

Conclusion



Coming of Age discusses six dominant images or constructions of youth. Arising out of the ashes of World War II, *the delinquent boy* marked threats to recovery. Instead of helping to rebuild society, he roamed around, spent time engaged in the black market, and had supposedly no interest in political participation or leadership. *The sexually deviant girl* fraternized and endangered society by spreading venereal diseases; she also challenged gender roles and racial categories. Adult contemporaries mobilized both images to express perceived threats for recovery. In the miracle years, youth once again became a space for discussing and criticizing Americanization. Influenced by a growth in youth culture, two images stepped into the limelight: *the Halbstarke* as a working-class male youngster who wasted time on street corners and rebelled against social norms; and *the teenager* with her middle-class background, desire to dance to rock 'n' roll music, and claim to leave home and kitchen. Both constructs of youth challenged the return of traditional conceptions of normality. Initiated by protests in Schwabing in 1962, *the student* and *the Gammler* threatened the political cohesion and overall order. Mostly seen as male images of older youngsters with female companions, *the student* in particular began organizing outside accepted political structures and formats. His economic background and education, in combination with open dissent, challenged the future of the nation; he also unearthed fears of Munich becoming another Weimar.

Gendered roles and binaries are apparent when analyzing these images of youth. Contemporaries constructed males as delinquent if they abstained from work, failed to prepare for future leadership positions, and challenged broader traditional norms; female deviancy, on the other hand, was tied to sexuality. Gender, sexuality, and age mattered and played a key role when defining and constructing female misbe-

haviors all through this time period. These surprisingly consistent patterns mark continuities throughout modern history; they also capture a lack of scholarly debate surrounding female youth more specifically because juvenile delinquency remains a male concept. As scholars we need to understand interactions between male and female youth if we want to get a better sense of everyday dynamics, interactions, and relationships—as apparent in *Coming of Age* for the context of Munich.

Space mattered as well because certain locations helped define and characterize juvenile delinquency. The Bavarian capital has been a social democratic island, surrounded by a conservative rural environment, for decades. As a result, traditional stereotypes regarding the dangers of cityscapes, loose law enforcement, and a lack of social order are all the more apparent in Munich. Street corners, dark alley ways, or train stations became collaborators in constructing youth as delinquent: time and again adult authorities construed young people seen within these environments as deviant by default. Not surprisingly, young people became increasingly active in evading such deviant spaces and adult supervision overall. As demonstrated in *Coming of Age*, they began challenging spatial frameworks in their attempt to create spaces for youth. Conflicts surrounding juvenile delinquency thus played out within certain city spaces: black markets and the areas surrounding American barracks in the crisis years; street corners and milk bars in the 1950s; or parts of Schwabing, the university or even courtrooms during the protest years. Some scholarship has addressed such connections to space¹ but specific historical studies focusing on juvenile delinquency seldom keep these important frameworks in mind.

The actual young had agency throughout this transitional period in modern German history, and it clearly increased as Munich came of age. Throughout the crisis years, young people had comparable little input or power concerning the construction of youth. Many protested once picked up and detained to supposed educational facilities; most tried to evade raids the best they could. Yet overall U.S. officials and local authorities had an easy time to create and manufacture threatening images of male and female delinquency to then pick up delinquents on the streets of Munich. The rise of youth cultures and a widespread commercialization of West German society throughout the 1950s then showed a slight shift. Youth had become profitable and the young gained a little more agency. Soon young people organized themselves in groups and clubs, and began contributing to the constructions of youth. This trend continued in the following years, triggered by the political awakening of young people in the Schwabing riots in 1962. Young males and females increasingly organized in community initia-

tives and student organizations, and they found ways to spread their own views and constructs of youth. Alternative media outlets, or the simple willingness to speak up and provoke, thus complicated broad narratives and simplistic constructs around juvenile delinquency in Munich. Such growth of agency ultimately diversified society, a process that captures an overall democratization.² Historian Dieter Rink argues that youth cultures have provoked German society over the years, and such exposure to difference has made West Germany more tolerant. Society has, according to Rink, “abstained from criminalizing, excluding, and destructing” various youth cultures since the 1970s.³ *Coming of Age* agrees with this interpretation although it is important to note that authorities often became simply more subtle in their responses.

The analyzed images of youth were social constructs and created representations. Homelessness, black-marketeering, and fraternization among the young did exist. But in the postwar period in Munich, these were much more complex phenomena. At best 10 percent of the young population overall could be broadly described as *the Halbstarke*. The supposed widespread nature of *the teenager* is more difficult to assess. However, sources suggest that she was also a limited phenomenon, if she existed at all. In the mid-1950s, most girls could rarely leave the house and if they did could not simply go into a nightclub to dance. Milk bars or maybe their own rooms remained their prime space, always near authorities. *The student* and *the Gammler* were not the only carriers of protests, and the latter in particular was a small yet visible group. At times, carefree or careless youngsters found themselves demonized as Gammlers throughout the 1960s, a dynamic speaking to the power of this construct in Munich as elsewhere.⁴ Similarly, at the riots and protests in Schwabing, not even half of those arrested were students; at the protests at the Buchgewerbehaus building six years later, students played a key role in organizing but did not carry out the protests themselves. Instead, it was a broader movement of protestors aimed against emergency laws, the War in Vietnam, and various other issues. Over time, this changed, and by the early 1970s actual university students more fully endorsed *the student* as their identity. In general, however, authorities exaggerated juvenile deviancy throughout this period in Munich because it was beneficial.

Not surprisingly, most of these representations of young people are still evident in current historiography and a broader collective memory. *The delinquent boy* and *the sexually deviant girl* haunt discussions regarding the immediate postwar period. Both images have been reproduced by a variety of scholars to underline the devastation after the

war. In that sense, juvenile delinquency became a symbol for the state of postwar Munich. *The Halbstarke* has elicited numerous publications to this day. Most of them do not go beyond a brief acknowledgment regarding the limited visibility of this image; some even reproduce questionable characteristics, making sporadic references to the possibility of a moral panic insufficient. *The teenager* has seen less scrutiny overall—apart from broad and general references to the rise of American youth culture. Some recent conversations have added some complexities, namely in the context of discussing the youth magazine *Bravo*. Finally, *the student*—more so than *the Gämmler*—has become an almost mystical image, and has taken on a life of its own. Some see the democratization of society rooted in the arrival of *the student*; others nervously recall the end of traditional values, established morals, and social order. In fact, a high-ranking Munich police officer noted in 2009, “I am eighty-two years old and have managed to block out the events [occurring in the Bavarian capital in 1968]. I do not want to be reminded of them and do not want to get upset.”⁵ Protestor Reinhard Wetter, on the other hand, noted in a similar context that he does not want to participate in attempts to revisit the events of 1968 in Munich. He believes that too many simplifications and generalizations are apparent.⁶ Personal recollections of those that came of age at that time sustain these dynamics as individuals align their memory along age, political leanings, and broader historical context. This then explains the widespread popularity of music, movies, or other cultural elements coming out of this timeframe, and the perhaps larger impact of the 1950s and 1960s on Germany’s collective memory overall.

The existence of images of delinquency also hints at the constructed nature of intergenerational conflicts. Adults define and defend existing societal norms. This setup makes conflicts between different age groups—defined, at times, as generation gaps—seemingly inevitable. The young are generally more vulnerable and thus exposed to discrimination. Although most societies rely on these hierarchies, *Coming of Age* exposes the fact that intergenerational differences are largely constructed and not inescapable. Rooted in a continuing emphasis on juvenile delinquency and supposed misbehaviors, the media, various authorities, and a diverse mixture of other societal groups continually nourished distrust towards the young—and do so to this day. After all, the existence of delinquency is beneficial, making efforts to cultivate and, at times, promote, intergenerational conflicts a surprisingly widespread, lucrative, and persistent phenomena: institutions rely on generational differences to gain legitimacy, and marketing strategists hoping to make money off the young continually sustain generational

divides. The actual young also define their identity based on exaggerated and partly imagined differences from adults. Actually, throughout the 1960s “‘generation’ served protesters ... as a political argument,”⁷ as noted by one scholar. Pierre Bourdieu said it best, stating that “both youth and old age are socially constructed in the conflict (*lutte*) between the young and the old.”⁸

Connections between constructing and controlling remain central to this volume. Interested in the benefits of constructing youth as deviant, *Coming of Age* demonstrates how social constructions can become powerful tools of social control. As indicated throughout this study, once adults framed youth as deviant, then each image of youth became a way to control the actual young, and society as a whole. By 1946, the existence of *the delinquent boy* allowed authorities to justify large-scale raids in less orderly areas of town; at the same time, the appearance of *the sexually deviant girl* justified broad and invasive health regulations; it also helped demonize fraternization. Later, the construction of *the Halbstarke* helped impose stricter traffic laws and brought more funds to traditional youth groups. Besides, police had a justification to increase surveillance of certain parts of town, namely working-class neighborhoods. Female youngsters demonized as *the teenager* faced stringent measures as well. Simply listening to rock ‘n’ roll music and idolizing Elvis was reason enough to be sent to juvenile detention, a frightening dynamic that speaks to the power of such discourses. Commercialization eventually provided another way to conform and domesticate youth: the promotion of an apolitical and consuming youngster, the new teenager, opened a profitable space in a fearful society. The events in Schwabing in 1962, combined with a politicization during the 1960s overall, allowed authorities to create the Schwabing police state: undercover police officers patrolled the streets and collected data, law enforcement infiltrated student groups, and city officials utilized urban planning to reclaim spaces mostly frequented by the young. The latter indicates again how space mattered, not only when constructing youth as deviant but also when trying to control the young.

The mere existence of certain constructions of youth became perhaps the most powerful tool of social control. As this microhistory demonstrates, defining and marking someone as an “abnormal Other” was a way to control their behaviors. Moreover, constituting norms and standards for all became a way to normalize society. Both trends affected Munich’s formative years. Girls shortly after the war did not want to be called *Veronika Dankeschön*. They thus made sure to stay away from supposed deviant city spaces and avoided conversations with U.S. American soldiers, if at all possible. Similarly, many male

youngsters worked hard and aligned with the demands of authorities; only then, they hoped, could they avoid being seen as delinquents. Shortly after the war, that was extremely difficult because scarcities pushed the young—like many others—to the black market or to the U.S. Military Government for resources and work. In the 1950s, lines became a little more blurred. Some male youngsters used certain elements of U.S. popular culture to create their own identities and subcultures. Their active participation in the construction of *the Halbstarke* makes an analysis of who constructed these images more complicated. The fact that authorities even perceived youngsters simply driving their mopeds to work as deviant and threatening nonetheless outlines the power of this construct. This means, in some cases, it was a stigma to be called a *Halbstarke*, and any behavior along these lines had to be prevented; other youngsters enjoyed the attention and used this image to provoke, to test boundaries, or to simply enjoy being young. For young women, references to their sexual purity remained amongst the most powerful ways to control female bodies and behaviors. Combined with traditional values, girls in the 1950s were often exposed to the gaze of those around them. References like, “That does not suit a lady,” and the possible stigmatization of being “a loose woman” were extremely powerful in a society that held up sexual repression and patriarchy. Finally, in the 1960s, youngsters, along with many other voices, most actively used the images of *the student* and *the Gammler* to provoke and to frame an alternative narrative of events. Whereas being called a *student* or *Gammler* did not necessarily lose its stigma, the use of both constructs by protestors indicates a certain progression: the young now more actively participated in the construction of youth. Yet it was the fact that protestors organized in the 1960s that made a difference against a state still employing harsh mechanisms of social control. Ultimately, as *Coming of Age* argues, adult authorities did not merely construct deviancy and blow it out of proportion, as noted by Stanley Hall and others; they also used the existence of delinquency to control society, to follow Michel Foucault. Desires to control were grounded in historical precedents, contemporary exigencies, conflicting motives of various actors, and the unique postwar situation.

These trends regarding constructing and controlling male and female youth in Munich expose much broader dynamics, including continuities in Munich’s history and beyond. Discussions around 1945 as a supposed *Stunde Null* zero hour have been questioned by scholars focusing on *Alltagsgeschichte* for quite some time. *Coming of Age* aligns with such critiques. Unlike existing studies, however, it exposes continuities in regard to the management of youth. Young people felt only

minor differences regarding their treatment after 1945, and compared to the Nazi period: they continued to be seen as deviant if they did not align with largely traditional norms and frameworks. That local German authorities and the U.S. Military Government worked together so closely when it came to dealing with juvenile delinquency only hints at even broader trends, especially since these authorities rarely agreed on other issues. Furthermore, the protest years did not end in 1969. Instead, many authorities continued to hold on to *the student* even after the end of broader debates and protests. For them, it was a useful tool to continue to push their agenda. This reading challenges a top-down approach that argues that federal dynamics—namely the chancellorship of Willy Brandt—is more important when trying to understand a sudden shift in discussions. Whereas over time broader debates within West Germany around détente, amnesty, and more direct democracy became noticeable in Munich, conservative state institutions in Bavaria actively questioned and challenged such an approach. The voices of the young and others on the streets, this volume contends, are consequently significant when trying to make sense of larger historical trends and complexities.

Conversations around youth more so than broad political shifts on a federal level helped push Munich towards a more tolerant and open society, an openness that had its limitations. As apparent in *Coming of Age* and arguably for this transition period in modern German history more broadly, authorities merely shifted towards more subtle mechanisms of social control. Direct actions in the forms of raids or invasive health policies as apparent in the crisis years and certainly before that increasingly lost their appeal, especially after the riots in Schwabing. Until then, however, and in some instances beyond the early 1960s, similarities between Munich in West Germany and the situation in city spaces in East Germany are clearly apparent. But by the mid-1960s a broader and organized coalition within the general public in Munich protested directly against police brutality and invasive mechanisms of social control—unlike in the GDR, where such protests were not a possibility. Local officials responded to this not by rethinking their approach overall, or even by stepping away from demonizing youth. Constructing youth as deviant is a much too profitable framework. Instead, adult authorities looked into more refined tactics to control youth and society that seem to be more acceptable for a democracy: undercover agents, surveillance, spatial planning, deescalation. All of these frameworks were mechanisms of social control still aimed to combat real and imagined juvenile delinquency; and all of them ultimately helped control much broader spectrums of society overall. In

this sense, coming of age for Munich and West Germany also meant growing up as a democracy by now employing more indirect and thus only outwardly tolerant mechanisms of social control.

Finally, and more globally speaking, constructions of youth as delinquent and attempts to utilize such representations to control young people and societies haunt public conversations well beyond Munich or Germany. In daily life the demonization of youth, or the war on youth as cultural critic Henry Giroux has described it,⁹ takes many forms, especially in times of political and economic difficulties. A constructed distrust towards the young, grounded in the use of age as a way to frame hierarchies, is at the center of these conversations; moral panics involving gangs, rowdies, pregnant teenagers, or other concepts tied to juvenile delinquency are often the norm because these types remain lucrative setups for educators, child savers, and corporate interests alike. Historical studies must question the uncritical reliance on constructs of youth as delinquent much more broadly. As *Coming of Age* demonstrates, images of youth as deviant remain adult constructions in place due to many ulterior motives. Scholars need to be aware of this dynamic and should be extra careful when relying on such discourses in their own work. Such efforts, I hope, will more broadly affirm that talking about youth is much more than simply discussing young people.

Notes

1. See, for example: Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine, eds., *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* (New York, 1998); Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, eds., *European Cities, Youth and the Public Sphere in the Twentieth Century* (Burlington, 2005).
2. Jarausch, *After Hitler*.
3. Dieter Rink, "Beunruhigende Normalisierung: Zum Wandel von Jugendkulturen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 5 (2002): 3–6, here 6. See also: Krüger, "Vom Punk zum Emo," in *Inter-cool 3.0*.
4. Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*.
5. Stankiewicz, *München '68*, 76.
6. *Ibid.*, 52.
7. Holger Nehring, "'Generation' as a Political Argument in West European Protest Movements during the 1960s," in *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 57–78, here 57.
8. Jones, *Youth*, 3. See also: Bourdieu, "Youth Is Just a Word," in *Sociology in Question*.
9. Henry Giroux, *America's Education Deficit and the War on Youth* (New York, 2013).