

Consumption and production of culture

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



Introduction

The centre for Contemporary cultural studies (CCCS) has been criticised heavily about how it talks about youth subcultures. I will show how youth subcultures have been perceived by theorists and then show why it has been criticised through those theorists.

Each subculture joined together form the whole community and brings their individual uniqueness into it. A person's subculture is also known as their parent subculture, which is the culture they belong to through what style they associate with. Cohen suggests that working class youth subcultures, "live out a kind of symbolic or magical occupation...their parents had once called their own". He also puts the idea across that the subculture a youth is in is a "compromise". Each subculture is the making of what youth's parents subcultures were. They take two other subcultures for example "mods" and "rockers" and a new subculture can be formed. As this new subculture would take the same beliefs and interests as the other two so the youth could still be associated from that of the origins of what their parent's subcultures were. The dominant culture is the general consensus, in which most people within a community accept the subculture and adopt the norms and values within. All these ideas are taken from Gelder, 2005.

Subcultures can be taken as a form of resistance as some can be used as an act of rebellion. I believe that some youths want to act and dress differently to what their parents want them to do, so they do the complete opposite.

A subculture can eventually be incorporated into mainstream, everyday life once it is known and accepted by the dominant culture and is then taken into everyday life. “ Eventually, the mods, the punks, the glitter rockers can be incorporated, brought back into line, located on the preferred ‘ map of problematic social reality’ (Geertz 1964) at the point where boys in lipstick are ‘ just kids dressing up’, where girls in rubber dresses are ‘ daughters just like yours’” (Hebdige). This shows that even though when it starts out, it might be seen as not part of the norm, but it can eventually be incorporated into the norm and is eventually accepted by the society.

Hebdige (1988) ideas are along the same line as Marxists ideas. They have the ideas that each subculture takes an item or object and can change the meaning of it, by how they make it look. He looks at the meaning of the styles each subculture wears. To find out the meaning of the British youth subcultures before the war he used semiotics to understand them. The meanings of the signs were interpreted using this method. Each word or object within a culture has a specific meaning in it. Hebdige was able to know what each object meant to each individual group of people.

Hebdige believes a subculture in two forms can take a process of recuperation. One being that of the signs in which are involved in the subculture and making them into objects which are mass produced and can help make the subculture more popular. Also there is the ideological form which any deviant behaviour is labelled and redefined by the dominant groups.

Within a subculture Hebdige believes there must be two questions asked, which must be answered once the meaning of style is known better. One being “ how does a subculture make sense of its members?” and the next being “ how is it made to signify disorder?” Both of these questions are answered to show how a subculture can be communicated between its self and the media.

Material goods can be important to certain groups as they are symbolic to their own subcultures. They have specific meanings for different items and they are sentimental for them. Within a subculture it is not just the material goods associated with it that make it, it is also the language that specific group uses. Between some subcultures there can be different languages emerging between them. Also different words can mean different things for each subculture. When subcultures merge together whatever the meanings of their symbols merge together and create new meanings and build on what was there before.

Different subcultures can be over emphasised by the media. The media can expose them and bring them into the public eye more. They can bring across the idea on what a subculture is; can speak about them positively or negatively. They can influence everyone else in the community just by what they think. The media though mostly always tend to bring things across negatively, which I think is shocking as I believe everyone has a right to what they think is right.

Some subcultures are not always put across as friendly groups. Some are put across negatively and that is the only side that is shown of them.

Soccerhooligans are put across as being bad and sometimes associated with being animals. I think these sorts of groups do one thing bad and they always get seen negatively. No one ever looks for the positives within them.

Tony Jefferson (1976) also looked into the area of youth subculture. He mainly looks into Teddy boys or Teds, which were associated with attempting to recreate the working class community. They joined together to fight for their own territory and built a sense of loyalty between each other. Jefferson viewed what was happening as a sense of them buying their own status. They started wearing items which were worn by classes higher up, in the hope that with them now wearing them, they get seen as a higher status. From this it looks like they could not accept who they had become due to their area being under threat and felt they had to do whatever they could to buy their status back. This all happened because their own territory had become under threat from urban planners.

Each subculture tends to be very short lived and will only be around for as long as it stays in fashion, which is until the next new thing, which happens all the time. So in terms of political potential, it is very low as they do not stick around long enough to make a big enough impact to get power generated. Though a subculture's profile is easily lifted by the help of the media, this helps get a particular culture started and make a name for them. Particularly in the 50s, the time of punks, rockers, the high profile subcultures, the Government tried to get subcultures thrown away, by strongly saying the trade unions would be taken away. Instead they wanted

the nuclear family promoted and did not want anyone having their own uniqueness.

The problem with each subculture is that production companies have to cater for each individual style. They produce whatever is in fashion and change it whenever the subculture changes. Each subculture is always changing and building on what it already has. Some subcultures even end up merging to form a new culture, which again has its own uniqueness about it.

As said before, the CCCS is criticised, one is that they tend to go towards ‘rigidly vertical models’ (Stahl 2004). They often don’t take into account factors like age, race and gender. Also class universally is used singularly to explain the youth subcultures. Hebdige does use working class to mainly describe the subcultures in his reports. He also uses the influences of race to observe how some British subcultures, such as punks, have emerged over the years.

Another area which is criticised is that of the fact in which the male writers work, such as Willis and Hebdige, are invisible of girls. Angela McRobbie has written about the fact they ignore females in their explanation of youth subcultures. The male writer’s always focus mainly on the males within a subculture. The females just get ignored and don’t have any influence on the rising of how they see a subculture.

Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber focus on female youths within a subculture. They focus on females because all the other theorists just focus on the male population. From that though you cannot get a full

representation of what a subculture is, as it does not look at the whole population. McRobbie looks at the reasons why they do not look at females. That they might be viewed as separate and not be seen as much. They might have a subculture which is not seen by the community and the media. Although both of them did think that girls did play less of a part in a subculture, but believed this was down to the fact that during this time it was mainly male dominance and the girls did not have a big role at this time. They believe that structurally those young girls are different to young boys. That is why they believe that hidden somewhere is subcultures for those females. I believe that the male subcultures were just highlighted as it was male theorists conducting it and they mainly looked between the male dominance sides. There were probably female subcultures just as big, but they were not as influential or highlighted by the media as much. The media did not pick them up. This is a big downfall in the area of subcultures, as it does not show the big picture.

The theories that are put across from the CCCS and Hebdige are not always on the same levels as Marxists. They tend not to agree with them and disregard them. They believe they don't take into account of how important the economic base is and the fact it shapes our culture.

Another problem with Hebdige's work was there was no evidence that suggests that what he puts forward is actually how the people within those subcultures interpret it themselves. He doesn't have any research which backs up his idea, which means it's only what he believes. The people within those subcultures could interpret those objects completely differently. He

didn't talk to the members within to get their views; he could have conducted an interview. This though shows that his view lacks validity and other sociologists could respond to it as being subjective.

Andy Bennett and Keith Kahn-Harris (2004) see the CCCS as failing to show that subcultures are class based. They show that the CCCS only look at subcultures as being working class only and that there are not different classes in between. Other sociologists to Hebdige believe that the whole idea of consumerism is not built up through class, but rather the taste of different people. They believe that through people having different views on things they can see what is in style and respond accurately. This efficiently took away the boundaries between classes and brought different groups together.

Throughout the CCCS there is not much highlighted about the ethics or locality within subcultures. They believed that throughout the UK a subculture was the same where ever it was, but other researchers have discovered that there are some which are just based locally.

There is not a lot said about any of the youths which do not follow into a subculture. Even though these youths make up most of them they do not get talked about. The CCCS does not mention anywhere a reason for why one youth follows into a subculture, but another one does not, even though they are from the same working class background.

Throughout pieces written on subcultures, there tends to be an over emphasis on resistance. They tend to talk about how each subculture is an act of resistance over something rather than being someone's way of life and

not wanting to get back at others. Some subcultures are seen as if they are resisting against something they do not want to do. They act as if they are opposing against what people believe to be the right way of life and what is seen as the norm.

The CCCS intently put the idea across that each subculture is only about being the opposite to mainstream. Also suggest that there is only one type of norm and if you're not like that then you are part of an oppositional subculture. They do not put across that there could be several mainstream as not everyone likes the same thing. They do not know what a subculture is actually about they have only put out theories. For all they know a subculture could just be about having good fun.

The theorists that criticise the CCCS and Hebdige the most is the Postmodernists. They claim that class does not play a big part in subcultures, but they also say that there might not even be subcultures. They think that they do not exist as they cannot be defined very well. They do not think that youth culture can really be described through the subculture concept.

Even though there is many negative, there is positives about subcultures. Subcultures are very influential on showing the differences between everyone in society. If you did not have those differences between subcultures, everyone would be the exact same, no one would have their own ideas and uniqueness about them.

In society now, it is still visible that subcultures still exist. You can see different subcultures within society and everyone belongs to their own

group. Subcultures are probably more visible now than before, but the difference is every subculture is accepted widely as existing, though there is some difference between subcultures. Some do not like each other and tend not to get along.

As shown the CCCS has been criticised a lot. There is no firm research evidence to confirm what these theorists say. Even though there are negatives associated with the CCCS, you can see where some of the ideas about subcultures have come from and how they show how subcultures have grown and can influence culture as a whole. Though there are the positives, I agree with that of McRobbie as when all the other theorists were talking about subcultures, they should have incorporated what they were saying towards females as that would show the whole society.

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