complicating the analysis. Postmodernism and the New Right, which represent early neo-modernism, have co-existed since the early 1980s. Moreover, society is affected not only by the *Zeitgeist* of the present instance, but also by the residues of the past.\footnote{Alexander, 'Modern, anti, post and neo', p. 67.} Alexander’s schema provides a useful analytical tool to examine the shifting values and attitudes and, more importantly, the political expressions and aspirations of Western youth. It is also useful in explaining trends in fashion and youth style.

The *Zeitgeist*, as a connotative term, is by nature meta-narrativistic and inexact. However, this does not render the concept unusable. Such shifts in social mood, especially when they accompany economic change, feed back into society to affect nearly every sphere of life. At present post-modernism has a large influence on Western
music, fashion, morality, social, political and intellectual thought, and even in sport and recreation.

In this chapter, I propose that the economy is the motor of youth culture: changes in economics, such as those from Fordism to post-Fordism, with its accompanying shifts in political and social conditions, are reflected in changes in the Zeitgeist, and ultimately cultural norms - especially those subscribed to by youth.

**Fordism, Modernity, Anti-modernity, and Conformity**

As David Harvey argues, Fordism was not simply a system of mass production, rather it was ‘a total way of life’. For example, Henry Ford’s highly automated regime of work involved ‘a new type of worker and a new type of man’. They were, in Frederick Taylor’s words, ‘trained gorillas’. In order to discipline his workers and acquaint them to his regime of work, Ford employed an army of inspectors. They were instructed to restructure workers’ private lives: ‘Fordism meant the assembly line, but it also meant Prohibition and “puritanism”, the attempt to regulate the sexual and familial life of the worker along with his work life’.

As a ‘total way of life’, Fordism profoundly affected the Zeitgeist, the social mood, or tempo, of the times. The post-war social mood became directly linked to an economic and political system that celebrated ‘massness’. The Zeitgeist affected all spheres of life: the society of ‘trained gorillas’ and mass consumers also built bleak architecture, forged a mass education and a mass welfare system, and subscribed to

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16 Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, p. 50.
mass class based politics. Fordist economies of scale produced cultures of limited scope, with limited lifestyle choices. The social mood of the times was one of conformity: ‘this orthodoxy, hard to recapture today, was narrow, solemn and hieratic’. As a student in the 1950s, Richard Flacks remembers a McCarthyist political apathy based on a fear that a ‘stand on any issue’ might lead to trouble, as well as, the virtual miasma of blandness that engulfed student life during those years. Blandness was expressed in the way students looked - the crew-cuts, the Ivy League charcoal gray clothes, the bermuda shorts, and the circle pins. And underneath the apathy and blandness was the sense that everyone was trying to ‘make it’ - into a secure, ‘privatized’, corporate and suburban niche.

While Fordism remained relatively intact until the economic slump of the 1970s, it nonetheless generated considerable criticism. First, large scale social movements, such as the black civil rights and feminist movements, grew in response to the failure of blacks and women to achieve social equality, in particular access to secure, meaningful and highly paid employment, and hence to the ‘much-touted joys of mass consumption’. Second, middle class youth started to question the social structures in which they were immersed. Ironically, this stemmed from the Fordist mass higher education system: ‘no longer was higher education to be restricted to the task of socializing the future governing class; it was now to produce a mass of people to do the advanced work of technological development and social management’. Tertiary education grew rapidly in response to this demand: during the 1960s the number of youth entering college doubled. It was also the linchpin of the consumption based society: ‘the educational system was to become the primary route for upward mobility,

18 Flacks, Youth and Social Change, p. 2.
21 Flacks, Youth and Social Change, p. 36.
the route that would enable millions of youth to achieve comfortable incomes and relatively high status even though their families had no real property'. However, university staff, particularly younger members, also encouraged rational criticism. Students applied these techniques to their own circumstances and identified poverty and inequality as enduring products of capitalism not withstanding the promises of the mass welfare system. Such analyses in turn bolstered the newly formed anti-war, civil rights and feminist social movements, and also fostered other movements such as the greens and the new leisure movement. Students started to question fundamental assumptions about capitalism. Instead of supporting the social order, students started ‘dropping out’ and created a counterculture. The political and drop-out threads came together and transformed the Zeitgeist. In this new ‘anti-modernist’ mood, capitalism was no longer ‘rational, independent, modern, and liberating but backward, greedy, anarchic, and impoverishing’. Anti-modernism was also a response to Fordist conformity and the cultural orthodoxy of the 1950s. Nonetheless, despite this change in Zeitgeist, the mainstream in Fordist society remained committed to universal values and cultural conformity. A policeman at a US Congressional hearing on drug use held in 1966 said that one of the dangers of illegal drugs was their effects on social norms. Holding up a photograph of a youth he said,

I'm sure you'll agree that this young lad is certainly a nonconformist. He is presently under the influence of LSD when this photograph ... was taken. He has painted his face and his jacket, the nonconformist signs on the back of his jacket together with his face would certainly indicate the young lad was a nonconformist with our society as we know it today.

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23 Alexander, ‘Modern, anti, post and neo’, p. 78.
The way in which youth transformed the *Zeitgeist* illustrates their importance in Western society. Before the Second World War youth constituted a relatively small and uninfluential group. As both consumers and producers of commodities, post-war youth gained an increasingly loud ‘voice’, which only further increased with technological advancements, especially television.

Changes in capitalism, and accompanying shifts in social and political conditions, thus transformed the actions and reactions of certain sectors of youth and ultimately the post-war social mood. As Antonio Gramsci puts it, ‘new methods of work are inseparable from a specific mode of living and of thinking and feeling life’.26 But anti-modernist movements, although they had a huge effect on the *Zeitgeist*, and indeed the lives of millions of individuals, did not significantly change the economic and political structure, although they came close in places such as Paris in 1968.27 John Lennon said in 1970 when asked about the impact of the Beatles on British history:

> the people who are in power and the class system and the whole bullshit bourgeois scene is exactly the same except there is a lot of middle-class kids with long hair walking around London in trendy clothes and Kenneth Tynan’s making a fortune out of the word ‘fuck’ ... The same bastards are in control, the same people are running everything, it’s exactly the same ... They’re doing exactly the same things, selling arms to South Africa, killing blacks on the street, people are living in fucking poverty with rats crawling over them ... The dream is over. It’s just the same only I’m thirty and a lot of people have long hair, that’s all.28

Although a reaction to Fordism, anti-modernism and its concomitant countercultural lifestyles dried up with the decline of Fordism in the early 1970s.

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Post-Fordism, Post-modernism and Individualism

The stock market crash of 1973 exposed the shortcomings of Fordism for all to see. Fordism ‘precluded ... flexibility of design and presumed stable growth in invariant consumer markets’. It was a rigid and unwieldy system. The first major post-Second World War recession, which stemmed largely from the Arab oil embargo that year, prompted a reconfiguration from rigid Fordism to a highly flexible post-Fordist system.

Robin Murray argues that in post-Fordism production,

the keyword is flexibility - of plant and machinery, as of products and labour. Emphasis shifts from scale to scope, and from cost to quality. Organisations are geared to respond to, rather than regulate, markets. They are seen as frameworks for learning as much as instruments of control. Their hierarchies are flatter and more open. The guerrilla force takes over from the standing army.

Post-Fordist methods of work produced post-modernist modes of ‘living and thinking and feeling life’. Whereas Fordism was based on mass consumption, post-Fordism utilised not only specialized consumption but competitively individualised consumption. Post-Fordism encouraged individuals to distinguish and differentiate themselves by different arrangements of commodities. These new forms of consumption had little in common with the collective norms and values of the 1950s and 1960s.

Just as Fordism encouraged conformity in the Zeitgeist, post-Fordism fostered ‘the rise and promotion of individualist modes of thought and behaviour’. Post-Fordist societies gave ‘relatively wide scope to individual creativity and initiative’ with

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29 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 142.
31 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 171.
33 Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, p. 52.
individuals affording ‘high priority to self-expression both in their work and in political
life’. This flexible, individualistic mode of work had two effects, both of which were
reactions to anti-modernism. The first was the growth of the New Right, an amalgam of
liberal and conservative ideologies and philosophies, and a reaction to the gains made
by the left in the late 1960s. A cornerstone of New Right economic philosophy is
individual economic responsibility. The increasing dominance of the New Right from
the late 1970s onwards signified the end of the ‘provision of standardised, collective
goods and services by the bureaucratic state’. For example, the New Right criticised
Fordist welfare bureaucracies for their ‘massness’, and consequently began to dismantle
them in the 1980s. Nowhere was post-Fordist individualism more evident than in
Margaret Thatcher’s Britain and Ronald Reagan’s United States.

Post-Fordist capitalism also helped produce the first post-modern youth
movements, including punk. Economic restructuring and social and political
readjustment towards post-Fordism, combined with two recessions in the 1970s,
produced a long term economic decline which stood in stark contrast with the previous
three decades of economic prosperity. British youth, for example, faced, amongst other
things, the highest rate of teenage unemployment in the United Kingdom since the
Second World War. Whereas the prosperity of the previous decade produced youth
who had a positive, albeit alternative, focus, the 1970s witnessed the emergence of

widespread nihilism amongst youth: ‘the punk followers create an appearance of outrage which appeals to those who feel there is no future, no work and bleak prospects’.

But as Marshall Berman sees it, this nihilism was not overarching. Punk rock is, ‘a medium that proclaims and dramatizes radical negation without radical hope, and yet manages to create some sort of hope out of its overflow of energy and honesty and the communal warmth it ignites’. In part these youth directed their outrage at anti-modern movements which they said had failed to effect any lasting change on the world. Punks declared that they would never trust a hippie. They built their value system around personal honesty and integrity, two philosophical ingredients punks appropriated from the counterculture. Determined not to fail like the counterculture, punks presented themselves as even more socially outrageous and profane. Punk expressed a commitment to individualism and personal integrity through music, dancing, clothes, hair and attitude. Among post-modern intellectuals, the failure of the French student and worker uprising of May 1968 was a ‘defeat of utopia’, that ‘undermine[d] the meaning structures of intellectual life’. They retreated into nihilistic language-based theory, resolving ‘never to go out again, and dug themselves into a grand metaphysical tomb, thick and tight enough to furnish lasting comfort against the cruel hopes of spring’.

The New Right and punk are embodiments of two regimes of post-modernism that Scott Lash identifies as articulating with post-Fordism. "Mainstream
postmodernism" or the 'postmodernism of reaction' fits 'rather snugly with the requirements of late capitalism'. It celebrates the T-shirt slogan, 'I shop, therefore I am.' In the words of Lash, it 'positions subjects in fixed places and fosters social hierarchies based on cultural objects functioning as status symbols and the principles of "distinction"'. On the other hand, 'oppositional postmodernism', or the 'postmodernism of resistance', refuses to celebrate individual consumerism and advocates continued community social ties. It rejects the hierarchy of distinction, and instead 'fosters an open subject positioning and eo ipso the tolerance of a variety of other subject positions; cultural objects here function not to create invidious distinctions, but to construct collective identity on the non-hierarchical principle of "difference"'.

These two regimes equate with two co-determinous social moods. Alexander believes that mainstream postmodernism, combined with New Right politics, represents the birth of neo-modernism - the revival of modernist themes previously seen in the 1950s. In other words, the free market is undergoing a rebirth, capitalism is once again being viewed by many as, 'rational, interdependent, modern and liberating'. On the other side, oppositional postmodernism is the basis for the cynical post-modernism of the punks and other alternative youth movements.

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51 Foster, 'Postmodernism', p. xii.
53 Alexander, 'Modern, anti, post and neo', p. 78.
54 Again, it should be noted that individuals' positions are neither fixed nor definite - they are fluid. Some move easily from position to position and back again. However, for the sake of comparison I make direct contrasts between mainstream postmodernism and oppositional postmodernism.
Both Zeitgeists celebrate individuality: mainstream postmodernism has resulted in the dismantling of mass social ties and encourages individuals to strive to consume - on the principle of distinction, while oppositional postmodernism demands individuals pursue lifestyles which they perceive to be freely chosen, based on living life how you want to - through the principle of difference. The ascendant post-Fordist regime is mainstream postmodernism. Here markets determine lifestyles. Even those that appear to operate outside the market - such as those inspired by oppositional postmodernism - are either incorporated into the post-Fordist market through commodification, or they are suppressed. As demonstrated by the treatment of the Travellers (chapter four), this suppression can be violent.

The rise of the New Right in the late 1970s, and its subsequent triumph from 1980s onwards, led to the principles of distinction holding sway over the Zeitgeist. It was the era of the yuppie - the young urban professional. Yuppies embodied competitive individualism through their habits of conspicuous consumption. While a diverse group, punk, and other related philosophies, mostly resided in the oppositional postmodernist regime and rejected the blind followers of fashion. Nonetheless, punks also embodied conspicuous individuality. Whereas yuppies sought individuality through status symbols, punks built their individuality around non-conformist ideas and deviation from social norms, especially in fashion.

Initially, in the 1970s, many punks embodied an oppositional postmodernism through their espousal of the philosophy of being true to one’s self. Strategically this involved, simply, doing what one wanted. All that united and engendered a sense of inclusion and community amongst these anti-social punks was a distrust of the outside.

world. However, at the end of the decade punk social norms shifted. As early as 1977 the process of media incorporation had begun: punk joined the mainstream fashion world when *Cosmopolitan* reviewed Zandra Rhodes’ punk collection. Punk’s rebellious image attracted youth but even that was too much for some, as one ‘ex-punk’ explains by recalling her youth:

> I cringe when I think of that Nazi uniform now, though, at the time, I think I just felt like it was something a bit naughty ... They called me Flash Linda because, I guess, I always looked too clean, too glamorous to be a real punk. I did try spitting a couple of times, but it seemed unsanitary.

A significant proportion of punks embraced mainstream postmodernism’s competitiveness. To many, punk became, in a sense, a competition about individualism. Due to the influx of ‘fashion victims’ like Flash Linda, debates, accentuated by occasional physical violence, raged over who expressed social opposition most effectively and who, therefore, espoused the true punk ethic. Punk became ‘obsessed with its own authenticity’, in other words punks strove to become ‘hyper-punk’. These punks achieved individuality through competitive non-conformity. Here is one fairly typical attitude expressed by an ‘alternative’ youth in the 1980s:

> everyone wanted a different look to everyone else ... Punks, new romantics, goths, rockabillies, none of them wanted exactly the same haircut, and one-upmanship became the predictable raison d’être for most night club denizens. There was little bonhomie, and it was every haircut for himself.

Youth in general, both ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ spent extensive amounts of time shaping their appearance, applying makeup, re-styling their hair, and wearing ‘appropriate’ clothes.

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Things changed. In the late 1980s the New Right consolidated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the leading proponent of a non-market alternative to Western capitalism. While neo-modernism and post-modernism co-existed through the 1980s, in the 1990s neo-modernism became increasingly dominant. Neo-modernism, based on mainstream postmodernism and New Right politics and economics, has at its core a revitalised emphasis on the benefits of democratic capitalism not seen since the 1950s. It reasserts the positive attributes of capitalism: economic freedom, liberating, political and rational thinking. The late 1980s ultimately produced fatalistic and apathetic youth. With the success of the New Right, the rise of neo-modernism, and the emergence of grunge around 1987 and the stock market crash, youth in the late 1980s and 1990s do not see any non-market alternatives emerging in the foreseeable future. Allan Bloom, an American philosopher, criticised late 1980s youth for being, amongst other things, self-centred and lacking any sense of inherited wisdom from the past. On the contrary, these youth had learned the lessons of the past all too well. Grunge youth displayed apathy and resignation because of the failure of political activists to overthrow the obnoxious and unjust aspects of Western capitalism. Political activism failed and so grunge youth believe that the only place left for change resides in one’s personal space.

Grunge rejects both the conspicuous consumption of the yuppies and the competitive non-conformity of punks. Grunge parodied both 1980s competitiveness and its own lack of political motivation with two words - ‘loser’ and ‘slacker’. For example, the 1991 film Slacker depicted unemployed youth, while in 1994 US musician Beck released his song, ‘Loser’, which contained the refrain, ‘I’m a loser baby, so why don’t

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61 Alexander, 'Modern, anti, post and neo', p. 65.
you kill me?' But grunge still retained punk's spirit of difference. One grunge youth replied when asked about her fashion style, 'I don't dress to make a statement or to get attention, but I don't want to look mainstream either.' Functional, plain, skateboarding-based fashions replaced yuppie glamour and the perverse glamour of punk and its offshoots. Dreadlocks replaced hairspray, make-up was ditched, combat and work boots became vogue, and grunge youth raided second hand shops as a symbolic gesture against rampant commercialism. In trying to capture the philosophy of this oppositional postmodernism inspired subculture, Coca-Cola trialed a new drink, 'OK', in 1994. Coke based its advertising campaign in the US around a non-elitist, non-judgmental slogan, 'I'm OK, you're OK'. Grunge had become commodified.

However, although an oppositional postmodernism-based subculture, once co-opted into the commercial sphere, grunge shed the philosophies of many of its punk predecessors. Instead of constructing lifestyles around symbols of the elite, individuals started to appropriate aspects from ostracised sectors of society. The alternative became the mainstream. In this climate, forms of commercialised rebellion, such as 'extreme' sport, punk and rave music and fashion, boomed. It now became an insult to be called a conformist. One cynic argued that in the 1970s, 'American teens wanted to feel part of an amorphous mass. Now they want to be individuals. Just like all their friends'.

Is 1984 the Future?

Forms of commercialised rebellion are currently immensely popular in Western society. Yet, as this thesis demonstrates, commercialised rebellion exists only in name. The

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64 Hugh Davies, 'West side sceptics as cool as Cyberia', Sunday Star Times (NZ), 12 June 1994.
adoption of styles, music and activities of alternative groups does not reflect widespread disgust at, and disapproval of, Western society. Rather, it simply reflects a highly individualistic social mood based on the philosophies of mainstream postmodernism and neo-modernism.

Neo-modernism dominates the contemporary Zeitgeist in the late 1990s. Although historians and sociologists recognise that the structural forces of capitalism facilitate both freedom and constraint, that is capitalism is conducive to conflict and antagonism as well as co-operation and harmony, neo-modernism ignores the downside and focuses solely on the enriching powers of capitalism.

Of course there is another side to this Zeitgeist. Co-determinous with neo-modernism, and hostile to its economic and political visions, is oppositional postmodernism. It rejects large scale capitalism and, like the anti-modernist critiques of the 1960s and 1970s, points to the constraining effects of capitalism and the fact that the benefits reach only a select few. Critics of New Right forms of capitalism note the outrageous salary packages paid to the leaders of big business. While food banks give food to the hungry and homeless, executives in Australia, for example, earn annual salaries of AUS$5m, plus share packages which are often worth more. Oppositional postmodernism questions the very core of capitalism. It challenges the need for hyper-consumption and the excessive drive for growth and profit. While the New Right speaks of growth, oppositional postmodernist groups talk of sustainability. For example, the organisers of the recent International Buy Nothing Day said that they wanted to highlight the damaging impact of the ‘shop-till-you-drop lifestyle’ on the environment: ‘it’s about getting our runaway consumer culture back onto a sustainable path’ claimed...

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one spokesperson.\textsuperscript{67} While the New Right talks of the overarching importance of the free market and free trade, oppositional postmodernist groups focus on morality. Money, they say, should not be more important than moral and ethical principles. For example, during the 1997 APEC forum in Vancouver, held to encourage free trade amongst Asian and Pacific nations, organisers refused to discuss either human rights abuses or the catastrophic damage to the environment being caused by massive burnoffs in south east Asia. Leaders concerned themselves solely with economic issues.\textsuperscript{68} Also, while the New Right is breaking down broad social ties, oppositional postmodernists decry the loss of community. American journalist, John Leo, aghast at the nature of commercialised rebellion and the individualistic messages big business sends to consumers, pointed to the shift away from traditional mass values occurring with the rise of the New Right and the new \textit{Zeitgeist},

\begin{quote}
The drumbeat of rule-breaking slogans has a devastating effect. Our commercial culture and the advertising industry are not just at war with traditional values. They are at war, too, with the possibility that new common values will emerge from the current social chaos. By pushing self-obsession, narcissism and contempt for all rules, they strike at the sense of connectedness that any society needs to cohere and to care about its common problems and least fortunate members ... They are busy-financing our social meltdown.\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quote}

How do neo-modernists respond to these criticisms? Mostly they dismiss their detractors as irrelevant. ‘It’s hard to take these people seriously’, said one representative of major Wisconsin businesses, adding that large corporations have been responsible for ‘more good than anything else. Corporations allow us to live the way we do today’.\textsuperscript{70}

Praising the benefits of capitalism is a common neo-modernist tactic:

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{67} Adbusters, \textit{International Buy Nothing Day}, www.adbusters.org/Pop/buynothingday.html
\item \textsuperscript{68} David Knowles, ‘Vancouver, the despots feast’, \textit{Mc Libel list} (mclibel@europe.std.com), 27 November 1997.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Quoted in Ward Morehouse, ‘Greening the corporation’, Address to the Greens Gathering, Los Angeles, 16 August 1996.
\end{itemize}
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all over the developed world, people are living longer and are better educated and better fed than ever before in the history of humanity. But many environmentalists believe that we are treading the wrong path and that industrial growth and progress are the causes of human misery rather than the solution. They want us to limit economic growth, saying it is unsustainable and ruining the planet.\textsuperscript{71}

Neo-modernists employ modernist frames of reference to attack oppositional postmodernist philosophies and ideologies. For example, a recent documentary screened on Britain’s Channel Four attacked the environmental movement ‘Characterising environmentalist ideology as unscientific, irrational and anti-humanist, this acerbic and polemical three-part series turns Green ideas on their head’, say promotional clips for the documentary.\textsuperscript{72} Interestingly, this documentary referred to few scientific facts, although propaganda doesn’t worry about facts. Oppositional postmodernism inspired groups - for example, those who question the free market, hyper-commercialism, the unrestrained development of technology such as genetically altered flora and fauna, the continuing encroachment of roads and airports into nature, the continuing disregard for the earth’s resources, the dismantling of the welfare state - are cast as unscientific luddities and old-fashioned reactionaries, hopelessly trying to drag society back into the dark ages, instead of the bright future offered by capitalism. Neo-modernists insist that progress is inevitable. Such inevitability is yet another manifestation of the Ward Morehouse’s There Is No Alternative phenomenon. In other words, the New Right, spurred on by the success of capitalism over its non-market alternative, or as Francis Fukyama puts it, the ‘end of history’, portrays the future as a certainty, in order to eliminate opposition to its uniform social vision. Instead of fighting it, the populace had


\textsuperscript{72} Quoted in ‘British documentary illustrates new PR strategy’, Press Release, Reclaim The Streets.
better get used to it. Indeed, Krishan Kumar argues that the ‘victory of market ideologies virtually throughout the world carries the potential for intense social conflicts and perhaps renewed authoritarian rule’.73

Here it is worth reiterating Hall and Jacques’ analysis of the British New Right: ‘while it speaks the language of choice, freedom and autonomy, Thatcherite society is increasingly characterised by inequality, division and authoritarianism’.74 This is partly because, although the New Right reflects the post-Fordist spirit of individualism, as Kumar states, ‘the more diversity there appears to be, the more it is accompanied by uniformity’.75 Although post-Fordist changes may in the future expand into widely felt changes in capitalism, at present, David Harvey argues,

it is not hard to see how the invariant elements and relations that Marx defined as fundamental to any capitalist mode of production still shine through, and in many instances with an even greater luminosity than before, all the surface froth and evanescence so characteristic of flexible accumulation.76

Notwithstanding their post-Fordist intentions to produce different, non-standard goods, global marketing means businesses such as Bennetton and Laura Ashley end up producing commodities that appear, ‘in almost every serial ... shopping mall in the advanced capitalist world’.77 In short, the underlying logic of capitalism ensures that ‘the same designs are repeated mechanically across the nation’.78 Steve Connor argues that, ‘the new language of difference ... is not a splitting apart of the modernist dream of universality, but a morbid intensification of it’.79

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73 Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, p. 200.
75 Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, p. 190.
77 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 296.
78 Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, p. 191.
79 Quoted in Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*, p. 191.
Punk, Rave and Snowboarding

In this chapter I have tried to show how changing economic and political conditions - mainly the shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism - have altered the Zeitgeist which, in turn, has shaped cultural norms, especially those subscribed to by youth. Post-Fordism has resulted in a Zeitgeist of individuality, with the acceptance of formerly unacceptable, alternative styles and activities. But, as I have argued in this thesis, New Right individuality is based solely on consumption. The New Right has created a political environment which shows little tolerance for alternative lifestyles or different social tastes and values that deviate from economic strictures. Yet this needn’t entail the total decline of difference. As Harvey has argued, social moods like neo-modernism are facades, superficial changes, behind which lies capitalism. Capitalism facilitates difference, especially in fashion and music, merely to survive. Certain youth subcultures, for example punk and rave, act as ‘testing grounds’ for new styles which capitalism then commodifies. Sometimes commodification requires political intervention such as the passing of new legislation. For example, by making unlicensed raves illegal, Britain’s Criminal Justice and Public Order Act forced rave out of the anti-commercial ‘underground’ into the commercial sphere. Difference either generates growth by being brought into the commercial sphere or it is suppressed, often violently. So the future under the New Right entails not the absolute repression of difference, but a very tight leash on that which exists outside the commercial sphere nonetheless. In this manner, even those punks and ravers who are apolitical, trying only to live according to their own philosophies, pose a threat to the New Right’s social vision. As anti-
modernist feminists once argued, the personal is political - creating art and play outside the marketplace is indeed a radical and political act. Offensiveness allows punks to build a buffer between themselves and capitalism. ‘Fashion punks’ are waiting for big business to find another subculture to exploit so that punk is once again uncommon and a source of individuality. Among political punks, commercial attention has both positive and negative aspects. Commercial punk bands and fashion are a conduit to punk politics. The commercial sphere offers a more widespread and powerful means of reaching people than via the independent sphere. Alice Nutter, member of the formerly independent anarchist band Chumbawamba, describes why her band decided to sign with EMI:

the more successful you are, the more people hear your lyrics, the more people might actually listen to them, think about them and if we’re really really lucky, some might even get off their butts and do something. We don’t really know if it will work out but it’s certainly worth a try ... We still want to change the whole system, turn it upside down! We’re not stars. We’re revolutionaries. We just moved our battle zones. We’re fighting the system now from within and not from the outside anymore and that’s even better; this way we can do far more than we could in the past.\(^{80}\)

However, as part of the commercial machinery, their messages, like those of Rage Against the Machine, become compromised. The challenge facing political punks is to capitalise on punk’s current high profile in the commercial sphere in order to spread their philosophies and politics. For example, Chumbawamba claims to use their high profile to bring issues before the public. At the recent Brit Music Awards, Danbert Nobacon dumped a pitcher of ice water over the British Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott to protest Labour’s ‘selling out’ the working classes and, specifically, to highlight the plight of a man fired for trying to win union rights.

\(^{80}\) Interview with NYRock, February 1998. www.nyrock.com/interviews/chumb_int.htm
Commercialism also affects political ravers in a similar fashion. In order to distribute their message, and to effect lasting change, rave must become popular. However, government and police action have turned rave into part of the legitimate entertainment industry in which anti-commercial philosophies are lost. Ravers too must, somehow, find a way to exploit commercial popularity and convince people to at least question their worlds. However, making people aware of punk and rave’s anti-commercial oppositional politics is easier said than done. In the current neo-modernist environment, the New Right has acted swiftly to crush dissenting views immediately they gain public audiences. This situation is not likely to change quickly. Neo-modernism and the New Right are far too pervasive to be suddenly removed through the election process. Just as the foundations of Nazism were laid in the 1890s, the social attitudes that produced current right-wing politics have been forming for some time:

since the 1960s, economic redistribution has become less attractive in advanced countries as voters have seen more money redistributed from them than to them. In the computer age, government increasingly seems clumsily ineffective and bossily intrusive, so voters want less of it. What they do seek is basic order - hard money, safe streets, peace in the world, a society that encourages virtue and discourages vice - and on those issues the right often has an advantage these days.\textsuperscript{81}

Snowboarding has undergone a similar process. Skiers and ski field management considered snowboarders unacceptable and banned them from ski fields. Snowboarding was able to capitalise on the niche market environment of post-Fordism. As noted previously, this was the milieu in which small businesses had wide ranging freedoms and flexibility to operate. The niche snowboarding industry did not require large Fordist-type markets to survive. As an economic force, snowboarding was something that ski field managements, often acting against the wishes of skiers, could not oppose.

Thus snowboarders have experienced both the restricting and liberating aspects of capitalism. Commercialisation gave snowboarders economic power which ensured them access to ski fields. No longer forced to hike up backcountry slopes, where they risked avalanches, and sheltered in snow caves, snowboarders gained access to skiing's infrastructure, including chair lifts, a safe riding environment, roads to the ski fields, as well as ski resort towns built up by skiers' patronage. Growth enabled snowboard companies to improve distribution and lower prices, thus giving riders' access to cheaper priced boards and equipment. Capitalism enabled talented snowboarders to live off their skills and pursue 'eternal hedonism'. It freed riders to make play of their work.

Yet, capitalism also restrains snowboarders. Snowboarding has been adopted by commercial interests and grown into a multi-million dollar, internationally recognised, over-hyped commodity. While, on the one hand, it has further boosted the professional sector of snowboarding, on the other, it has exposed professionals to attack by staunch defenders of snowboarding's anti-commercial philosophies. Professionals, if they transgress snowboarding's new leisure movement based code of ethics, are labelled 'sell outs' and ostracised for handing snowboarding's 'soul' to capitalism. There are two sides to this anti-commercial position. Certainly capitalism has the tendency to over-commercialise and trivialise an activity. However, as I have argued above, capitalism also allows professionals to support themselves and their families, and to travel the world. Ideologically 'pure' snowboarders may gain comfort from their morality but often they live on the dole (which raises other moral questions) or they survive in dead end, menial, soul destroying jobs.

Snowboarding's increased popularity also attracted the interest of non-snowboarding groups, such as the FIS and the International Olympic Committee. Much
like New Right governments who brought punk and rave into the mainstream in order to minimise both movements as threats to the social order, the FIS and IOC seek to control snowboarding. Individualistic, anti-competitive, anti-commercial and anti-bureaucratic 'extreme' sports are potentially powerful sources of change in the sports world. By placing snowboarding into the mainstream, the Olympics, thus boosting its competitive and commercial side, the FIS and IOC want to minimise snowboarding as a threat to their traditional, established world. They want to keep the status quo - without competitions and the accompanying commercialism and bureaucracy both organisations would quickly become irrelevant and unnecessary. Thus riders need to retain snowboarding's philosophy of fun and freedom, and control the over-commercialising tendencies of capitalism without becoming caught up in the mechanics of administration. Unfortunately, to keep snowboarding free, co-operative and independent of the commercial sphere, some administration is necessary. Ironically, the absence of such institutionalisation was part of the reason that attracted riders to snowboarding in the first place. Overall, if snowboarders want to retain the activity's original philosophies they will have to reject competitive riding. This is already occurring, to a certain extent.

Among some participants snowboarding's increased commercialism and popularity means that it is no longer unique, or a source of individuality. Yet they cannot ignore the advances capitalism has brought them, so they will search for another, more 'underground' activity, or wait, probably in vain, until snowboarding loses popularity. They may briefly solve their problem by making their snowboarding more offensive through anti-social behaviour, but they can't really express this on the field - ski field managers will simply confiscate their lift tickets.
Paranoia and Repression

The late 1990s are an age of increasing paranoia and distrust. This is partly because,

the mood has been cast by uncertain political and economic times, by high expectations colliding with the reality of declining real wages. Worsening matters is the fact that many of the institutions we came to depend on have betrayed us. Corporations no longer deliver lifetime employment. Charities abscond with our money. Marriages fall apart. And our government does little good in trying to tackle our mounting social problems. At the same time, our world has grown more vast and complex than most of us find comfortable ... Our office typewriter has been replaced by computers that transmit data through space we cannot see ... Our money is now dispensed by a machine and our paycheck never comes but appears magically in our bank account ... or does it?82

‘Trust?’, asks sociologist John Lachs. ‘How can you trust in things you cannot see? What we’re left with is a fundamental sense that we’re not in control of our lives, that we’re impotent’.83 For the New Right, fuelling impotence and ‘stoking distrust - of crime, of welfare freeloaders, of racial preference - has become an indispensable tool in the marketing of public policy’.84 But New Right public policy is built on a misplaced paranoia. In a social environment where many Australian adults, for example, identify ‘dole bludging’ as the most pressing problem facing society,85 even the enthusiasm and carefreeness of youth in general is distrusted and feared. The Generation Gap is more prevalent than it was in the 1960s when it was first recognised. In a recent survey of American adults, one man remarked: ‘by the time they are in high school, most of them are in trouble. They might not be in criminal trouble, but they are out there aggravating the neighbours and raising hell on the streets’.86 In the same survey, high proportions of

83 Quoted in Spayd, ‘The age of distrust is upon US’, p. 22.
84 Spayd, ‘The age of distrust is upon US’, p. 22.
85 From the Clemenger agency’s The Silent Majority III, quoted in Richard Guilliat, ‘Hey you... boy!’, Good Weekend (supplement to the Sydney Morning Herald), 22 November 1997, p. 17.
86 From Kids These Days: What Americans Really Think About the Next Generation, quoted in Andrew Hacker, ‘The war over the family’, The New York Review, 4 December 1997, p. 37
those questioned felt it is ‘very’ or ‘somewhat common’ that today’s youth are undisciplined (89%), spoiled (85%), lazy (74%), or annoying, if not a menace (71%).

The response to youth, stemming from these attitudes, has been severe. In Australia, as in New Zealand, several cities have imposed curfews on youth of a certain age. And, calls for even more limits on the civil rights of youth are being made. In NSW there is a wide support for the Street Safety Bill and the Parental Responsibility Act which promise to crackdown on youth by utilising strategies reminiscent of Britain’s draconian Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. These are not aimed at political youth or criminal youth in particular. The former would allow police to break up groups of three or more young people in public, while the latter would allow police to place such youths in 24 hour detention without charging them.

Peter Quinlivan, an Australian mall manager, finds it striking that his generation, which defined itself by its youthful anti-authoritarianism, wants police to enforce laws that constitute a form of age segregation. He sees an ominous portent in the decision by the largest shopping mall in the United States, the Mall of America in Minneapolis, to ban unaccompanied adolescents on Friday and Saturday night: ‘why does everyone forget what it’s like to be 15? It seems my generation wants to have its cake and eat it, too - we got away with absolute bloody murder and now we want everyone else to be subdued and stifled’. Anti-modernists called for individual free will, however, as Marshall Berman says: ‘modern men and women ... grow up in a state of partial freedom, but ... find this freedom such a dreadful burden that they will gladly sign over their lives to any leader or movement that will take the weight away’.

87 From Kids These Days, quoted in Hacker, ‘The war over the family’, p. 37.
88 Guilliat, ‘Hey you... boy!’, p. 17.
89 Quoted in Guilliat, ‘Hey you... boy!’, p. 20.
One source of this reaction to youth comes from the paranoid created by New Right propaganda concerning crime. The other source of this anti-youth reaction is that the shopping mall of today has replaced the town square. But there is a fundamental difference: 'a town square is a community space where people meet, whereas a shopping mall is a private building where people spend money'. With the New Right destroying so many communities, malls 'are designed to be the new community hubs', but a hub in a society where consumption is everything. Anything that gets in the way of spending is removed, including youth. You either spend or get sent home.

Under such a paranoid and repressive environment, technologies of surveillance are increasingly present in cities around the world. Police in Britain argue that people have no fear of such technology, stating, 'if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear'. It should be noted that this phrase is a direct translation from the slogan of the Stasi, the former East German secret police. Surveillance technologies do little to reduce crime. Cameras are another means of discriminating against alternative views. Operators routinely exercise their prejudices. A study by Hull University found endemic discrimination against blacks, gays, minorities and young people. As one camera operator told a television documentary crew, 'people with shirts and ties are OK. Most people you can tell by looking at them'. Another said, 'I tell by the hair'. Still, while such moves are examples of frightening discrimination as well as attacks on personal freedoms, statistics show the popularity of such surveillance. One council in Britain claims that 97 percent of residents polled supported the use of cameras; police claim

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91 Guilliatt, 'Hey you... boy!', p. 18.
92 Guilliatt, 'Hey you... boy!', p. 20.
93 'Too close circuit for comfort', Squall, no. 15. www.users.dircon.co.uk/~squall/surv.html
94 'Too close circuit for comfort', Squall.
95 Quoted in 'Too close circuit for comfort', Squall.
equally high levels of support. The hegemonic power of the New Right in suppressing difference, whether in the name of combating crime or not, is great indeed. Perhaps George Orwell in his prediction of Big Brother in 1984 was simply 15 years late. Often we don’t know what we’re giving away until its gone.

96 ‘Too close circuit for comfort’, Squall.
This bibliography consists of the following six categories:

1. Economic Development and Politics
2. Youth Culture
3. Art and Commercialism
4. Socio-Historical Aspects of Boarding
5. Newspapers and Magazines
6. Main Internet Sites

1. Economic Development and Politics


2. Youth Culture


3. Art and Commercialism


4. Socio-Historical Aspects of Boarding


5. Newspapers and Magazines

*Dominion*

*Evening Post*

*The Face*

*Forbes*

*Financial Times*

*Guardian Weekly*

*Los Angeles Times*

*Listener*
Maximumrocknroll
Money
New York Review
New Zealand Skiing Annual and Guide
New Zealand Snowboarder
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Pavement
Playboy
Real Groove
Reuters News Service
REVelation
Rip It Up
Rolling Stone
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Sydney Morning Herald
Time
The Times
Transworld Snowboarding
U.S. News & World Report

Wall Street Journal

6. Main Internet Sources

Anarchy Email List (anarchy-list@cwi.nl)

Crashsite (crashsite.com)

Explore (www.exploremag.com)

Flakezine (users.aol.com/angerinc)

McLibel Email List (mclibel@europe.std.com)

Rachel’s Environment and Health Weekly Email List (ert@rachel.clark.net)

Squall (www.users.dircon.co.uk)

SOL Snowboarding On Line (www.solsnowboarding.com)

Transworld Snowboarding (www.twsnow.com)

UK Dance Email List (listserv@tqmcomms.co.uk)