

The punk subculture essay sample



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In this essay we have to talk about the identity, but if we want to write about the identity we have first to know about the meanings of agency and structure, all of this is going to be related with the punk subculture. On one hand we start to refer to structure, because we live in a social structure that influence the way of how we have to think and act, so because of this influence we are not totally free, the society limit us. But on the other hand, we can talk about agency, ie, the capacity of the individual to act with autonomy and to make their own choices. To sum up we are saying that he built his own identity, your identity it could be similar to the identity of other person but never it is going to be the same, you create it and you want to be like someone but you have your own DNA and that also influence your identity, all things that are in or out one person configure his identity.

The punk subculture emerged in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia in the middle 1970s. They have many influences, this influences come from several strains of modern art, writers... The word punk is typically used in a derogatory manner, so often has been associated with punk attitudes of personal neglect or has been used as a means of expressing feelings of discomfort and hatred. It begun by the working-class, young people who criticized a declining economy, rising unemployment and they sought a reform.

The punk culture is a subculture characterized by a concern for individual liberty, a revolt against the mainstream society and the dominant culture, they used to be anarchist or marxist. Their common viewpoints include non-conformity, anti-authoritarianism, DIY (Do It Yourself) Ethic, direct action and not selling out.

Ten years later had been many currents derived from the first, the hardcore punk, the streetpunk, celticpunk, cowpunk, anarcho-punk, garage punk, skate punk... So the punk subculture was captured and put in a laboratory, where it was observed and were created by mitosis new forms of the initial subculture, but with their own DNA. The classical subculture died when he became the object of nostalgia and became susceptible to commodification.

Sometimes the opposition by subcultures to stay living in the mainstream of society has been slated as a negative trait, where the real fact is that they are only attempting to find their own identity and meaning. But if we think about the subcultures we can see that they are different of the mainstream, but they are similar ones to each others inside the group, so if you look at them from inside the group they are perceived to be normal, conventional and conformist.

But if we stop to think about the true meaning of punk subculture we will see much more than what history tells us. Emerged in the 70's with the name of punk, but really that ideal exists since the culture does, in the 70's the only thing that was done was named a pre-existing current of thought. In these years the only thing that changed his image was the homogenization of the current of thought with a type of dress and the association with a type of music that gave its name, punk. This music is totally different to pop in which songs the only thing that is trying to do it's sell catchy records or love songs, however punk songs looks to convey their political thought, their ideas, trying to get people to realize of the reality, awaken from their dream and begin to be non-conformists, to create their own opinion and conscience.

If we want to focus the essay we have to talk about fashion, and how the fashion influence the people in the conformation of their own identities, however it also help people to express their identity. “ Fashion is a cultural phenomenon. It is concerned with meanings, and with communication. Fashion, thus, concerns the statements that we make, more or less deliberately, with the help of physical items like clothes and accessories; statements about ourselves, about who we are and what groups of people we want to belong to. Fashion is about identity and about the self.” (Kratz, Charlotta and Beimer, Bo. (1998). P. 194)

With this text we can see what we are talking about, we can make our own identity, we can choose to which group we want to belong, we can wear the clothes that we want to, we can listen the music we like, however we are influence by the media and so many times we want to do things but we don't do because of what people it is going to think of us. The punk subculture instead to follow the mainstream, tries to have their own opinion, not constrained by what people might think of them, if they like one hair color or hairstyle, they are going to take it, nobody cares!

Even with their opinion that they could wear the clothes they want or keep the hairstyle they pleased, the group had some aesthetic ' rules', what they used to wear were boots (motorcycle boots or Dr. Martens boots), tartan skinny pants with chains, t-shirts with revolutionary slogans and mohawk or shave heads, not counting the amount of piercings in places never before imagined. The frequent use of these elements had the adverse effect of the trickle-down theory, a phenomenon where people do not emulated the fashion catwalks, now the fashion catwalks emulate the fashion of the punk

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subculture, and we have a lot of examples of this phenomenon, like Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier.

The name by which this phenomenon is called is bubble-up. All this at first had seemed crazy, fashion designers from the high places of society that are able to set trends, were emulating the trends from the lower spectrum of the society. The subculture that used to be, regrettably, accused to go against nature and that it was a subject to abhorrence and disapproval by followers of mainstream trends, now are the inspirations of the fashion designers. But when people saw the designs in the catwalk they loved the new designs but most of the time they still disapproved the punk subculture, we are humans and we tend to do strange things, without reasons. Here we have an example of text who tells us about the bubble-up phenomenon.

“ The other significant change since Simmel elaborated the trickle-down theory is the parallel existence - and arguably dominance - of ‘ bubble-up’ fashion, which, as the name implies, describes fashions created and popularized on the streets, and the filter upwards, Many sub-cultural styles, looks associated with a particular type of music or an individual icon, have, over the last fifty years, filtered upwards to become available on the high street.” (Church Gibson, Pamela (2006), p. 26)

One of the characteristics of punk fashion is that it perfectly reflecting the theory of ‘ bubble-up’, as we told before, as adapting style punk leather jacket up to the fashion catwalk for example. The problem is that the globalization of fashion also contributed to the attrition of the originality and the identity of the subculture style. This overcrowding of the original idea

eventually causes aversion even to the people who created the original of it, because with the bubble-up they lose part of their identity, and one of their principal characteristics is a stubborn refusal of massification. [pic]

Although now the punk subculture is not as massified, on the fashion catwalks trend is booming, in the picture we can see a design of Balmain season Spring/Summer 2011, among other trends were booming as the color block that season also comes the punk, a trend subversive and 'dark', showing in their models rebellious and transgressive attitude manifested with disjointed or torn clothing with studs, spikes, safety pins, leather jackets, shirts with subliminal messages, faded clothes, clothes with transparencies, in ultimately all that emulates the punk breaking with the established order. Also mimic trends punk with makeup, dark eye shadows and scrambled hairstyles, spiked jewelry, military boots again (as a Dr. Martens)...

After we talk about the bubble-up we can ask ourselves about the identity again, because maybe the punk subculture lost part of their identity with the bubble-up, but fashion has a lot of possibilities so they could continue evolving as they was doing last years before that phenomenon. In the next text we can see the evolution of the fashion punk subculture from the music, the dance...

"...fashion style relates new possibilities for experimentation with subjectivities and identities to the influences of both popular culture (most specifically popular music and dance) and the altered economic environment within which fashion trends evolve. As the worlds of popular music and

fashion collided to produce dress styles that could shock by transgressing codes of femininity or masculinity, of 'good taste' and vulgarity, the freeing up of appearance released a surge of energy that liberated younger women from the conventions that had emerged during the modernist period."

(Macdonald, M. (1995) p. 213)

[pic]

Referring not only to the text but also but also to the image, with a clear relation to the same subject, we could talk about the liberation of women from their yoke, in other words, the woman was subjected to a basic archetype that told her that she should be and how to behave as combing, women should be at home and take care of her husband... But things began to change slowly and suddenly... 'boom' the revolution, if the change was beginning to be evident, punk subculture led to the extreme, opposing not only to the cultural thinking of the moment in search of greater freedom, but also breaking the rules completely. Then starts a new stage where women are released completely, thus begins a homogenization in the vestment, here we can talk about the gender, that now only affects the choices they make and the way they feel about the clothes they wear.

They can wear the clothes as they want and can comb like men, shave their head (completely or not), things never seen before (omitting the Egyptians that usually shave their heads and then covered with big wigs), also dye their hair in bright colors, both, men and women, they wanted to draw attention, as if they were shouting 'We are not like the rest of the people, we are different and we want the whole world to know it'.

“ Perhaps that is one of the great secrets of subcultural history: punk faked its own death. Gone was the hair, gone was the boutique clothing, gone was negative rebellion (whatever they do, we’ll do the opposite). Gone was the name. Maybe it had to die, so as to collect its own life insurance. When punk was pronounced dead it bequeathed to its successors – to itself –a new subcultural discourse. The do-it-yourself culture had spawned independent record labels, speciality record stores, and music venues: in these places culture could be produced with less capitalism, more autonomy, and more anonymity. Punk faked its own death so well that everyone believed it.”
(Muggleton, David and Weinzierl, Rupert. (2003) P. 234)

The text reflects the punk subculture actually not completely died, died only aspect that remained before the public, the seed that was planted in the 70’s had flourished and although the original plan had already died but before their pollen was transmitted. The bees have pollinated the flowers of the plant, ie, the original idea would not die, was deeply rooted in subjects related to the punk subculture, although the idea had been changing and it was not the original punk subculture and was not only seen as such initial subculture, most of the time was related entirely to the anarchist vision, everything depended on the evolution and the evolution depends of the decisions that the subject had taken.

It is observed that the punk as we said before was the idea, aesthetics only helped to see the change in the mentality of the people, but what really mattered was the new way of thinking, relieve against the mainstream, to contribute their ideas but these were contrary to public opinion. So now I

want to analyze some icons/symbols of the punk subculture to understand better what they want to transmit us.

As we have already discussed the punk subculture relates to the left wing of the political system, with the anti-fascism, they are against dictatorships, the authorities and the oppression, they totally reject the Nazis ideologies. In this picture we can see the typical boot of the punk subculture (a boot with clearly military inspiration), this boot is crushing the symbol of Nazism. This image depicts two opposing ideologies, represents the principles of the punk subculture, we see what punk ideology want to abolish, is a persuasive communication. The colors used to represent an image are clearly important, in this case they used black and white, this message is direct, and the colors give the rawness and strength to convince the followers. But if we see it from another perspective this represents anger and destruction, so that the values although initially nobles were truncated with the brutality of the picture, that is trying to abolish violence with more violence.

The icons are intentional signs that are characterized by a high degree of similarity between the represented object and representation, so even if the represented object ceases to exist the icon remains. While signs symbols are intended to be based on the relationship with the represented, the symbol only exists while an interpreter is able to associate a meaning using a learned code. The association between a word and its concept is symbolic because we can see this same concept for each language who has invented different symbols.

Here's an example in which although it what is represented, the sign, is a boot and we could relate it to the army crushed the Nazis, but we know that is not like this because that does not make the same sense as the punk subculture that has awarded to the boot, is one of the symbols by which they are recognized, so in this moment of our argument it is easier to relate this symbol with the punks and get the meaning of the representation. The boot would be a symbol while it still associated with the punk subculture it still having the same meaning of the code that had been learned.

In this picture we see the symbol of a musical group ' Los Miserables' which follow the punk theory. In this picture we see many signs, first we have the closed fist up, this hand signifies strength, is a call to revolution, but on the other hand we have the five-pointed star (one of the symbols used by the punk subculture), this star is often represented with the color red, as this is associated with communism (the flag of the Soviet Union has this symbol), socialism or anarchism. But the pentagram is also associated with success, overcoming and youth and when it is not related to the punk subculture we can talk about the five-pointed star as an esoteric meaning related to good and evil.

So in this case we can see as the symbol of the five-pointed star could have many interpretations, but it is accompanied by a fist upward, so that narrows its meaning and we could clearly see it as a symbol of the punk subculture. To do this we had to play the final meaning of the conjunction of the two images, because if we only saw the star we could doubt about their meaning or grant the meaning that does not belong. This image is in black and white to focus only on the icon, for example if we have one five-pointed star and <https://assignbuster.com/the-punk-subculture-essay-sample/>

we have it in red with a black background it probably means something about punk subculture or anarchy, but if we have a golden star it is more difficult to relate it to some kind of orientation.

This image is very different from the previous ones, is a display of the main features of the punk subculture. In this case the subject is shown as an young aggressive, as the same word located up on the cross 'violento'. On the other hand they are talking about the issue of atheism, the picture plays with this concept, because the punks are closely related to the absence of a supreme god. This picture is dedicated to play with the system of the opposites again, in this case between the signifier and the signified.

The signified is the concept or image is showing (this depends on the individual) and the signifier is the sound, the word, the acoustic image (allows us to think of words without pronouncing), shows the word violent but shows an image of two faces, is violent and revolutionary and also an image submitted by crucifixion, the person who gave his life for the redemption of others, it is a demonstration of sacrifice for others, this sacrifice is actually the resurrection as the awakening of ignorance to understanding the society. The photo here is with CMYK colors, but in this image are dark and aggressive colors, in order to what the image wants to display. We talk about how the images influence the way of think of the people, but when we finally finish with that we are going to finish the essay analyzing a quote about the culture industry.

“ The idea of subculture it is often a temporary vehicle through which teens and young adults select a somewhat prefabricated identification ...the

subculture is both a discourse that continues to be a meaningful tool for countless people and, at the same time, something of a pawn of the culture industry.”(Muggleton, David and Weinzierl, Rupert. (2003), p. 221)