Summaries

The musical boundaries of youth culture

by Henk Kleijer and Ger Tillekens

Despite the frivolous character of its subject, the study of popular music has acquired a respectable status in the field of sociology over the last fifty years. Popular music has been recognized as an important carrier of the romantic feeling of individuality as well as a symbolic marker of social inequalities. In this way popular music expresses a central paradox of modern life, where individual choices are felt to be personal but often end up falling within the borders of existing social divisions. Introducing the contributions to this issue, the authors call for more research on the changing ways in which popular music works and reworks this paradox.

Rock-'n-roll: The social construction of a music style

by Leo d'Anjou

The rise of an autonomous youth culture is one of the most remarkable events of the fifties not in the least because of the noisy advent of its music: rock-'n-roll. This music shocked society and has been associated with rebellion and protest ever since. Rock-'n-roll acquired a meaning that went beyond the music itself and the intentions of its producers because it is a social construction. This article analyses the construction of rock-'n-roll, particularly the way it was shaped in the social and musical context of postwar America characterized by rapid social changes. It shows that a musical style like rock-'n-roll is not the sole creation of gifted artists or shrewd entrepreneurs but far more the unintended outcome of intricate processes in which many different actors are involved and in which cultural boundary crossings play an important role.

Choices of their own? Musical preferences and media involvement of Flemish youth

by Frank Stevens

In sociology, two contrasting views exist on aesthetic choices. One claims that aesthetics becomes more and more a reflection of personal traits through the process of individualization. Another view claims taste to be determined by the structural and societal position of the individual. This article investigates whether one can discover evidence for such a structural determination in the musical preferences and media involvement of Flemish youth. The results show that one can make a clear distinction in girl and boy culture and between the tastes of youngsters with a different social background. Especially education seems to create an important divide in the development of tastes. This is in accordance with earlier research about the divisions in ethical values of young people in Flanders. More attention should be paid to the relationship between ethics and aesthetics.

Individualization or sexualization? The sexual life-world of low-educated Flemish youth

by Tim Vanhove

This article describes the implications of individualization as a structural or societal process on the perception of sexuality of low-educated Flemish youth. The qualitative research consists of 26 weeks of participatory observation in two Flemish Secondary Schools – one class studying 'Science and Math' in a general secondary education school and one class studying 'Cooking and Hotel Management' in a vocational secondary education school – and 22 in-depth interviews with pupils aged 17 to 21. For the low-educated youngsters, the process of individualization on a cultural level seems to find its counterpart in a sexualization of the youth period. Through the emphasis on the physical and temporal proximity in their life-world, the degrees of freedom of the respondents are immediately consumed in an individualistic and sexually hedonistic way. The lack of reflexivity and (long term) consequence-assessment combined with the imperative of self-preservation, due to the limited possession of economic and cultural capital, overshadow the implementation of the individualization process on the micro-level.

Webgrrlies

by Marjolein den Hartog

Webgrrlies are a group of teenage girls communicating by way of a mailing list on the internet. In their mails the girls discuss every aspect of their lives with their peers, and they are very serious about it. Does this group fit in with definitions of more local youth cultures? Do these girls have subcultural characteristics like a common set of values and norms, a unique style, and a separate channel of communication? It is obvious that new rules, values, and norms are necessary on the internet. Democracy, a friendly atmosphere, and honesty concerning their identity are Webgrrlies values. They also have common style attributes, although these are characteristic for teenage girls as a whole. Despite the heterogeneity of this group, the girls have one common interest: they want to communicate. Communication is their style. Every grrlie has equal access to conversations, and the anonymous and temporary aspects of the list are a safe way of sharing thoughts and feelings.

Living between tradition and temptation: Shifting identities of Mulsim girls

by Aukjen Doornbos

Many first generation Muslim girls in the Netherlands regard the Islam as an important element of their identity. Their commitment to this religious factor even surpasses their identification with the culture of their parents' country of origin. Here thirteen higher educated Muslim girls speak about their everyday life decisions on topics such as the consumption of alcohol and fast food, fashion, films and television series. Though the outcomes of their decisions show a great variety, the girls appear to be very similar in their religious views. Their arguments indicate a shift from a religious commitment regulated by rules and morals toward a more person-oriented and developmental interpretation of the Islam.

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