

Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard, eds. *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*, New York: New York UP, 1998, Pp. 474. \$65.00; \$22.95 pb.

The express aims of *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* are twofold: first, to foreground the importance of historical context in constructions of “youth” and “youth culture”; and second, to advance a formational definition and model of “youth” and “youth studies” as a corrective to the older functionalist model of G. Stanley Hall’s 1905 *Adolescence* “which rendered ‘scientific’ many of the understandings of ‘youth’ that had emerged from the cultural enclaves of the middle class of the previous century” (2).

To achieve the first aim the anthology follows an approximate chronological arrangement of “the best recent and new work on youth and youth cultures by social historians and American/cultural studies scholars” (2). This work includes Victoria Getis’s analysis of the early twentieth-century formation of the Boy Scouts of America; Linda N. España-Maram’s and Robin D. G. Kelley’s examinations of the cultural and political implications of dance halls of the 1930s and 1940s and the zoot suit; Ernesto Chavez’s, Jeffrey Rangel’s, Joe Austin’s, and Brenda Jo Bright’s discussions of Chicano Power and the Brown Berets and the political power of alternative art forms (mural painting in Los Angeles, graffiti in New York subways, and Chicano low rider murals); Mary E. Odem’s, Kyra D. Gaunt’s, Rachel Buff’s, and Stephen Duncombe’s surveys of the gender politics of youth played out in a number of racial and subcultural modalities; James T. Sears’s, Joanne Addison’s, and Michelle Comstock’s explorations of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths’ life experience in the 1950s and internet world of the 1990s — to name only some of the chapters represented.

To achieve the second aim — that of establishing a new formational model of “youth cultures as specific social-historical formations” (2) — each chapter situates its discussion of cultural groups and phenomena within a precise period (one might say decade) of the twentieth century and “addresses the historical specificity of youth, locating young people and the representations of their lives in a complex and changing historical network of institutions, economic structures, state policies, adult initiatives, and youths’ self-activities” (3).

The collection of essays is impressively informative and broad in its coverage of the cultural and historical terrain of the twentieth century. I have highlighted in this review only half of the twenty-six essays included in the collection. The chronological arrangement of chapters certainly does, as the editors intend, emphasize the importance of the historical moment in the construction of definitions of youth and youth culture which can appear, indeed have appeared, to be much more monolithic than a sociohistorical analysis actually reveals.

Having acknowledged the accomplishment of the organizational scheme and the interesting array of cultural scholarship, I want to return to a lacuna Austin and Willard themselves mention as a deficiency inherent in the focus on chronology. Such an arrangement, they suggest, “leaves out a great deal that might engage a conversation specifically about young people and youth cultures”; however, just what may be left out is not specified or even broadly suggested. Two possibilities came to mind and were confirmed by reading the chapters in the chronological order presented. The first was an under-representation of certain youth cultures. The most obvious of which were GIs in “Part II: War and Postwar,” and religious or para-religious groups throughout the collection. The second possibility was that the essays themselves might be more provocatively and productively read in thematic constellations which would foreground the cultural and social issues at stake: gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, socio-economic status. Austin’s and Willard’s response to noting the gap arising from a chronological arrangement was to claim that “[t]he formational approach works to bridge that gap” (3); yet, neither the introduction nor the essays themselves make clear how the formational approach of *Generations of Youth*, which seems inherently imbedded in and strengthened by attention to chronology, actually overcomes the limitations of that very chronology.

Though I do not suggest that the collection would be necessarily or even significantly improved by replacing any chapters with essays discussing the absent groups I have just mentioned, if the “gap” Austin and Willard mention *is* the under-representation of certain youth cultures, then a statement explicitly listing some such groups would have been more culturally aware and comprehensive, and, in context of American cultural studies of *Generations of Youth*, more scholarly. Interestingly, under-represented groups of *Generations of Youth*, by their very absence, repeat a cultural oversight that the anthology itself works to correct, that of Hall’s earlier “scientific” and middle class rendering of youth and youth culture which “had emerged from the cultural enclaves of the middle class of the previous century” (2). Striking is the virtual absence of any discussion of religion, its youth groups, music, literature, film and concomitant influence in the lives of many twentieth-century young people — save for David Roediger’s mention of “whitianity for ‘white Christianity’” (360) and “little cultural space for a Pat Boone” (363), as well as Addison’s and Comstock’s reference to Beverly LaHaye’s homophobic organization Coalition of Concerned Mothers (374). This omission suggests just how much a product of the academic (arguably secular and middle-class) enclave *Generations of Youth* itself is.

If the “gap” *is* the under-emphasis on the cultural issues/constructions at stake, then clearly a thematic organization would have facilitated such an emphasis. Willard, one of the editors of *Generations of*

Youth, moves in this direction when he refers to Beth Bailey's chapter on the gender politics of parietals at the University of Kansas in his chapter on the spatial politics of skateboarding (338). In chronological order, the cumulative effect of the essays was noticeably repetitive, particularly in Parts I and II. The same recurring issues — racial oppression, gender privileging/marginalizing, sexual disciplining, youthful resistance to the tabooed — in true Foucauldian form, appear to produce strikingly similar effects and cultural phenomena despite the variance in historical moment. Even so, chapters of *Generations of Youth* will likely be read selectively by students and cultural scholars thus lessening the repetitive effect. In any event *Generations of Youth* makes a provocative contribution to American cultural studies.

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Mike A. Males. *Framing Youth: 10 Myths About the Next Generation*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1999. Pp. 391. \$29.95; \$18.95 pb.

Mike A. Males. *The Scapegoat Generation: America's War on Adolescents*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1996. Pp. 329. \$29.95; \$17.95 pb.

Clashes between generations are nothing new; not surprisingly, the transfer of power that inevitably takes place is disruptive and frightening for elders who must give way to the next generation. As youths begin to flex their political muscles, the adults they will displace view them with doubt and suspicion, while gazing back nostalgically to their parents' and grandparents' time as a golden age when youths were respectful and hardworking (however erroneous this perception may be). Perhaps this is no more than a natural anxiety on the part of adults, but it can produce a multitude of negative effects, as it often translates into oppressive social systems designed to consolidate power in adult hands while disenfranchising youths. Scholars of children's literature and culture have been analyzing the potentially oppressive nature of adult/child relationships for some years. However, these discussions rarely have seeped into larger cultural discourse and, indeed, are resisted by lay people. At the same time, politicians and media outlets tap into powerful adult constituencies and readerships by exploiting adult fears. Hence, disturbing anti-youth rhetoric recurs unabated in the popular media and political debates.

In his books *The Scapegoat Generation: America's War on Adolescents* and *Framing Youth: 10 Myths About the Next Generation*, Mike Males attempts to explode the popular myths that adults propagate about youths. He aims his tough, scathing arguments squarely at the politicians who exploit widespread fear of youth for political gain, the scholars whose