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Abstract

This paper takes the neglected sociological matter of sleep and applies the insights contained therein to issues and debates within the sociology of consumption. Sleep, it is argued, is pursued if not consumed in a variety of ways in consumer culture, including its (lifestyle) associations with health and beauty, leisure and pleasure. It is also increasingly recognised if not contracted for in the workplace, construed as the 'ultimate performance enhancer' and the 'cheapest form of stress relief'. These and other insights are located in the context of a burgeoning 'sleep industry' and the consumer identities it spawns: one which is busy capitalising on this dormant third part of our lives through a range of products, from beds to bedding, night-wear to night-cream, pills to pillows. Sleep, it is concluded, is a crucial element of consumption, augmenting existing theoretical and empirical agendas in significant new ways. The broader sociological implications of sleep are also touched upon and addressed, as a stimulus to further research, discussion and debate.

Keywords: *Beauty; Consumption; Health; Leisure; Sleep; Work*

Introduction

1.1 Sleep, by and large, has been a strangely neglected sociological matter to date. There may well, of course, be good reason for this. Sociologists, after all, are predominantly concerned with waking life, in its manifold guises. Sleep moreover, some might say, is first and foremost the province of other disciplines such as biology, psychology, or professions such as medicine. Dreams, likewise, are more for the attentive probings of psychoanalysts than the musings of sociologists. To profess a sociological interest in sleep, therefore, is all too often greeted, initially at least, with scepticism if not hilarity: 'are you serious?', 'you must be joking', 'good excuse for nap', 'whatever will you think of next!'

1.2 A moment's reflection, however, reveals the error of any such judgements and the missed opportunities they entail. Sleep is central to society, a functional pre-requisite in fact, permeating its institutions and its boundaries, its discourses and its practices, its roles and rituals, its beliefs and its mythologies. A vast amount of work indeed goes into the planning and preparation, scheduling and partaking of sleep in society: a process involving considerable activity and co-ordination, acknowledged or not. Whilst sleep, to put it another way, involves a valuable release from the conscious demands of waking life, the management of sleep, like the management of emotions, is a hidden yet vital part of everyday life. When, how and where we sleep, let alone what we make of it and who we do it with, are all to a considerable degree socio-cultural matters.

1.3 Sleep then, throws up a fascinating range of sociological issues, from the biology-society relations it embodies and expresses, through the social patterning and management of the sleep role, to the broader questions of power and status, surveillance and control this raises. All this, moreover, without any mention of the social significance of dreams or dreamers, nor the changing nature and status of sleep across culture, time and place.

1.4 There have, to be fair, been minor sociological excursions or forays into this dormant third part of lives -- see, for example, Aubert and White (1959a,b), Schwartz (1970), Melbin (1987), Taylor (1993). It is also of course possible to re-trace or recover various sleep related themes in the work of past scholars, from Elias's (1978/1939) work on the 'civilising process' to Mauss's (1973/1934) musings on 'body-techniques'. Much remains to be done, nonetheless, to redress this traditional neglect. A sociological engagement with sleep, as Williams (2003, 2002, 2001) has recently argued, enables us to critically rethink a series of deep-seated assumptions about relations between wakefulness, consciousness, sociality and temporality, not

least through a focus on the 'doing' of sleep (cf. Taylor 1973) as an embodied social activity, role and event we prepare for and perform on a daily basis; itself socially and culturally 'patterned' in various ways. This in turn raises a series of further pertinent questions. To what extent, for example, has sleep been commercialized and commodified in consumer culture? Is sleep, for instance, becoming a consumer 'good'? How does this square with notions of the so-called '24 hour society' or a society which 'never sleeps'? What light, moreover, does this shed on current debates within the sociology of consumption and related domains of inquiry such as the sociology of the body and health? These are some of the questions that this paper, a 'think-piece' of sorts, seeks to address if not answer as a stimulus to further debate.

1.5 In the first part of the paper, as a backdrop to the themes which follow, the question of where precisely might sleep fit into past/present theories of consumption is taken up and addressed. This in turn paves the way, in the second part of the paper, for a closer examination of three key arenas or domains within which sleep is being 'capitalized' upon: first the spheres of health and beauty, second through the pursuit of leisure and pleasure, and third, within the workplace itself. The paper concludes, in the light of this, with a recapitulation of the main arguments, together with some further reflections on where this leaves us and what future sociological agendas it signals.

1.6 What then of sleep and consumption? How might this relationship be profitably theorized and what leads does it provide on this dormant trail?

Theorizing Consumption: (where) does sleep fit in?

2.1 Sleep, at first glance, echoing the above points, has little if anything to do with consumption. If it involves the conscious withdrawal from society, into a state of slumber, then how can it? We may be consumed by sleep, as an embodied (or dis-embodied?) state, but little more. Again, however, first appearances are deceptive.

2.2 The sociology of consumption, to be sure, comprises or draws upon a variety of perspectives, from classical Veblenesque theories of conspicuous consumption, to Campbell's Romantic ethic thesis, and from Bourdieu's 'habitus' related musings on the structuring structures of taste and the struggle for social distinction, to those who emphasise the purpose of consumption for the much cited self-identity quest (itself tied to the body in a variety of ways) in a late or postmodern culture, which include, in this latter guise, an emphasis on consumption as a site of play, performance, spectacle or symbolic creativity.

2.3 This, in itself, raises a number of potentially promising issues and avenues of inquiry as far as sleep is concerned. It is not, however, our intention to review or rehearse all these differing perspectives and issues here in terms of sleep. Instead we ask the seemingly simple yet provocative question 'is sleep another prime example of the capitalist desire to cash in our lives, thereby creating a (new) "dormant" market for its "goods" and the "dreams" it sells us (on a daily or nightly basis)?' Is there, moreover, a tension or contradiction here between the increasing commercialisation and commodification of sleep (in keeping with the body and lifestyles in general) in consumer culture on the one hand, and the social and cultural trend toward a reduction in our sleep time, if not an increase in sleep deprivation, on the other.

2.4 This, perhaps, suggests something close to a 'manipulationist' approach to these dormant matters. Any emphasis on manipulation, however, ought at least to bear in mind the active role consumers themselves play in constructing ever more opportunities where some form of consumption is needed - a more complex dialectic between some sort of consumer autonomy and the machinations of commercial ideology perhaps? A whole sleep and rest industry has nevertheless emerged to address, not to say, exploit, these 'needs' (and no doubt stimulate new concerns), invoking a range of legitimating rationales (including optimal health and performance) in doing so, thereby addressing us all as potential consumers and supplying us with everything from nightwear and pharmacological aides, to the ultimate bed where a 'silent night' is more or less guaranteed.

2.5 In keeping with the opening up of other new consumption-based areas of exploration in recent years -- from weddings (Boden 2003, 2001) to death (Gabel et al. 1996) -- it is now possible, in short, to point to a variety of ways in which people are 'buying into' sleep through a range of sleep-related commodities and products. More boldly or speculatively perhaps, we may go further and speak here of sleep itself as (something which is fast becoming) a consumer 'good' or pleasurable 'way of escape', pursued through a range of consumption activities and sleep-related products which in turn may be analysed in relation to a consumer (sleep) industry that produces the 'sleeper' as a specific (sought-after and desirable) consumer identity.

2.6 It is to a more detailed exposition of three key arenas/domains, themselves overlapping, within which this is taking place that we now turn.

'Capitalising' on Sleep: a lucrative market/dream ticket?

(i) Health and beauty: looking good, feeling great

3.1 Much has been written, in recent years, on the salience of health and lifestyles in consumer culture. Health now is something not simply to be worked at but consumed through a range of lifestyle choices, goods and services, themselves part and parcel of broader concerns with body maintenance, the image and the look in consumer culture. We 'buy into' health in a variety of ways, these days, from the food in our shopping baskets, through membership of health clubs and fitness centres (themselves requiring the purchase of further sport/leisure wear), to the purchasing of health care itself as a consumer 'good' (see, for example, Henderson and Petersen 2001). Health promotion, moreover, takes places in a variety of contexts and settings, from the gym to the shopping mall, real or virtual. The boundaries between health promotion and commercial interests, in this respect, are themselves increasingly blurred, with a premium placed on individual responsibility (Nettleton and Bunton 1995). 'Looking good, feeling great', therefore, becomes a dominant cultural motif, experienced and expressed through identities such as the 'health promoting self' (Glasner 1995). Health, as this suggests, is not simply morally laden but 'aestheticised' within consumer culture (Featherstone 1991), through associations with this or that commodity, themselves providing important markers of status and identity (cf. Bourdieu 1984). The greening of consumer culture, likewise, links to health promotion in complex ways, providing yet another lucrative market to capitalise on as the production and consumption of health are collapsed anew (Nettleton and Bunton 1995).

3.2 Is sleep, we may ask, the latest episode in this story? On the one hand, to be sure, sleep continues to be a neglected matter, health-related or otherwise: the casualty, one might say, of the restless, unremitting or wide awake society (cf. Melbin 1987). On the other hand, however, sleep is increasingly pondered if not promoted in a variety of ways, some more salubrious than others, through its association with health and risk, lifestyles and consumption (of which more below)^[1]. Here we glimpse one key facet of the active 'doing' of sleep (cf. Taylor 1993) which itself of course, to repeat, is embodied through and through (Williams 2001, 2002). Individual or collective responsibility for a 'life well-slept' ^[2] weighs heavily in the balance sheet here. Sleep, it is claimed, is crucial to health, happiness and well-being, enhancing performance in all walks of life from the boardroom to the bedroom (Dement with Vaughan 2000): a message echoed and amplified through the media, both printed and electronic (Kroll-Smith 2003). Sleep, for example, displays complex relations to attention, cognitive functioning, memory, mood, motor skills, immunity, sensitivity to pain, not to mention health care use, sickness absenteeism and even long-term survival (Martin 2003). Relations, in this respect, flow both ways, from sleep to health and from health to sleep. Sleep, moreover, is now hailed or hyped as a crucial form of 'stress relief, the cheapest around in fact (a point we shall return to later). Implicated in both inner functioning and outer appearance, sleep therefore increasingly reinforces the looking good, feeling great motif of consumer culture: a translation, in effect, via the media more than medicine, of scientific 'facts' into popular health-related fads or fashions, if not 'fictions'. Body maintenance whilst you sleep, the dream ticket!

3.3 This association with looking good, and feeling great, is further underlined in relation to beauty and skin care products. Mention should be made at this point of the notion/concept of 'beauty sleep', in terms of its health dimensions and its commercial marketability, in this lucrative cosmetic climate of ours. Night-time, it is claimed: ...is prime regenerative time for your skin - particularly between the hours of 2am and 3am. Studies by cosmetic companies have shown that this is when the skin is abuzz with surges of growth hormone and other substances that lead to the formation of collagen and the repair of some of the DNA damage that occurs everyday through exposure to UV rays. The skin is also more porous at this time, which means that any skincare on the face or body is likely to be more effective at getting to the lower levels of skin where it's actually needed' (*Observer* February 4th 2001). ^[3]

3.4 Women in particular, in the light of these (cosmetic) claims, are encouraged to consume and work hard on their bodies whilst *asleep* – an extension of the 'work of consuming femininity', that is to say (Winship 1987) – to reap rewards whilst *awake*. Professional 'salon' houses such as Decleor, Gatineau and Elemis, for example, heavily promote their nighttime skincare ranges through appeals to the biological functions of sleep and its effects on skin tone and condition. A promotion for Decleor's Soir Du Soir, for example, reads: 'Let your face cream work while you sleep [?] enabling it to repair and replace the damage caused by external elements during the daytime'. Gatineau's Laser Night Concentrate too, we are told, will; 'help to stimulate cellular renewal while you sleep', whilst the Absolute Night Cream from Elemis can; 'do its energizing work while you sleep' ^[4]

3.5 It is at this very juncture, however, returning to the core of our argument, that a contradiction arises, if contradiction it is. For all these alleged benefits, be it health or beauty, our sleep time is by all accounts increasingly being 'squeezed' in a society which, in many respects, never sleeps (Martin 2003)! We live, as

Melbin (1989) puts it, in an incessant or unremitting society, which has steadily 'colonized' night in a variety of ways, from the humble electric light bulb to shift-work, night-clubs to 24 hour television and convenience stores. The Internet too, of course, that sprawling digital network, is no respecter of sleep schedules or time zones, adding a further wide-awake dimension to life and living in this so-called 'global age'. Extending our days, in these and countless other ways, has many potential payoffs. Consumer culture, in this respect, is somewhat Janus-faced, both sleep denying and sleep promoting all at once, through the twin mandates of 'control' and 'release'. Either way, a lucrative market beckons for the wide-awake or for the tired and weary consumer.

3.6 The 'costs' for individuals, however, caught between these contradictory mandates -- themselves far from perfectly balanced -- may be considerable. Sleep problems, by all accounts, are on the increase (Martin 2003). These range from medically recognized sleep disorders such as insomnias, narcolepsy, sleep apnoea and restless leg syndrome, to general problems of fatigue and tiredness through accumulated sleep debt (see <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>) (Dement with Vaughan 1999/2000; Coren 1997). We sleep, it is claimed, approximately one and a half hours less than our grandparents did (Dement with Vaughan 1999/2000). The implications of this, according to leading sleep experts, are serious, with risks both for individual health and public safety (including many accidents at work and on the roads). Some indeed go further. We are, Dement claims, a 'sleep sick' society, with an 'epidemic' of sleep disorders in our midst (Dement with Vaughan 1999/2000) (see also Coren 1997). The incessant society, from this viewpoint, has much to answer for.

3.7 Again, however, a variety of 'remedies' are on offer here, themselves further testament to relations between the healthicization (if not medicalization) and commercialisation of sleep in the current era. These range from: (i) the 'judicious' use of prescription hypnotics where medically indicated ^[5], through; (ii) relaxation techniques (controlled breathing, imagining pleasurable scenarios/sensations), stimulus control (getting rid of external stimuli/thoughts at bedtime), cognitive techniques (counting sheep) and sleep state restriction (active prevention or delay of sleep), to; (iii) over-the-counter remedies/self-medications and alternative therapies of various sorts such as hypnosis, biofeedback, acupuncture, feng shui, herb and flower remedies. Widely available over-the-counter remedies include, for example, those which use antihistamine to promote drowsiness (e.g. *Nytol* and *Sominex*), and those based on a combination of herbal ingredients (e.g. *Peaceful Night*, *Natrasleep*, *Sleepeaze*, *Nodoff*). In addition, mildly sedative herbs such as valerian, camomile, kava kava, passion flower, lemon balm and American scullcap can be taken as supplements in tablet or tincture form. This array of consumable sleep remedies/goods goes hand in hand with the marketing of *active relaxation*, the construction of a sleep-conducive environment and dietary/lifestyle factors which, although not overtly commercialised, rely upon consumption of a sort, or, alternatively, purposive non- or limited consumption ^[6]. As for the humble cup of Horlicks, this it seems is not quite so humble after all: a GlaxoSmithKlein product, in fact, which is supported by the slogan 'Sleep Better, Feel Better' (<http://www.horlicks.co.uk/>).

3.8 Another important strategy here, returning to the earlier discussion about sleep, health and lifestyles, concerns the promotion of 'healthy' sleep habits. Dement, for example, pursues just this line through his advocacy of basic principles of 'sleep hygiene' or a 'sleep-smart lifestyle' - further evidence of the sleeper being constructed as a reflexive consumer identity, not only responsible for his or her own health but whose decisions about sleep have an equally important social or public health dimension. The simple goal of 'good sleep hygiene', from this viewpoint, is: ...to do everything possible to foster good sleep at night. Sleep hygiene includes non-psychological elements, such as avoiding caffeine before bedtime, but *many of the elements are behavioural*. *Keeping a regular schedule* is one of the most important behaviours for *healthy sleep*. A regular schedule *helps train your sleep cycle* in the same way that running at the same time every morning conditions you to prepare for exercise at that time. Sticking to a regular sleep schedule seven days a week is a sacrifice worth making if it helps you maintain peak condition throughout the week. *Consider it 'doctor's orders'* (Dement 1999/2000: 150, emphases added) ^[7].

3.9 In a similar vein, Dr. Edinger (a U.S. psychologist) teaches 'sleep education modules' which claim to reprogramme insomniacs to adopt good sleeping habits ^[8]. Certain strands of thinking here, moreover, are less concerned with increasing the *quantity* of our sleep time than with improving its *quality*, including the advocacy of napping or micro-sleep as an efficient sleep management strategy with added health benefits.

3.10 These calls go hand in hand with the work of a range of sleep societies and organizations, including the *British Sleep Society*, (<http://www.sleeping.org.uk/>) the *American Sleep Disorders Association*, (<http://www.americansleepassociation.org/>) and various other sleep websites on the Internet (visit The Sleep Medicine Home page at <http://www.users.cloud9.net/~thorpy>, or the Sleep Research Society at <http://www.sleepresearchsociety.org/site/>). Sleep net.com, (<http://www.sleepnet.com/>) for example -- established in 1995 and bearing the motto 'Everything you wanted to know about sleep but were too tired to ask' -- is a website designed to link all sleep information located on the Internet so as to 'empower the

public'. Currently sleepnet.com contains over 80 thousand pages with more than 2 million page views per month, including information on 'sleep disorders', 'sleep links', 'forums' of various sorts, not to mention the 'sleepmall' facility with its many sleep-related products for purchase. The US *National Sleep Foundation* (NSF) website (<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>) -- which is dedicated to improving public health and safety around sleep and sleep disorders -- also provides a range of materials, activities and events, including publications, information on sleep disorders, a 'press room' facility, sleep links, together with guidelines on both sleep services and 'getting involved'.

3.11 This theme of consuming sleep-related information and commodities for health reasons, alongside increasing concerns about rebalancing our 'unhealthy' or sleep-disruptive lifestyles, further coincide when the sleeper's immediate environment comes under scrutiny. *Here's Health* (September 2001, pg 76-8), for instance, devotes a whole article to educating its readership about 'how to create the ultimate healthy bedroom, an allergy-free eco-friendly space to give you a good nights sleep', highlighting, in so doing, a number of potential health hazards that might lurk in our bedrooms and endorsing a range of alternative health-affirming replacements. With regards to selecting the correct bed, the reader (as potential consumer) is firstly reminded that 'we spend a third of our lives asleep, so it makes sense to have a bed that supports your health'. Sleep in an 'inferior bed', the prospective health-conscious consumer is informed, 'can worsen or even lead to orthopaedic problems such as sciatica and arthritis', before being introduced to various commodities such as orthopaedic beds, hypoallergenic mattresses, 'eco-friendly' bedroom furniture (i.e. using wood from renewable sources), and even beds free of metal components which are suitable for those people 'who are sensitive to electromagnetic fields' (prices and contact information about the brands/companies featured appear as standard) -- see also <http://www.sleepcouncil.com>. Consumers, moreover, according to this article, should also be vigilant about the type of bedding they select as this can have further health implications: 'If you have allergies such as eczema, choose organic bedding. Our skin absorbs many of the substances which come into contact with our bodies, including pesticides and chemicals from clothing and bedding. Organic cotton is made without synthetic fertilisers, pesticides or bleaches'. It seems the implication here is that the use of 'synthetic' or 'artificial' ingredients in modern mass production methods or processes counteract the 'natural' state the body (and its immediate environment) must achieve before good quality sleep can proceed, and, as such, are further detrimental to our overall health and well-being.

3.12 A new arrival to this once slumbering market is Boots' sleep range, offering a plethora of innovative items to these newly 'produced' consumers. Everything the troubled sleeper could need is available here, from *Warm Neck and Shoulder Wraps* which gently ease aching muscles and encourage natural sleep patterns, through to a *Sleep Warming Chocolate Drink* containing soothing herbal extracts of chamomile and hops which, it is claimed, work together to relax your mind and body in preparation for sleep, not forgetting a variety of *Pillow Mists*, the calming aroma of which may help you relax and aid a peaceful night's sleep [9].

3.13 Sleep, in summary, through its associations with health and well-being, is pursued if not consumed in a variety of ways in consumer culture, including the adoption of particular (sleep-cum-health promoting) lifestyles, goods and services. We are it seems, for better or worse, increasingly 'sold' the view that sleep (including the humble nap) is the 'dream ticket', so to speak; a message, moreover, off-set against the incessant demands of 24/7 society, which highlights important elements of control and regulation regarding both our sleeping and waking lives, within and beyond the consumer industry. These associations, in turn, are reinforced through the cosmetic pursuit of beauty sleep, itself gendered, thereby adding a further aesthetic dimension to the looking good, feeling great culture of our times.

3.14 Another possibility emerges here, however, which returns us to the contradiction of sleep denial as well as promotion raised above. Ours is an age in which tinkering if not tampering with our bodies has become something of an obsession. From cosmetic surgery to organ transplants, Prozac to the new genetics, the technological possibilities are endless: a *Brave New World* (Huxley) indeed. Might sleep then be next on the list, reducing or cancelling our need to sleep in favour of the incessant society. Melbin flirts with just such a possibility. People, he notes: want to have the choice of when to sleep and whether to sleep at all. The feat is within the capability of a culture that learned how to improve fertility in humans, how to prolong their length of life, and how to transplant organs from one body into another, and that now creates new organisms by genetic transfer. A society that can accomplish those things...will undo sleep if it wishes (Melbin 1987: 133-4).

3.15 This, indeed, is already happening. Stimulants, to be sure, have been around a long time, but a whole new class of drugs, designed to treat conditions such as narcolepsy, are turning these dreams into a reality: drugs, moreover, with important military applications for combating sleep amongst soldiers on important (night-time) operations. The thin end of the wedge perhaps, who knows?

(ii) Leisure and pleasure: ways of escape?

3.16 It is precisely at this point, however, that a further question arises. Would there be any takers, if reducing or cancelling our need to sleep were an option? Sleep, in many ways, provides a welcome release from the conscious demands of waking society. Without sleep, Schwartz (1970) comments, we would indeed have to invent some other substitute. It is, in this respect, sleep problems notwithstanding, a desirable if not pleasurable escape route, all the more so if the content of our dream life turns out to be exciting or erotic. The attractions of sleep, in this respect, are many and varied, extending far beyond the promises of health and beauty, to the spheres of leisure and pleasure, if not outright luxury and pure self-indulgence: the flip side of the disciplinary mandate of (self) control.

3.17 Again, a variety of examples may be cited in support of these contentions. Asked what they intend to do with their weekends, vacations and retirement, for instance, many people cite sleeping as an acceptable and desirable pastime (Taylor 1993). Sleep, in other words, is seen a luxury or leisure pursuit one can indulge in when other demands and commitments allow: freed, that is, from the discipline and demands of the alarm clock and all it symbolises in our work-a-day world.

3.18 Whether for leisure, pleasure or sheer necessity, however, a range of bed and bedding products are ready and waiting for the tired and weary consumer. Products such as 'sound asleep' pillows and 'luxury bedding', for example, are promoted as a 'joy to sleep upon', thereby ensuring a 'harmonious nights sleep'. As with other products, moreover, the associations between sleep and sexuality are also seized upon, marketed and sold in various ways, from satin sheets and sexy night wear to the alleged relations between sleep and sexual performance itself^[10]. Both popular women's and men's magazines, indeed, devote considerable space to these relations between sleep and sex. FHM bionic, for example, ran an article on 'Power Sleep' in which readers were asked to 'train in our sleep gym so you can work better, *have more sex* and remain conscious during important meetings' (December 2001).

3.19 Although an intimate or private domain, historically associated with the civilising or sequestration of 'natural' bodily functions (cf. Elias 1978), the recent transition toward home improvements has also, to some extent, transformed the bedroom into a space where time can be spent 'stylising' as well as sleeping. The 'snoozy bed', for instance, is a case in point, hailed as 'that rarest of beasts -- an original, simple, elegantly designed, bed perfect for that low-slung, loft dwelling lifestyle that we all (apparently) aspire to' (*Independent on Sunday*, 24th June 2001), is a case in point. To this, we may add the explosion of lifestyle programming in recent years, including the popularity of interior 'make-over' shows such as *Changing Rooms* in which the spatial organisation of sleep and sleeping arrangements, including the bed and the function of bedrooms, comes under the scrutiny of professionals, not to mention the viewing public in general. Shades of conspicuous consumption perhaps?

3.20 Matters do not end here, however, as far as the leisure and pleasure of sleep are concerned. A variety of sleep related themes, stories, images and ideas are also projected and (willingly) consumed in and through the leisure and entertainment industries. Television dramas, documentaries and best-selling novels, for example, regularly employ sleep related themes to captivate their audiences, be it through murders unknowingly committed by somnambulistic assassins, yarns which link dormancy and domicile (cf. Jonathan Coe's best-seller *The House of Sleep*), or fly-on-the-wall programmes (for voyeuristic pleasure?) about the weird and wonderful world of sleep walkers and talkers (captured on night-time video cameras) and the dormant dilemmas/nocturnal cum carnal activities of housemates holed up together for weeks on end (cf. Big Brother): another 'obscenity', perhaps, in the Baudrillardian hyperreal sense of the word. The recent Channel 4 'Shattered' series, for instance, is the latest episode in this saga: a variant on the Big Brother themes, in which contestants were sleep deprived for the sake of £100,000 prize money, dangled in front of their tired and weary eyes (<http://www.channel4.com/shattered>). Shattered indeed!

3.21 Sleep, in short, in these and many other ways, is not simply a pleasurable if not luxurious form of corporeal 'release', it is also now 'big business'; part and parcel of the expanding leisure and entertainment industries, which are busily capitalizing on sleep in ever more ingenious or spectacular ways, directly and indirectly, night and day.

(iii) Work and rest: contracting for sleep/sleeping on the job;

Knowing that napping can be good for workers is a long way from sanctioning it in the office, but there is evidence that that attitudes are beginning to change. A Demos report has even recommended something which would have been unthinkable a few years ago. It suggests introducing office hammock bays, corporate siestas, and banning breakfast meetings (Wilson, quoted from the *Guardian*, 16th February 2004). Next time you leave for the office don't forget to pack your toothbrush. And your teddy bear. And maybe some smart-casual pinstripe pyjamas. Bored, hungover and overworked employees have been stealing 40

winks at work for years. Only now are employers waking up to the benefits of turning office space into sleep space and encouraging staff to take a nap (Barr, quoted from the *Times*, 8th March 2001).

3.22 Perhaps the final twist to the tale of sleep, in recent years, concerns the manner in which it is now *beginning*, no more or less, to be taken seriously 'on the job', so to speak. This, in part, is due to growing recognition of the problems of fatigue in the workplace, be it through lost productivity or accidents of various sorts, some fatal. Managing 24x7 magazine, for example, estimated that worker fatigue cost US companies \$77 billion last year with respect to lost productivity and industrial accidents accredited to tiredness (The *Times*, 8th March 2001) – an estimate surpassed by the NSF's own calculation of \$100 billion (incorporating sleep related car, truck and aircraft crashes) (see also Dement with Vaughan 1999/2000 and Coren 1997). In part, however, sleep is also now being more positively construed (in keeping with many of the trends discussed above) as the ultimate 'performance enhancer' if not the 'cheapest form of stress relief' around: the latest chapter in the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism story perhaps, with or without Edison's blessing? [11]

3.23 Waking up to sleep, as this suggests, is as relevant to individuals and organisations at the production end of producer- consumer networks, as it is to consumers themselves. A number of industries (typically law, banking, advertising and I.T.) have recently introduced workplace initiatives to counteract the efficiency lost when workers are tired. Some companies, moreover, have extended the range of fringe benefits they offer employees to embrace a more positive approach to 'sleeping on the job'. PR consultancy Text 100 and TBWA, a London based advertisement agency, for example, have introduced so-called 'duvet days' when employees can take a small number of days off a year when they just cannot bring themselves to get out of bed (*Independent on Sunday*, 30th July 2000). Deloitte consultancy and google.com, both based in the US, have instead created 'napping rooms' in their buildings to encourage midday snoozes by their workforce (the *Times*, 9th January 2001). 'After a nap', says Cindy McCaffrey, vice president of corporate communications at google.com, people 'feel refreshed and are more likely to perform better' (quoted from the *Times*, 8th March 2001). Steger (2003) talks here of similar initiatives in Japan; a country, in her terms, both past and present, which displays a 'polyphasic' sleep pattern characteristic of 'napping sleep cultures' [12]. A number of other US companies have also experimented with more flexible and alternative benefit packages which include 'supermarket vouchers, desk massages, sleep modules, in-house yoga and even discounts with dating agencies' (*Independent on Sunday*, 30th July 2000) [13].

3.24 Hollywood too, it seems, is catching on (if not setting the trend) through celebrity contracts for regular shut-eye: the ultimate example, perhaps, of 'beauty sleep' for the perfect (on screen) image. When celebrities talk numbers these days, a recent article proclaims: ...they're not talking million-dollar fees. They're talking hours of sleep. Penelope Cruz, the latest celebrity sleeper, recently boasted about a 12-hours-night habit, and several of her Hollywood colleagues are said to demand that sleep, or at least no early-morning calls, be *written into their contracts*? After years of being skipped in favour of the latest fitness fad, sleep is being taken seriously – and those with an age old addiction are finally being vindicated. What was once considered slothful is now the ultimate performance enhancer? In New York, when people look at their watch these days, it's because they are trying to schedule their eight hours (Kirwan-Taylor, quoted from the *Sunday Times Style Supplement*, 13th May 2001).

3.25 From here, indeed, it may only be a short step to the fetishisation of sleep, amongst certain segments of the (American) populace at least: a trend which itself may prove quite 'unhealthy' in a performance obsessed, image based culture such as ours.

3.26 Contracting for sleep, to summarise, may well have its (corporate) advantages. It also, however, has its drawbacks, from the greater potential for worker exploitation in the inflexible era of flexible capitalism (cf. Martin 1994), and the blurring of boundaries between home and work this entails, to the prospective fetishisation of sleep itself, construed as the ultimate performance enhancer and/or the cheapest form of stress relief around. Sleep, in short, is being 'put to work' in a variety of more or less profitable ways across the producer- consumer spectrum.

Conclusions

4.1 Taking as its starting point the neglected sociological matter of sleep, the main arguments of this paper should now be apparent. Sleep is a crucial part of our lives and a central facet and feature of society, recognised or not. The 'doing' and 'undoing' of sleep, provides a succinct way of summarising these themes and issues, which in turn relates to when, how, where and with whom we sleep, let alone what we make of it.

4.2 The specific focus of this paper, however, set against this broader sociological backdrop, has been on the commercialisation and commodification of sleep in consumer culture, with particular reference to the

'tension' between the increasing commercialisation and commodification of sleep in consumer culture, on the one hand, and the social and cultural imperatives of the incessant or unremitting society, on the other; trends which in turn relate to the dual if not contradictory mandates of (corporeal) 'control' and 'release'. As a preliminary venture into largely uncharted terrain, this no doubt raises more questions than it answers: a catalyst, we hope, to future discussion and debate. Sleep, as we have argued, is increasingly marketed and sold, pursued if not promoted, in a variety of ways, whether for health or beauty, leisure or pleasure, in consumer culture. It is, in this respect, part and parcel of the contemporary construction and cultivation of lifestyles, expressed in and through the body as the bearer of symbolic value. Sleep, as we have seen, is also increasingly recognised as the ultimate 'performance enhancer'. This, in turn, is slowly but surely filtering through into contemporary employment practices (from duvets to napping rooms) if not contracts, thereby adding a further twist to the Protestant work ethic: namely, sleep as ally rather than enemy. Sleep, in short, is now big business, itself facilitated through a burgeoning market of products, goods and services, from beds to bedding, nightwear to nightcream, pharmaceuticals to complementary therapies, spanning both consumption and production networks, incorporating not simply commercial interests but therapeutic health concerns in the home and in the workplace.

4.3 As for current theories of consumption, the issues raised here fit more or less readily into existing frameworks and debates. The doing or undoing of sleep, for instance, add important new dimensions to theories concerning the reflexive cultivation of body, self and identity in consumer culture. A number of pertinent questions regarding the commercial exploits of the sleep industry also arise here, which *manipulationist* approaches are well placed to address. We all, of course, need to sleep, but the ways this is marketed and sold to us, in part at least, may be viewed in this light, including the 'production' of the 'sleeper' as a specific consumer identity. Sleep, to repeat, is all too often the first casualty in an incessant society, but either way, consumer culture is ready and waiting; busily cashing in on our lives, manipulating our desires and wishes accordingly. Another market to colonise indeed, if not to control and regulate, for the tired and weary consumer.

4.4 As for future directions, the need to take these issues forward, both theoretically and empirically is clearly paramount. Further work, we suggest, is particularly required on relations between the healthification and commercialisation of sleep, focusing on specific products, goods and services, including the very nature of these claims-making activities and the identities they construct for the sleeper *qua* consumer. There is also, as we have seen, much important work to be done here on the construction and consumption of sleep-related images and ideas, discourses and representations, through a variety of media, both printed and electronic, from films to books, music to television, videos to magazines.

4.5 Sleep, more generally, raises important issues not simply for the sociology of consumption, and related fields of inquiry such as the sociology of the body, and the sociology of health and illness, but for sociology in general. These include the location of sleep in relation to biology and society, time and space, structure and agency, power and status, roles and rituals, self and identity, surveillance and control, the public and the private, even the sacred and the profane (Williams 2001, 2002, 2003). It is not simply then a case of turning the sociological spotlight on sleep-related issues in consumer culture, but of considering or pursuing these issues in society as a whole, including discourse and debates about the 'well-slept society': an agenda which should keep us all, as sociologists as well as sleepers, busy for sometime to come. Something to sleep on perhaps...

Notes

¹ For a fuller debate on these issues see Williams (2003) and Hislop and Arber (2003).

² Thanks to Peter Conrad for this term (personal correspondence). The UK think-tank Demos are also now producing a report on the 'Well-Slept Society' (<http://www.demos.co.uk/>)

³ See also Martin (2003) on the scientific evidence concerning 'beauty sleep': findings, to date, which remain far from clear-cut or straightforward. Scientific evidence for a 'direct causal link between sleep and an unblemished complexion', for example, 'remains sparse, Sleeping Beauty notwithstanding' (2003: 68). Skin care products, in this respect, may well be more effective at night-time when the skin is more porous, but the notion of beauty sleep remains a complex if not contentious one.

⁴ These product promotions have been taken from the QVC Home Shopping Website -<http://www.qvcuk.com/>(click on health and beauty department).

⁵ Dement, for example, whilst noting the problems of barbiturates and benzodiazepines, advocates the judicious use of prescription hypnotics (sleeping pills) for conditions such as primary insomnia. The new

class of imidazopyridines such as Ambien, he claims, have few of the problems associated with past sleep medications due to increased specificity (Dement with Vaughan 1999/2000: 159-163). For a detailed discussion of the broader controversy and debates surrounding these and related products, including the pharmaceutical interests which lie behind them, see Abraham (1999). See also Gabe and Bury (1996) on cultural and lay dimensions to the use of benzodiazepine tranquillisers and hypnotics to treat anxiety and insomnia.

⁶ Consumers are often encouraged to classify sleep inhibitors and enhancers, taking measures to actively prevent the former (coffee, tea, alcohol and tobacco) and switch to the latter (herbal teas made with herbs valued for their soporific effects such as camomile and valerian).

⁷ These measures, however, as Dement himself stresses, are only part of the picture: tackling sleep problems requires action on a variety of fronts, extending far beyond the individual.

⁸ As reported by Atkins in the *Observer*, 4th February 2001.

⁹ Further details can be found at Boots' Website (<http://www.boots.com/>), accessed 2/10/3 when 104 items were displayed after entering the keyword sleep in a product search.

¹⁰ To 'sleep' with someone, in fact, Schwartz (1970) argues, implies something far more intimate than the mere/sheer physicality or carnality of sexual relations. Relations between sleep and death are similarly complex and multi-layered. See, for example, Williams (2003).

¹¹ Edison, by all accounts, has much to answer for, not simply by virtue of his prodigious output as an inventor – including the electric light bulb – but also through his condemnation of (too much) sleep: costs he counted very much in terms of lost productivity. See, for example, Coren (1997).

¹² No hard and fast lines, however, Steger and Brunt (2003) note, can be drawn here between 'Asian' and 'Western' sleep cultures, particularly in the era of globalisation.

¹³ In a similar vein, there have been recent calls in the U.S. (as part of promoting the 'Zzzzzs to A' bill) for schools to begin classes later (after 9am as opposed to the 7am or 8am start of most US schools); the argument being that during puberty the biological clocks of teenagers get disrupted and 'forwarded' by at least an hour, leading to early morning sleep deprivation (the symptoms of which - poor concentration, irritability, low tolerance, high frustration - are not conducive to an effective learning environment) (*Independent*, 23rd November 2000, Dement with Vaughan 1999/2000).

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