

How appropriate is the term 'cultural revolution' to describe the events of 'the long sixties'. (c.1958 – c.1974). This discussion is with the use of three disciplines represented in Block 6: History, History of Science and Religious Studies.

Discussion about changes in ideas and values: people's attitudes and behaviour, views of authority, race, family and personal relationships.

ⁱArthur Marwick discusses the definition of the 'cultural revolution' that took place in 'the Sixties' as one that did not take on the form of a political or economic revolution.

In ⁱⁱEric Hobsbaw'n's book *Age of Extremes* he structured the twentieth century into three periods, where 'the Sixties' was incorporated in 'the Golden Age' (1945 - 1973). ⁱⁱⁱArthur Marwick, a historian, further periodized 'the Sixties' from 1958 - 1973.

However 'the Sixties' was not a worldwide phenomena, because it mainly happened in the United States, the United Kingdom and areas of Europe. Eastern Europe, Africa and much of Asia more than likely were not affected. To understand whether a cultural

revolution did take place or not we need to understand - “what caused ‘the Sixties’?” It was a period of extensive change in people’s values and ideas to name but one area. Extracts from ^{iv}‘Mini-Renaissance’ reveal that ‘Young people suddenly had an important voice; they were being listened to, followed even...’ ^vJim Haynes, a leading figure in ‘counter-cultural’ activities explained that ‘What we were doing in the colourful clothes and long hair in the sixties was telling everybody that we were tolerant, we were all having fun...’ After the Second World War everyone had high hopes of a social change, where issues like Civil Rights for black Americans would improve. However these hopes were thwarted as was pointed out in ^{vi}Martin Luther King’s letter, ‘...but it is even more unfortunate that the city’s white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative...’ Very many movements we associate with ‘the Sixties’ were born out of this dammed up frustration from the nineteen fifties. And who were the protestors? There was a ‘baby boom’ after World War Two so by the nineteen sixties there was a large presence of affluent teenagers in America. It would appear that the majority of these young people became the protestors. Daring films in the cinemas sanctioned their daring behaviour. Further ‘liberated behaviour’ was increased by the

taking of the Pill where formally there was constraint. Many questions were raised in 'the Sixties' and one important one was the role of women. ^{vii}Betty Friedan explained that, 'When women do not need to live through their husbands and children, men will not fear the love and strength of women...' This discontent which women faced during the fifties was to undergo some serious changes during 'the Sixties'.

Why were there so few women in science? Yet another question women were asking in 'the Sixties'. A ^{viii}survey published in 1965 gave figures for the percentage of women employed in various fields of science and engineering. The startling find was that only about 10% of people working in science were women. Many women asked why they should not be able to participate as actively as men did. Their frustrations were heightened by the knowledge that even if they were highly skilled, it would be extremely difficult for them to remain active members of the scientific workforce. This was due to the fact that a) they would probably leave because of pregnancy and b) after World War Two the United States government laid great stress on women's domestic role in order to encourage them to stay at home, (so that men could take up their place again in the

workforce). This stigma was carried over into to the workplace where as was discussed in an article for ^{ix}Women's Group from Science for the people magazine, 'they were limited by being placed in subordinate positions, rarely being given their own labs or ^xfirst authorship on papers, and the most glaring inequity, being paid less than their male counterparts for equal work.' It was also argued that women see the world differently from men. In the nineteen sixties no women graduated from university with a doctorate in Primatology at all. Through the influence of the feminist movements during this time however by the nineteen nineties the tables had turned. Many women entering the field have insisted that the analysis of the primates was male bias. It was thought that male monkeys were the dominant ones and therefore man concluded that he was rightfully the superior person and his counterpart subservient. Careful research has shown that anything a male can do a female can do too. Jeanne Altman in her studies was struck by the ability of the female primate to be able to do several things at once. ^{xi}Londa Schiebinger wrote that 'In Primatology, as in medicine, the majority of feminists to date have come from re-evaluations of females. Only in the nineteen sixties did Primatologists begin looking seriously at what females do.

Feminists first overturned the conventional stereotype of the passive, dependent female'. Londa suggested here that the feminist movement of 'the Sixties' had a remarkable effect on science. And through the illuminating discoveries out of the study of Primatology the role of women has become enriched. If we have to look at the Thalidomide tragedy we see how presuppositions (where members of the medical profession had thought that the womb was impermeable) had led doctors (including female doctors) and drug companies to neglect research on unborn babies. Where scientists were making weapons of mass destruction, one female doctor, Frances Oldham Kelsey, shaped science for the future when she questioned the possible risks of the drug Contagen on unborn babies. It was through her work with quinine in the Malaria Campaign during World War Two that she had discovered and realised that the foetus was vulnerable and that the womb was not impermeable. This event led to a dramatic breakthrough for the protection of babies whilst in the womb. Incredible as it may seem not even alcohol was seriously considered to be harmful to unborn children amongst the minds of the medical profession up until then.

‘What now?’ was probably a question on many parents’ minds during ‘the Sixties’. ^{xii}Theodore Roszak tried to explain why the youths of ‘the Sixties’ had felt as they did, ‘When science and reason of state become the handmaidens of political black magic, can we blame the young for diving headlong into an occult Jungian stew in search of “good vibrations” that might ward off the bad?’ Youths turned from the mainstream culture, so in the early phase of ‘the Sixties’ counter-culture was depicted mostly as rebellious: a reaction against mainstream values, Western materialism, parental values and the political system to name but a few. By nineteen sixty-seven the counter-culture was instead advocating equality, non-violence, experimentation and spontaneity, tolerance of alternative lifestyles, environmentalism, right livelihood, enlightenment and transcendence. This acceptance of other ways encouraged the blossoming of the New Religion Movements (NRMs). Why the need for an alternative lifestyle? ^{xiii}Theodore Roszak claims that, ‘The rejection of the corrupted religious establishment has carried over almost automatically into a root-and-branch rejection of all things spiritual; ...What the counter-culture has to offer us, then, is a remarkable defection from the long-standing tradition of sceptical, secular intellectuality which has served as the prime

vehicle for three hundred years of scientific and technical work of the West.’ So it would appear that many young people during ‘the Sixties’ wanted to break away from mainstream values and embrace a world free from technocratic society and the hypocrisy of the church system. In Roszak’s view Science, in the eyes of the counter-culture, had become the tool of political and social evil. The Vietnam war and its horrors did nothing to alleviate ill feelings and it proved that governments imbued by the technocratic, scientific spirit were unable to govern morally. Many of the younger generation turned from mainstream churches to counter-culture religions to find answers. Some it would appear got caught up in the religious culture through rather psychedelic means as ^{xiv}Tom Wolfe’s view looking back reveals, ‘Very few people went into the hippie life with religious intentions, but many came out of it absolutely righteous. The sheer power of the drug LSD is not to be underestimated. It was quite easy for an LSD experience to take on the form of a religious vision, particularly if one was among people already so inclined.’ Apparently the connection between drugs and religion has a long and honourable tradition, dating from prehistoric times. However the drug craze did become less popular as John Lennon, in August 1967 said, ‘We are not sorry that we

took ^{xv}LSD but we realize that if we'd met the ^{xvi}Maharishi before we had taken LSD, we would not have needed to take it.' As a result the drug culture of the Sixties died and the religious quest took on a whole new meaning or perhaps one addiction was just swapped for another one.

Would it be fair to say 'the Sixties' experienced a 'cultural revolution'? Indeed 'the Sixties' experienced something and if not a 'cultural revolution' what then? The Sixties underwent a different type of revolution to the French revolution or Mao's real 'cultural revolution'. Everything from Women's attitudes changing toward men and vice versa, to sexual liberation, ^{xvii}youth's 'dropping out', 'turning on' and 'tuning in'. Every level of living standard it seems was challenged and affected by the Sixties youthful rebellion. But then does not every generation go through life changing experiences which can affect the entire population in that area? What was so peculiar about 'the Sixties'? Was it a time of mything-out on Jesus or spacing-out on drugs? It appeared to be time of drastic measures, of shocking statements, as this ^{xviii}letter written by the daughter of a rich Memphis family to her parents, on the 12th September 1967 will reveal, 'We saw the teeny-boppers in their

mini skirts and fishnet stockings in Los Angeles; but I didn't believe the conservative Middle West would be caught dead in such gear. I must be wrong [...] [she went round the main shops in Arkansas] there wasn't a single dress I even wanted to try on. Everything is made for the junior figure [...] cut too short. Even my favourite Peck and Peck has deserted me for the mini-mod.' But then this is true of today, so it would appear that that was the beginnings of fashion dictating to the market, where everyone wanted to look like ^{xix}Twiggy and in 'the Sixties' it was all about teenage consumerism. ^{xx}Jim Hayes sums up 'the Sixties' with these words, 'The end of 'the Sixties' came as a kind of incredible collapse, a collapse of hope, and the innocence and naivety of the decade when everyone felt that we were changing the world, that we could change the world. Then maybe a few people began to realise that through music, through long hair and colourful costumes, through our attitudes, hopes and fears we weren't going to change the world. We could only maybe change ourselves a bit. And I think this resulted in a depression for some people and a rush of cynicism.' But ^{xxi}Maureen Nolan and Roam Singleton have a more positive view, 'And did all the upheavals in living standards, in attitudes and fashion have a lasting effect on the lives of the adults who were teenagers in

Liverpool in the sixties? I believe it did.’ In their opinion the Sixties was a mini-renaissance in which the right of individual expression was encouraged, applauded and nurtured by a generation whose naïve belief was all they needed was love. The Sixties experienced a cultural revolution that happened with startling speed and force and on many levels, from grass roots to the leading politicians. The Sixties touched many people’s lives for the better or the worse, but for the most part it continues to colour and enrich our lives today.

[1995 words]

ⁱ An Introduction to Humanities, The Sixties, Author of unit 25 and 26

ⁱⁱ Eric Hobsbawn’s book *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914 - 1991*

ⁱⁱⁱ The Sixties- Cultural Transformation in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958 - c. 1974

^{iv} a memoir by Maureen Nolan and Roma Singleton , Resource Book 4, pg 23

^v Jim Hayes, A3, *Thanks for Coming!* an autobiography, Resource Book 4, pg 24

^{vi} Letter from Birmingham Jail, Resource Book 4, pg 27

^{vii} The Feminine Mystique, Resource Book 4, pg 28

^{viii} An Introduction to Humanities, The Sixties, pg 99, Table 2

^{ix} ‘Declaration: Equality for women in science’ Resource Book 4, pg 5, B7

^x An Introduction to Humanities, The Sixties, pg 103. No 3: Writing scientific papers for publication is the most important way of building one’s professional credibility and

visibility in science.

^{xi} ‘Has feminism changed science?’, Resource Book 4, pg 54

^{xii} Theodore Roszak, ‘Journey to the East...and points beyond’, Resource Book 4, pg 56-60

^{xiii} Theodore Roszak, ‘Journey to the East...and points beyond’, Resource Book 4, pg 56-60

^{xiv} Tom Wolfe, novelist and journalist, *Mauve Gloves and Madmen, Clutter and Vine*. An Introduction to Humanities, The Sixties, pg 134

^{xv} Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, a drug which was used in the past for religious quests and was not considered illegal in the nineteenth century and earlier.

^{xvi} Maharishi Mahesh Yogi founded the Spiritual Regeneration Movement (SRM) 1967

^{xvii} Tim Leary, ‘Start your own religion’, Resource Book 4, pg 72

^{xviii} Letter, Resource Book 4, pg 33

^{xix} Twiggy, 16, who was the face of 1966

^{xx} Jim Hayes, A3, *Thanks for Coming!* an autobiography pg 24, Resource Book 4

^{xxi} ‘mini-renaissance’, Resource Book 4, pg 25

* Please note the Resource Book 4 is a course book for An Introduction to Humanities, A103