

CHAPTER I

Folk Devils and the Hipster Figure

On Classification Struggles, Social Types and Figures in Moral Panic Research

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Introduction

Over the last four decades, moral panic research has undergone much fruitful critical interrogation and theoretical development, recently in dialogue with research on moral regulation (Critcher 2009; Hier 2011; Hunt 2011), (de)civilizing processes (Rohloff 2018) and risk (Ungar 2001). In these debates, the moral panic concept has been revised and critiqued from a number of angles. Yet, during this time, its twin concept, the folk devil, has been rather undertheorized and rarely subjected to reflexive analysis (Introduction and Afterword in this volume; Walsh 2019). Indeed, Stanley Cohen admits that *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, the book in which he first developed and applied the two concepts, ‘was more a study of moral panics than of folk devils’ (Cohen 2002 [1972], xlviii). One reason for this is that he departs from an interactionist perspective, which focuses on how dominant actors in society label certain other actors as deviant and delinquent, rather than on how the latter respond to such labeling. In Cohen’s analysis, the folk devil is primarily conceived as a particular

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social type: 'In the gallery of types that society erects to show its members which roles should be avoided and which should be emulated', youth subcultures and other marginalized groups 'have occupied a constant position as folk devils: visible reminders of what we should not be' (Cohen 2002 [1972], 2). The folk devil type, then, is conceived as having a certain role position. During the outbreaks of moral panics, the folk devilling process entails that an individual, group or category is suddenly positioned by a significant section of people in a particular socio-historical context as a threat to widely shared fundamental values. Cohen argues that moral entrepreneurs and other actors can thereby project their fears, resentments and anxieties onto the folk devil, who becomes a scapegoat that is blamed for social problems and deployed to detract attention from the 'real' causes of those problems. As with many other moral panics over young people (Threadgold 2019), the mods and rockers in Cohen's study are represented by members of an older generation as undeserving youths (on the category of youth in Cohen's analysis, see Joosse, Afterword).

Moreover, like Cohen, subsequent research typically conceives of the relationship between moralizers and folk devil as highly asymmetrical (see, e.g., chapters 8, 10 and 11 in this volume). Indeed, some researchers argue that moral panics are always targeted against subordinated groups and instigated by elites to reinstate status quo (Critchler 2011; Hall et al. 2013 [1978]). Classic moral panic theory has been critiqued for underplaying the agency of folk devils and for conceiving of the societal reaction to them in overly unified, consensual terms (deYoung 2013). Rather, moral panics are contested phenomena in which folk devils frequently 'fight back' (Ajzenstadt 2009; McRobbie and Thornton 1995) and sometimes even act as 'provocateurs' who intentionally initiate social reactions (Walsh 2017, 2019). Relatedly, Mary deYoung (2013) critiques what she argues is a one-sided focus on marginalized folk devils in moral panic research. Instead, she calls for the analysis of 'feisty folk devils,' such as middle-class actors, and of how they deploy social capital and other resources to affect their stigmatized position. Research on middle-class folk devils has explored the moralization of social workers and other social service professionals (Warner 2013). Another case is the moralizing social reactions that emerge over helicopter parents, who are often cast as coming from privileged social backgrounds (Nelson 2019). However, Michael Levi (2008) argues that the white-collar crimes of the economic elite, such as identity and investment fraud, are seldom subject to widespread hostile societal reactions. Illegal financial activities are often covert or represented as exceptions posing little threat to the moral social order. Economic elites also wield the power to influence media and political institutions to temper or mute possible public indignation. Similar factors may explain why excessive and ritualized drinking practices within this group are seldom folk devilled (Bailey and Griffin 2017, 38).

In this chapter I attempt to contribute to these debates by clarifying the folk devil concept and its role in moral panic research. To this end, I extend Cohen's

brief account and discuss how the folk devil can be conceptualized as a social type. I draw on Bourdieu's research on classification to conceive of the folk devil type as a particular social identity position formed through classification struggles over value and recognition between different social groups. Moreover, I make a distinction between the concept of social type and the related notion of figure, to examine how certain figures may or may not be folk devilled during moral panic processes. This is explored by drawing on a case study of the contested societal reaction to a particular 'figure of youth' (Threadgold 2019), namely the middle-class hipster and its role in gentrification processes. The next section discusses research on the concepts of social type and figure.

Conceptualizing Social Types and Figures

Conceptualizing the folk devil as a social type means discussing a concept around which numerous conceptions and perspectives have been formed in the history of sociology and related fields. The analysis of social types can be identified in early social research, such as the work of Marx and Engels, although the term itself was not used (le Grand 2019). Broadly speaking, social types are conceptualized as primarily emic or etic categories. As etic concepts, social types are analytical constructions made by the researcher to interpret a social phenomenon. Etic concepts of types can be traced to Georg Simmel (1971). While differing conceptions of social types can be identified in Simmel's work (see le Grand 2019, 413), in his most influential writings, such as his essay on the stranger, they are conceived as abstractions where focus lies on a typical set of characteristics that pertain to an actor by virtue of her position vis-à-vis other actors in a particular form of interaction (Simmel 1971, 143–9). Influenced by Simmel, similar conceptions of types have been deployed within the so-called Chicago School of sociology, not the least in Robert E. Park's (1928) and Everett V. Stonequist's (1965 [1937]) enduring research on the marginal man. The problem with these foundational studies, however, is that the role of cultural processes in the formation of types is underplayed and largely reduced to socio-spatial forces (see Alexander 2004).

The role of cultural processes is addressed in Alfred Schütz's phenomenological work on social types, such as the stranger (Schütz 1944) and the homcomer (Schütz 1945). Types are here analytical categories used to conceptualize character types that are linked to actors' cognitive schemas and social roles. Yet, his phenomenological analysis cannot account for the role of social processes in the formation of types that lie outside the domain of subjective meaning-making (le Grand 2019). Orrin E. Klapp (1958) similarly conceives of social types as informal social roles. They are emic categories widely used by individuals in society and typically take on heroic, villainous or foolish connotations (Klapp 1962). As etic categories, types are functional in so far as they aid individuals in how to orient themselves to one another in interaction. They are also tied to

social control and also show individuals what roles that are desirable and which are not. In this sense, social types can be interpreted as ‘good’ for society.

In his analysis of the folk devil of moral panics, Cohen similarly argues that folk devils as types are role models constructed by society in order to, as quoted earlier, ‘show its members which roles should be avoided and which should be emulated’ (Cohen 2002 [1972], 2). But, unlike Klapp, Cohen is critical of how marginalized groups are labelled as deviant folk devils and how such labelling, as we learned earlier, serves to reproduce the existing moral order. As he writes, ‘The focus [of an interactionist approach] is on how society labels rule-breakers as belonging to certain deviant groups and how, once the person is thus type cast, his acts are interpreted in terms of the status to which he has been assigned’ (Cohen 2002 [1972], 4). Relatedly, in recent work on the public reactions to whistle-blowers, Magnus Haglunds (2009) further develops interactionist research on social types. He conceives of types as dynamic social identities and status positions formed relationally through an actor’s position in a particular group.

As an emic concept, social types and the related notion of figure have been conceived as classifications, often tied to nicknames, that are used by people in society. While Simmel’s, Schütz’s and other analyses of types as analytical categories can be criticized for being detached from their socio-historical context (Barker, Harms, and Lindquist 2013a), emic analyses of types are rooted in empirical research. In Walter Benjamin’s (1969) enduring work, the *flâneur* is conceived as an urban middle-class male associated with a particular style of life, whose emergence and demise are linked to historical processes under modernity in 19th-century Paris. Unlike Benjamin’s work, many uses of types as emic concepts lack theoretical grounding. One can mention the urban field studies in the Chicago School, which feature a plethora of social types such as the hobo (Anderson 1968 [1923]), the jack-roller (Shaw 1930) and the taxi-dancer (Cressey 1932).

Recently, at least two strands of research have deployed the concept of figure in productive ways. Anthropological scholars (Barker, Harms, and Lindquist 2013a, 2013b; Lindquist 2015) conceive of figures as individuals who symbolize wider sociocultural and historical processes including particular ‘structures of feeling’ (Lindquist 2015, 163). Like Benjamin, they argue that an analysis of figures may illuminate wider socio-historical processes. Figures are dialectically formed vis-à-vis the ‘ground’ of social life. As such, they are not simply products of a historical context but also actors who take part in shaping the latter. In cultural and feminist studies, Imogen Tyler’s (2013) analyses of figures have many parallels with much research on moral panics and folk devils, although this is not acknowledged. Similar to the folk devil, figures are formed through affective processes of abjection and othering wherein they become the target for governance and coercive measures by dominant actors. Figures are therefore often marginalized actors, as Tyler’s (2013) research on the illegal immigrant, the Gypsy and the benefits cheat shows. In line with moral panic

theory, the abject social reactions to figures emerge during periods of crisis and sociocultural change with high social anxiety.

Moreover, some recent studies of moral panics have identified folk devils as figures, although the term has seldom been theorized explicitly or deployed analytically. Thus, research on Islamophobia has explored the figures of the ‘Muslim on-street groomer’ (Britton 2019) and the ‘Muslim-terrorist-refugee’ (Martin 2015) as folk devils. And Steven Threadgold contends that youths in different social and historical contexts regularly become ‘figures of moral panics’ (Threadgold 2019, 6). The formation of these figures reflects generational oppositions as members of an older generation moralize young people as, for instance, dangerous, lazy or irresponsible (Threadgold 2019). Figures of youth are often class-related, racialized and gendered. Thus, figures such as the bogan in Australia (Threadgold 2018) and the chav in Britain (le Grand 2015) serve to folk devil certain young white working-class people. One can also mention the ladette, which is a working-class figure of excessive young femininity who is cast as a threat to the family as a social institution (Jackson and Tinkler 2007). Another example is the *pixadores* in Brazil, who are marginalized urban youths engaged in practices of public writing (called *pixacao* or *pixo*) and frequently constructed as undermining the moral and social order (Araya López 2020). This chapter will explore how the hipster figure, typically characterized as a young, creative middle-class person, is positioned in the moralization process. But first I will discuss how the concepts of social type and figure can be conceptualized and deployed in moral panic research by drawing on Bourdieu’s work on classification.

Social Types and Figures in Classification Struggles

Following the dividing line between emic and etic conceptions discussed above, I will now make the case for making a distinction between social types and figures (see also Lindquist 2015) so as to clarify their meanings and how they can be utilized in studies of moral panics. Social types, such as the folk devil, is an analytical category or ‘epistemic individual’ (Bourdieu 1988 [1984]) that is ‘constructed by the researcher to conceptualise a general set of characteristics of an actor (individual, category or group), which is derived from their social position and relationships with other actors’ (le Grand 2019, 420). To this end, social types are dynamic social identities (Haglund’s 2009).

As folk devils and other types are social identity positions constructed by the researcher, they may not be identified by lay individuals in the same terms. Social types are similar to Weber’s ideal types in that a limited set of features are abstracted out (Almog 1998). As the study of folk devils has shown, this enables the comparison of types over different socio-historical contexts. A disadvantage is that, in applying such a general concept in empirical research, one may risk oversimplifying complex processes and identity categories (Barker, Harms,

and Lindquist 2013a; Lindquist 2015). Apart from the folk devil, the most commonly used social type in moral panic research is probably the moral entrepreneur (Cohen 2002 [1972]). One can also mention the provocateur, recently introduced by Walsh (2019) as a subtype of the folk devil. The provocateur seeks to create moral panics by inciting public reactions of moral indignation through activities such as terrorism (Walsh 2017, 2019). Another moral public position that can be interpreted as a social type is the victim-hero discussed by Sarah Wright (2016). This type 'is characterised by his/her suffering and by his/her actions of retribution in an effort to redeem the virtue of his/her loved one or of themselves' (Wright 2016, 331).

Unlike types, figures are empirically situated social identities, often identified through certain nicknames in lay discourse. Their formation and demise cannot be analysed separately from their particular sociocultural and historical context. Figures are constituted relationally through material and symbolic practices as well as through the circulation of affects (Threadgold 2018; Tyler 2013). Moreover, figures may be positioned as different social types depending on the context. Thus, Wright (2016) examines how the figure of the bereaved mother can be positioned as a victim-hero in media narratives about crime. In a similar fashion, the mods and rockers in Cohen's foundational study can be interpreted as particular figures who were positioned as folk devil types by the media.

In what follows, I will show how an analysis of the folk devil type in relation to particular figures can be deployed in moral panic research by drawing on Bourdieu's work on classification struggles. In simplified terms, Bourdieu (1984 [1979], 1985) argues that forms of classification are rooted in hierarchical relationships and socio-symbolic struggles between social groups who have differing access to economic, cultural and social capital. Such struggles are not simply for status, resources and symbolic domination but on a deeper level about recognition and worth. In a recent paper, Arnaud Dandoy (2015) contributes to moral panic research by drawing on a Bourdieusian field analysis. However, Bourdieu's framework of classification has been surprisingly neglected in this strand of research. Drawing on Bourdieu, I suggest that social types and figures are social identity categories that can be stakes and agents in socio-symbolic struggles between social groups. As identity positions, types and figures are constituted dialectically through the classification of self and other.

Moreover, a framework of classification also serves to underpin moralization processes, including the volatile outbreaks of moral panics. Such processes centre on the moral dimension of classification struggles and the symbolic domination over moral values. Moralization is dialectical as classification not only entails folk devilling certain actors as immoral; it also serves to cast the moralizers as morally righteous and good (Hier 2011; Hunt 2011). Moralization processes therefore have a 'hegemonic role' (Hunt 2011, 62). This is aptly articulated by Nachman Ben-Yehuda:

As Stanley Cohen pointed out in 1972, moral panics are about representations, images and coercion: about which sector of a society has the power to represent and impose its images, world views and interests onto others as being both legitimate and valid. In other words, moral panics are about struggles for moral hegemony over interpretations of the legitimacy (or not) of prevailing social arrangements and material interests. (Ben-Yehuda 2009, 3)

I will interpret this quest for moral hegemony to involve classification struggles between unequally positioned groupings in society. Alan Hunt (2011) suggests that notions of middle-class respectability are a hegemonic project enacted through moral panics and other moralization projects. Research in a British context shows that middle-class respectability is a dominant moral value standard (Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2004) that goes back to at least Victorian times (Pearson 1983). Moreover, moral panic researchers contend that moral panics erupt when dominant groups' hegemonic projects undergo a crisis (Hall et al. 2013; Young 2009). In the framework presented in this paper, moral panics and other public conflicts similarly emerge when forms of symbolic domination are under threat and challenged. During such episodes, particular figures may or may not be positioned as folk devils, as will be explored more at length in the following section.

Public Contestations over the Hipster Figure and Gentrification

The Hipster Figure

I will now discuss how classification struggles, the folk devil as a social type and the notion of figure can be deployed in moral panic research, by focusing on a case study of the societal reactions to the hipster figure in a gentrified part of east London (for a more extensive analysis, see le Grand 2020a). The hipster figure is often imagined as a young, trendy, highly stylized, urban, middle-class person (le Grand 2020b; Michael 2015; Ravn and Demant 2017; Threadgold 2018) engaged in occupations or entrepreneurship in the creative industries (le Grand 2020b; Scott 2017). Public classifications of hipsters very much correspond to Bourdieu's (1984) description of the lifestyles and occupations among those who belong to the middle-class faction he calls the new cultural intermediaries.

The hipster holds an ambiguous status position as its aesthetics and lifestyles invoke both prestige and mockery from others (le Grand 2020b). The cultural practices associated with the hipster figure function as an 'emerging' form of cultural capital rooted in Anglo-American popular culture and notions of trendiness (Prieur and Savage 2013), which can be distinguished from

traditional forms of highbrow culture favoured by older generations of middle-class people (le Grand 2020b). Moreover, the hipster has increasingly become visible as a consumer, dweller and entrepreneur in studies on the gentrification of urban working-class districts (le Grand 2020b; Zukin 2010). As a gentrifier, the hipster is a controversial figure said to contribute to an area becoming fashionable and popular (Douglas 2012; le Grand 2020b; Zukin 2010). But the presence of hipsters allegedly also leads to rising rents and living costs, as well as to the exclusion of long-time dwellers (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011; Langegger 2016; le Grand 2020b). I will now examine how controversies around the hipster figure and gentrification emerge in moralizing public reactions.

Social Reactions to Gentrification and the Hipster Figure in East London

I will argue that the ambiguous status conferred to the hipster can partly explain why this figure has become the object of moralizing social reactions and attempts at folk devilling. In London, there have in recent years been several outbursts of public indignation against the gentrification of the retail landscape, which have notably featured the hipster figure as a symbol and cause. In Hackney, The Advisory eatery opened in the premises of what used to be the Asian Women's Advisory Centre, and in Deptford the Job Centre pub opened on the site of the former job centre. These establishments were seen as visible symbols of the gentrification of their respective areas, both of which rank among the poorest boroughs in London. What caused controversy was how social institutions targeting groups with typically fewer resources in society were used by business owners to ironically brand their hipster establishments (Elliot 2014; Frizzell 2013).

Public contestations over the hipster and gentrification became particularly evident during two social reactions centring on the Cereal Killer Cafe on Brick Lane, an iconic street situated in a gentrified part of London's East End. The area in and around the street have undergone gentrification since the late 1990s, resulting in large increases in property prices and rents. Other indicators of gentrification in the neighbourhood include the establishment of an artist community and creative industries. Yet, the social inequalities in the area are steep. The borough of Tower Hamlets, where Brick Lane is located, is one of the poorest boroughs of London. At the same time, the wealth in the City of London is a mere walking distance from the street.

The Cereal Killer Cafe, a café primarily serving cereals, was opened in December 2014 by identical twins Alan and Gary Keery amid much media coverage. The twins, who were photographed sporting beards, tattoos and print shirts, were often identified in the media as hipsters, as was the café. Thus, to *The Guardian* the twins gave cereals a 'hipster makeover' and described the café as 'a shrine to the 1980s [with] Transvision Vamp on the stereo; paintings

of fictional serial killers made out of cereal alongside novelty cereal packets from the 1980s or early 90s' (Jeffreys 2014). The café, with its pop cultural aesthetic and niche products, is a prime example of the type of value-added micro-entrepreneurship associated with hipsters (Scott 2017).

During a Channel 4 interview, Gary Keery was asked if their cereals were 'affordable to the area.' He responded that 'I think it's cheap for the area, really.' When the reporter told him that Tower Hamlets is 'one of the poorest parts of London,' he appeared surprised, saying, 'This isn't one of the poorest areas there is, is it?' When pressed if locals could afford to pay £3.20 a cereal bowl, Keery admitted, 'If they're poor, probably not then,' and asked to stop the interview. The Channel 4 interview spread rapidly in news and social media. Keery's responses to the interviewer sparked reactions of moral indignation and ridicule towards the Keery twins and their establishment. Thus, *The Times* noted that, 'in a country witnessing a return to Victorian-era social division, the opening of a hipster café in east London selling nothing but cereals looks ... provocative' (Moran 2014). *The Observer* concluded that: 'The tensions of gentrification ... created an unlikely flashpoint in the hipster heartland of east London' (Cowburn 2014). Moreover, Keery was mocked in the *Daily Mail* (Linning 2014) as 'the out-of-touch hipster' who 'didn't know he was working in a poor area' and 'even claimed that the niche cafe ... was cheap'. The interview 'sparked criticism from viewers,' one of whom was quoted in the *Evening Standard* saying that, '[r]egardless of the area, £3.20 for a bowl of cereal is a rip off, it doesn't even get you drunk' (Blundy 2014).

Mainstream media also highlighted the poverty in Tower Hamlets, including the high rates of child poverty, unemployment and benefit claimants. Yet, one article also highlighted the vast social polarization in the borough in that also some of the richest people lived in Canary Wharf. But many newspaper readers also supported the twins' enterprise, pointing out that the markup for a bowl of cereals is comparable to those of other niche establishments and big chains like Starbucks (Linning 2014). And, among news media, the tide quickly turned. On social media, Gary Keery wrote an open letter to Channel 4 and the reporter, which was quickly picked up by news media, in which he wrote, 'I am from one of the most deprived areas in Belfast, so me and my family know all about poverty,' adding, 'I have been taught a great work ethic and have made it this far without blaming small business owners trying to better themselves and make a future for themselves.' He also stated that the café employs 12 people. Thus, Keery positioned himself as a hard-working person from a disadvantaged background making a living as a small entrepreneur, i.e. a morally respectable citizen who contributes to society.

Some of these aspects were repeated by other media commentators. Notably, then London mayor Boris Johnson defended the twins in the *Daily Telegraph*, describing them as 'a gentle pair of bearded hipsters' unfairly 'monstered' by the Channel 4 reporter for 'pretensions to gentrify the area' (Johnson 2014). He

also lauded the Keery twins as entrepreneurs and ‘wealth creators,’ arguing that ‘[i]t is a great thing to want to open a place of work in one of the poorest boroughs in Britain’ (Johnson 2014). *The Independent* (Friedman 2014) concurred, writing that ‘we should be applauding the entrepreneurship of the Cereal Killer Café’ and that hipsters moving into Brick Lane ‘keeps this most eclectic of areas vibrant’. An article in the left-leaning *The Guardian* further claimed that the social reaction was ‘overblown,’ that the hipster café was the wrong target and ‘just a symptom of gentrification, not the cause. ... People are priced out of an area by rising rents and invisible landlords who will not be interviewed on television’ (Moore 2014). Following the episode, the café became highly popular. Media reported that queues to the café reached out onto the street. In 2015, the Keery twins opened a second branch in Camden (followed by other branches in the years to come) and published a cookbook.

I would argue that this social reaction is linked to social anxieties and resentments over urban social inequality in present-day Britain over the housing crisis and increasing social polarization in the wake of the 2008 credit crunch, as well as the intensification of neo-liberal housing and welfare policies (Hodkinson and Robbins 2013; Slater 2016). Neo-liberal policies include increased caps on housing benefits and the bedroom tax, the stock transfer of social housing stock (Watt 2009) and the recategorization of council estate land as ‘brown-field land’ that is then cleared for new private properties. The consequences of these policies and measures have been, among other things, a dramatic shortage of affordable housing and an increase in homelessness and temporary accommodation (Hodkinson and Robbins 2013; Slater 2016).

In this context of anxiety, the twins and their business venture became a symbol of the hipster figure, and, as such, of the increasing social polarization of gentrified areas. To this end, *they* became a trigger for the public display of moral indignation (Young 2009). The Keery twins and the hipster figure initially came to embody elements of a folk devil whose cynical and ironic business ventures were conceived to contribute to the inequality and polarization in urban space in the wake of gentrification. However, the twins and other commentators very much overturned such representations in mainstream media. They successfully cast the hipster entrepreneur in heroic terms as someone who is a ‘wealth creator’ in disadvantaged districts and thus framed gentrification as beneficial to such districts. Positive narratives of gentrification as leading to growth and well-being have become influential in policy and academic discourse through the notion of the ‘creative city’ (see Florida 2012 [2002]).

The respectability conferred on the twins as hard-working entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds, the relative cultural capital and prestige attributed to the middle-class hipster figure, and the contestations and vagueness regarding the causes of gentrification: these factors would all seem to contribute to why the folk devilling of the hipster failed. Lastly, the role of neo-liberal housing and welfare policies in contributing to gentrification, social polarization

and displacement was very much ignored in mainstream discussions. These latter issues were somewhat more at the foreground during a second societal reaction, to be discussed next.

Protesting Gentrification: The Moral Entrepreneur as Folk Devil

The anxiety over social inequality and exclusion following neo-liberal forms of urbanism and gentrification have led to increasing resistance and activism against gentrification, especially in London (Watt and Minton 2016). The Cereal Killer Cafe was at the heart of a second social reaction following an anti-gentrification rally on 26 September 2015 in which the café was targeted. The protest was organized by the group Class War. Announcing the protest on social media, the organizers wrote: ‘Our communities are being ripped apart. ... We don’t want luxury flats that no one can afford, we want genuinely affordable housing. ... Working class people are being forced out of our homes but we won’t go out without a fight’ (Rabble 2015).

Mainstream media, and particularly national newspapers with a right-leaning political orientation, reported on the incident using alarmist frames. The *Daily Mail* reported: ‘Families hid in terror as the Cereal Killer Cafe was attacked by hundreds of masked marauders armed with flaming torches and pigs’ heads’ (Greenwood and Lamden 2015). The protesters were also called ‘Alcohol-swilling Class War yobs’ and ‘left-wing thugs’ (Wheeler and Fielding in the *Sunday Express* 2015) and ‘thugs masquerading as political activists’ (*The Sun* 2015). In right-leaning newspapers, the protesters were also portrayed as privileged middle-class people who were inauthentic and hypocritical in their claim to speak on behalf of the marginalized. One headline read: ‘Class War “Poets” Show Their True Colours’ (Walden in the *Daily Telegraph* 2015). Thus, this second episode involves an identifiable moral entrepreneur (Cohen 2002 [1972]). But, in their moral crusade (Gusfield 1986 [1963]) against gentrification, Class War themselves were moralized as folk devils by large parts of mainstream media. As folk devils, the protesters were depicted as elitist, dangerous, middle-class actors of the far left with no regard for respectable values.

Following the incident, the Keery twins received even more support by mainstream media than during the first episode and were interviewed by many media outlets. In an interview, Alan Keery pointed to the economic benefits of hipsters and his enterprise: ‘hipsters – whatever that means – are driving the flat-white economy, which helps independent shops’ (Scott-Moncrieff in *The Times* 2015). He also claimed that businesses like his, unlike high street chains, provide particular ‘experiences’ for consumers. Other commentators similarly argued for the important role of hipsters in the urban economy. For instance, the *Daily Telegraph* wrote: ‘The Cereal Killer cafe is a perfect example of how “hipsters” improve an area for everyone’ (Hartley-Brewer 2015).

But, like in the previous episode, news media expressed concern over social polarization and rising cost of housing in the area linked to gentrification. For instance, the *Daily Mail* wrote: ‘The café has become a symbol of inequality because of its location in Brick Lane, a popular destination for affluent so-called hipsters. Although house prices in the area have soared it has some of the highest deprivation levels in the capital’ (Greenwood and Lamden 2015). In other accounts, even the hipster was as a victim in such processes: ‘The irony is that many of these folk [i.e. hipsters] were drawn to the East End for the same reasons that creative people everywhere are drawn to gritty neighbourhoods: because they can afford it. Over time their presence makes the place fashionable, and then none of us can afford it’ (Wagner in the *Financial Times* 2015).

Participants in the protest, the moral entrepreneurs-cum-folk devils were interviewed by the media. A letter by one protester was also published in *The Guardian* (Harvey 2015). In reports, participants claimed that the café had never been targeted beforehand, but ‘that protesters ended up outside by chance during confrontations with police’ (Mance in the *Financial Times* 2015). The protesters mainly blamed developers and landlords for gentrification. However, one member of Class War argued that hipster enterprises like the Cereal Killer Cafe and middle-class consumers are drivers of gentrification processes, claiming: ‘The cafe isn’t just a cultural symbol of gentrification, it’s an instrument of the economic colonisation of the area’ (Malone and Greenhill in the *Daily Mail* 2015).

Discussion

We can see how the Keery twins and their café came to symbolize something greater, namely urban change in the form of the hipster figure and gentrification. Both episodes show the active involvement and voice, albeit framed by news media, of those who were folk devilled, i.e. the Keery twins and the anti-gentrification activists led by Class War. Gentrification involves processes where middle-class people replace working-class dwellers in an area (Lees, Slater and Wyly 2008). Deploying the framework of classification, the moralizing public reactions to gentrification and the hipster figure in the two episodes can be interpreted as forms of class politics involving socio-symbolic struggles to legitimate a particular narrative about which groups have the moral right to the city. The hipster is a middle-class figure whose socio-spatial practices and cultivation of emerging or popular forms of cultural capital is subject to both prestige and denigration (le Grand 2020b). I would argue that the contested position of the hipster made the Keery twins targets for attempts to scapegoat them for the negative consequences of gentrification. These attempts at folk devilling largely failed owing to the social standing and respectability bestowed

on the twins and the hipster figure. In the classification struggles over the meaning of the two episodes, dominant narratives cast the middle-class hipster as a creative entrepreneur whose tastes and practices are beneficial to the social and economic development of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In this sense, dominant moral representations of gentrification and hipsters were framed around growth and economic development. This was particularly the case in depictions of the hipster figure as a wealth creator and related to the influential notion that the so-called creative class, largely made up of middle-class people, is a driver of growth and vibrancy in urban districts, including gentrifying neighbourhoods (Florida 2012). But such a positive narrative is largely beneficial to the middle class and serves to exclude working-class and other 'non-creative' people (McRobbie 2016).

Although gentrification has been a long-standing process in Brick Lane, I have argued that neo-liberalism and the aftereffects of the 2008 financial crisis served as the conditions for social anxiety over gentrification and the hipster figure in the two episodes. Local councils, landlords and developers were blamed for the negative consequences of gentrification by some commentators. The wider context of neo-liberal urbanism was addressed by *Class War* but largely unacknowledged by mainstream media. Rather, folk devilling the protesters and largely disregarding their agenda contributed to even less attention being given to the processes contributing to social polarization and displacement in gentrified districts.

Deploying the notions of classification, social types and figures allows us to examine how moral panics and their concomitant social identities involve the socio-symbolic struggles for moral worth, recognition and prestige between social groupings with unequal access to valued resources (economic, cultural, social). I have argued that the classification struggles over gentrification and the hipster figure are tied to a moral politics of class, involving long-standing practices of moral distinction and social differentiation based on class relations. Moreover, the benefits of deploying Bourdieu's notion of classification points to how the outbreaks of moral panic reactions are bound up with socio-symbolic struggles between social groupings. Much research has explored single case studies of moral panics conceived as fleeting events and has been critiqued for failing to account for how episodes of moral panic are linked to socio-historical processes (Crichter 2009; Hier 2011). One advantage of the framework proposed here is that it can help account for how moralizing social reactions and the formation of social identities, such as folk devils, are rooted in more wide-ranging and longer-term socio-symbolic struggles in society. And a focus on the public imaginations of particular figures and how they might be positioned as folk devils and other social types can help illuminate wider discursive formations and structures of feeling of a particular socio-spatial and historical context (Barker, Harms, and Lindquist 2013b; le Grand 2019), in this case the moral politics of class surrounding gentrification.

Conclusion

I have argued that the folk devil conceptualized as a social type together with the notion of figure and Bourdieu's work on classification struggles can provide useful interpretive tools for moral panic research. Social types are conceived as analytical constructs made by the researcher to conceptualize a certain social identity position, while figures are publicly imagined social identities formed in particular socio-historical contexts and tied to certain lay conceptions. In moral panic processes, social types such as the folk devil and figures such as the hipster are bound up with classification struggles between social classes and other groups over the moral hegemony or symbolic domination over moral matters. As these socio-symbolic struggles extend beyond the short-lived outbreaks of isolated moral panics, the framework proposed in this chapter situates moralization in a wider socio-spatial and historical context.

Two episodes of social reaction centring on the Cereal Killer Cafe were explored to qualify the main arguments of the chapter. I suggest that the public controversies analysed involve forms of class politics and classification struggles over the moral meanings of gentrification processes and the role of the hipster figure in the latter. My analysis shows how middle-class figures with ambiguous social status positions, such as the hipster, can be the object of moral contestations and attempts at folk devilling. But attempts to position a middle-class figure as a folk devil can be overturned if representations of dominant modes of respectability can be successfully mobilized on to the figure. Lastly, I suggest that when moral entrepreneurs, such as Class War, attempt moral crusades that are classified as a threat to respectable values and public safety, they may become positioned as folk devils; this despite the fact that the concerns raised by the moral entrepreneur tap into wider social anxieties, such as increasing socio-spatial inequality.

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