

Youth and youth subcultures media essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Brown (1998) argues that the only hard-core truth there is that “ we are born, we grow older, and we die.” The categories that fall between when we are born then grow old and then die for example childhood, adolescence, adult and elderly are socially created. One of the latest categories created is that of ‘ youth’. Oxforddictionaries. com (2013) defines the term ‘ youth’ as “ the period between childhood and adult age”. However there is no standardised definition of ‘ youth’, as the term ‘ youth’ is subject to cultural, social and political changes. Therefore many theorists argue that ‘ youth’ is a social construction (and will differ between cultures). Social construction is defined as something that is created by society, constructed from social meanings and definitions. In the 21st century we are considered to be in an age of information because we are exposed to numerous types of media such as TV, audio and printed types. Due to this it is argued that the media has an influence on how we as a society view youth and youth cultures. The purpose of this essay is to discuss to what extent the media influences views on youth and youth subcultures.

It is argued that ‘ youth’ is socially constructed this is through the fact that there are numerous classifications of what a ‘ youth’ is, and when someone makes the transition into leaving childhood behind and becoming a ‘ youth’. The only constant feature is that it is supposedly the culture and society that tells the individual when they are no longer a child and they are now a youth or an adult. For example within different countries there are different age definitions for a youth criminal. Inside England and Wales this is 10-17 years old (Crime disorder Act, 1998). As it is believed that from the age of 18 you are considered an adult within many cultures and societies around the world.

This idea of 18 being the age an individual becomes an adult is based upon the idea that you can now legally vote, get married and participate in a contract to name some characteristics that seem universal around western society specifically within Europe and USA. So as stated the western culture and society has classified an individual becomes an adult at 18. However throughout different cultures the stages between childhood and adulthood have constantly been changing, adapting and some could say becoming very blurred. Due to this childhood differs between different cultures so it is complicated to understand where childhood stops so that an individual can become this notion of a 'youth'.

Nevertheless although an individual's culture plays a big part in the classification of 'youth' the media is the biggest contributor and influencer on society's definition and views of 'youth' and 'youth subcultures. This is as the media are constantly bombarding the public with stories about 'youth's. These tend to portray the 'youths' and the subcultures attached in a negative light. Even when the media is not portraying youths in a negative manner that are flooding the media with their definition of what it is and means to be a 'youth'. With these ideas constantly being displayed they can create a discourse of what 'youth' is. This therefore shows the power and influence the media can have on societies views towards 'youth' and 'youth subcultures.

Another manor, in which the media considerably influences society's views on youth and youth subculture, is through the creation of moral panics.

Cohen (2002) identifies a moral panic as "(a) condition, episode, person or group of persons that emerges to become defined as a threat to societal

values and interests". A more standardised definition is that of Turner, Abercrombie and Hill (1988). They define a moral panic as " an overreaction of the mass media, police and local community leaders to delinquent offences which are in fact relatively trivial, both in terms of the nature of the offence and the number of people involved'. A recent example of the influence the media can have is that of the ' Hoodie' subculture/moral-panic they created. A style of dress worn by young people but not limited to, however when it was associated with deviant behaviour of people outside of the medias dictated image of how an individual should be it start to create a panic. It officially became a moral panic after the media heard that this style of dress had been banned from shopping centres such as the Bluewater retail park in Kent (BBC News, 2005), and had created a deviance amplification spiral due to all the opinions being offered and being many media outlets main story. This shows the influence the media has on societal views of youth and youth subcultures as the media created a panic over a style of dress that has been worn for decades by monks and featured in hip-hop music videos without need for panic or to negative portray individuals who are not acting within society's norms.

Nevertheless all though the media is a main contributor and influencer to subjects about or on ' youth' and ' youth cultures it still fails to create one universal definition or view of the phenomena identified as youth. This could be because as Buckingham (2000) says over the last few decades " the distinctions between children and other categories -' youth' or ' adults' have become difficult to sustain".

The media contributes to the socialisation of people across a broad range of areas (Hutson et al, 1992). Media, along with the other agents of socialisation attempt to create an image in which to mould children into. However youth cultures are created out of rebellion to this mould and from just not fitting the societies set norms of how an individual should be. Therefore, individual differences slightly minimises the amount of grip the media has on influencing society. This is as an individual has the power and right to classify and define themselves in any way they see fit. Therefore even if the media tells society to define a ' youth' as someone aged 13-25, the individual does not have to accept and refer to themselves as that classification.

In conclusion it is a known/generalised theory amongst societies that individuals are influenced by what they see. The media is the main source of what people see, therefore the media influences societal views considerably. Whether it is on the topic of ' youth' and ' youth cultures' to what political party an individual should support. This can be said to be down to the idea the technology and the media are creating a ' New Age' in which we are now all living in. However the media is just one factor in which can influence societal views, culture and background can also play its part by being a strong influence on an individual so that individuals don't only have the media as a source to refer to. Also individual differences can also be an influencer, although this is not as big a contributor as the media or culture and background. Individual differences show society that you don't have to fit the mould that is constantly being shown to the world about ' youths' and

‘ youth culture’. Nevertheless it is the media that is the main influencer by far as it is the main method of spreading a message to society in all forms.