

Youth Studies in Transition

THOMAS JOHANSSON

PART I:
Positions...



Foot soldiers of Modernity

Youth are always among the first to experience, first hand, the problems and possibilities of the successive waves of technical and economic modernization sweeping through capitalist societies (PAUL WILLIS, In *Critical Youth Studies*, 2014:80).



CHANGE...

The examination of young people's lives provides a unique window on processes of social and economic change and facilitates the exploration of some of the big theoretical concerns in social science (ANDY FURLONG, *Youth Studies: An Introduction*, 2013).



Youth as problem..

In contrast to the creative and constructive ways in which children's play is cast, young people's play and leisure activities are commonly seen as potentially threatening and disturbing. (Annop Nayak & Mary Jane Kehily, 2013)



Youth transitions. modernity and cultural change

TRADITIONS IN YOUTH RESEARCH

- **Youth Transitions:** Labour market, education, adulthood, generation
- **Youth Culture:** subcultural style, resistance, symbolic work, popular culture
- **Modernity theory:** identity, reflexivity, individualization



CULTURAL STUDIES –

Class, gender, ethnicity/race and identity in transition

- RESISTANCE THROUGH RITUALS (1975) – GROUND BREAKING!!
- Changing society – Changing youth cultures
- Symbolic work
- Strong focus on resistance – struggle against the Power



YOUTH TRANSITIONS

- **FOCUS**: Transition from adolescent/youth - to adulthood
- INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS – EDUCATION/LABOUR MARKET.
- POST-ADOLESCENCE...
- **NEW TRANSITIONS?**



MY GENERATION & MODERNITY

We wish to add however that if the field of youth studies is to be a site where these questions are asked thoroughly and reflexively, it is a **mistake to predefine class, or gender and race, as processes that remain stable.**

Institutional arrangements adjust, politics is played, politics are changed, and people actively draw on unequal resources to maintaining and recreate distinctions and advantages over others in the face of **conditions that change over time** (Dan Woodman & Johanna Wyn 2015:1408).



TRANSITIONS versus **CULTURE & SUBJECTIVITY?**

- Different traditions and methodologies
- The sociology of Institutions and Life Transitions – The sociology of Culture and Symbolic work – Modernity and Reflexivity
- Possibilities of cross-fertilization?

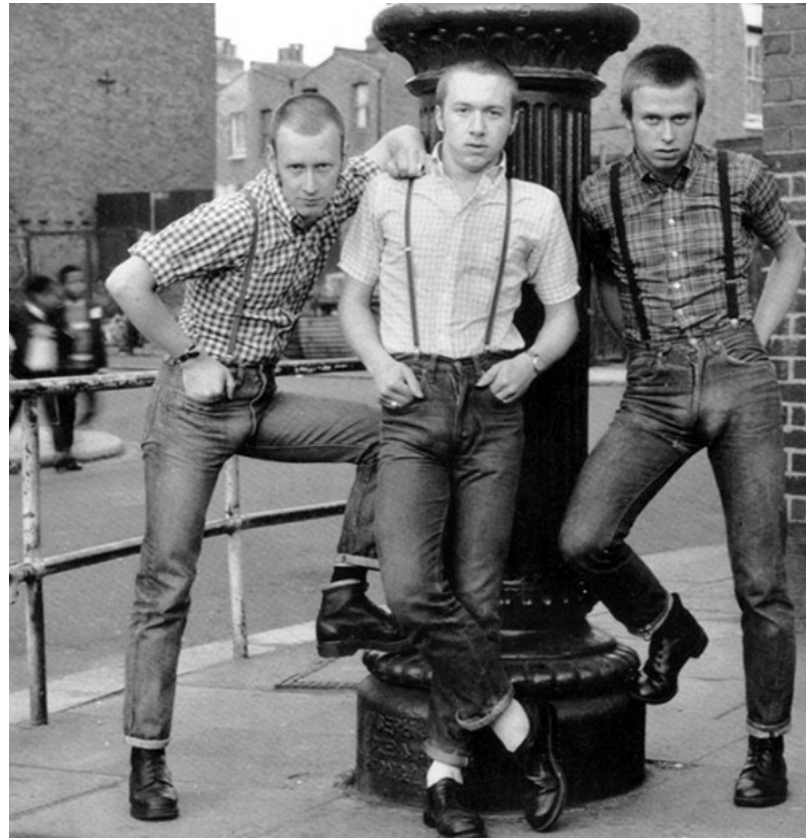


MY GENERATION

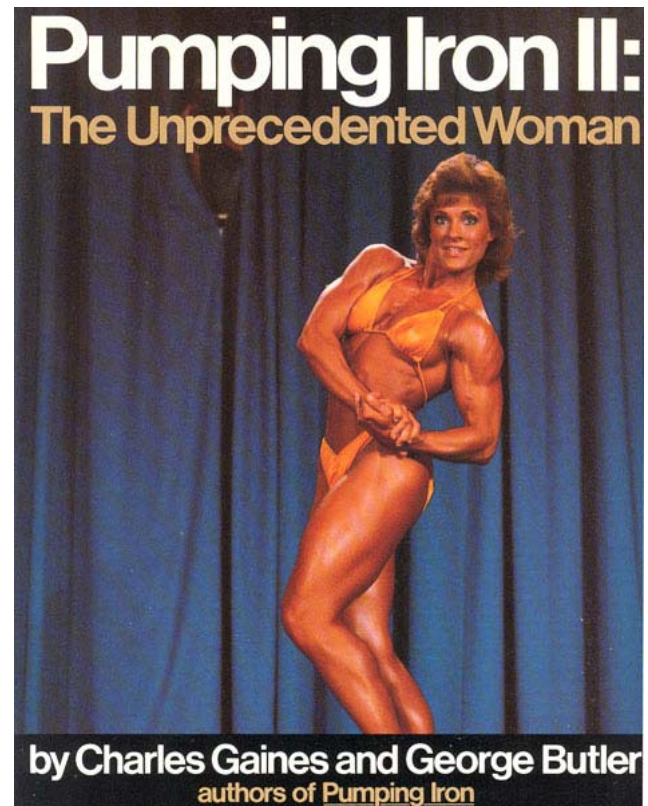


PART III:

Re-defining the conceptual landscape



EXPLORING SUBCULTURES



The margins and the center...

- Stable, homogenous OR fluid, transformative?
- SUB OR POST-SUB?
- SUB AND MAINSTREAM?
- DEVIANCE OR NORMALIZATION?
- YOUTH OR CROSS-GENERATIONAL?



BODYBUILDING AND FITNESS....

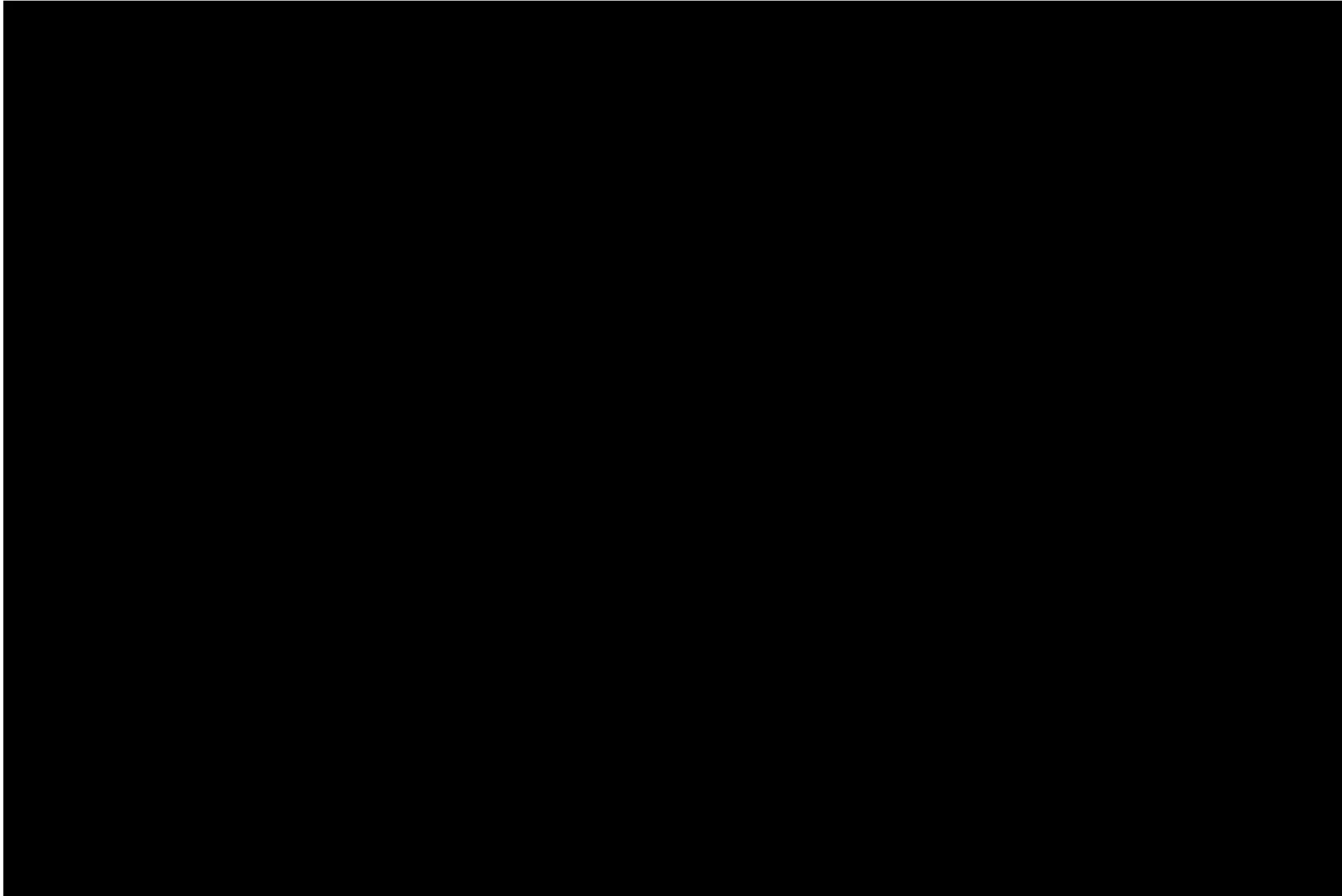
Mainstreaming Bodybuilding practices and bodies...



The Other of Bodybuilding



FITNESS REVOLUTION..



Skinheads and Right-Wing parties

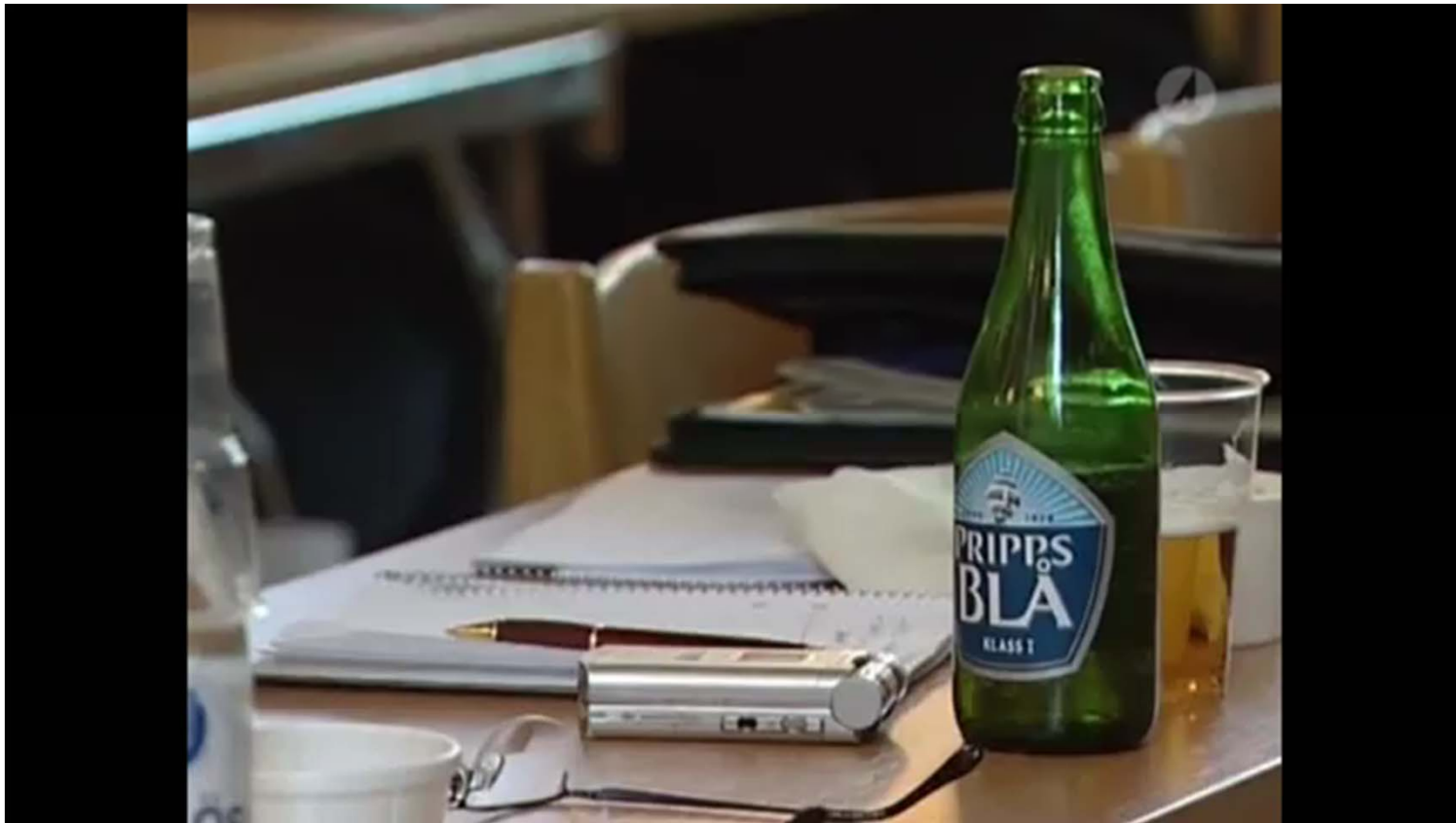
Normalizing racism and intolerance



VALUES AND ACTS in the 1970s

- Mike Brake (1974):
 - *Toughness and violence*: Skinheads seemed obsessed with violence and a macho culture, worshiping muscles, hardness and aggressive behaviour.
 - *Ethnocentrism*: The subculture was heavily inclined to hold racist attitudes and to despise homosexuals and others who threatened their sense of Britishness. However, their racism was initially complex, and several skinhead groups had Afro-Caribbean members. This changed later on, however.

The Sweden Democrats
1995



Transitional spaces.

By reading transitions in relation to subcultures and styles, we will get a more in-depth picture of what is taking place in these transitional spaces and phases. Using a dynamic interpretation of subcultures also directs our attention to the dynamic interplay between subcultures and “common culture”. Although subcultures feed into the common culture, they are never totally absorbed; they continue to fascinate, attract and generate desire. Transitions is not merely concerning how young people navigate in terms of education, employment and intimate relations, but also the symbolic and cultural dimensions involved in identity work.



Youth, generation and new subjectivities



Subjectivities I: Individualisation

- Youth and reflexivity,
- Choice biographies
- Individualized trajectories

- THOMAS ZIEHE, ANTHONY GIDDENS, ULRICH BECK...



Subjectivities II: Critique

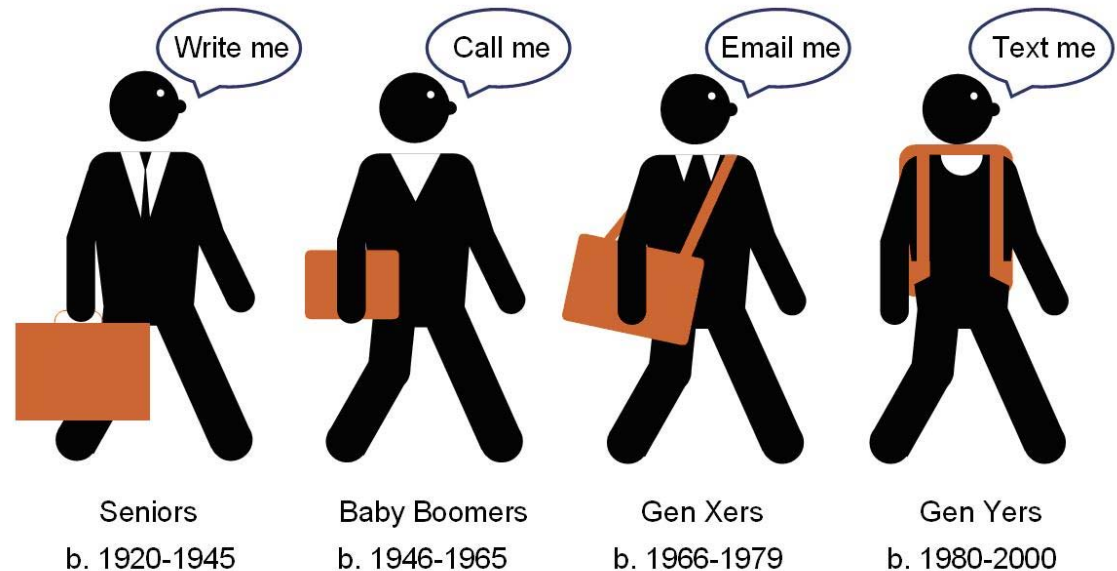
- Modernity theory as a neoliberal project?
- Talking INTERSECTIONALITY instead!!
- Back to structuralism?



Subjectivities III: Generation and new subjectivities

- Individualization, generation and new subjectivities
- Intersectionality/
Individualization
- A restructuring of everyday life and identities

Our four generation workforce provides challenges



YOUNG FATHERS BLOGGING

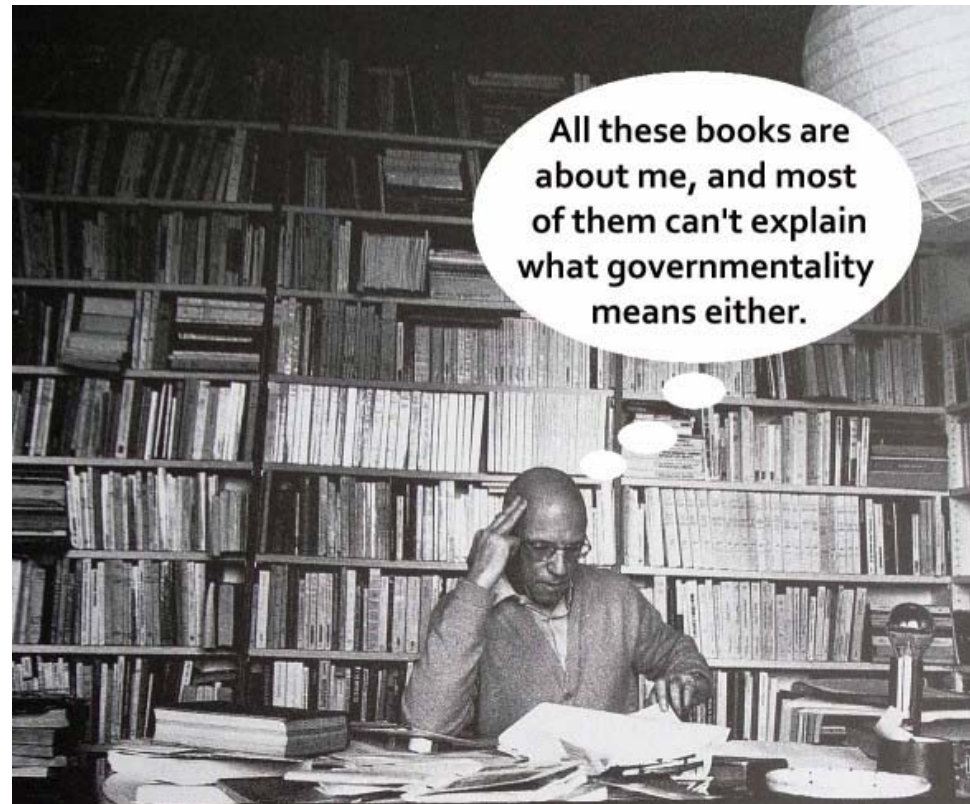
I just love my tattoos. They get me thinking about all the things I've been through, and it reminds me of what I'm capable of. I'm an alphabet kid with ADHD, but I'm strong and together we are invincible. Stand up for yourself: real friends accept and love you in spite of your faults. If someone wants to change you, tell them to find new friends instead. My little daughter is getting big. Next Friday she'll be one year old! My little girl. It's so wonderful to be on paternity leave, I have a lot of time with my daughter. It will be tough going back to work! I love you, Emma (Blog 4)



CARING FATHERS

- Having children requires time, patience, tolerance, and lots of love. Many may think that this sounds simple, but I know it's not. When you have a child you should be well aware that this child will actually be with you your whole life and that it's not like a toy, if you get tired and sick you cannot put it aside and set it up again when you're eager to play. Your child must always be put first. For some, this is obvious and for others, it's not. (Blog 3)
- Now we come home and should only stay inside the rest of the day and cuddle. It's amazing how I've missed him even though we were only apart one day. He is my other half this little guy; I don't function normally without him near me. (Blog 2)

PART IV:
The Future of Youth Studies



CHALLENGES

- Transitions. modernity and symbolic work: Combining perspectives
- Re-vitalizing "old" concepts
- Renewing methodological and theoretical approaches
- Heritage – building on "tradition", but extending and renewing...
- **Roots** and **Routes** to a vitalized youth studies approach



