

The her 'general introduction' defines subcultures as

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The modern image we have of subculture stems from ideas from the late twentieth century. Those ideas and theories were formed from the youth subcultural groups of the nineteen sixties. These groups included teddy boys, rockers, and the mods. A subculture is defined to be "a cultural group within a larger culture, often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture." However, there are various interpretations of this definition, which are influenced by different factors.

Later theories regarding subculture go on to question the idea of a postsubcultural state. However, the concept of a subcultural narrative is still relevant. Subcultural narrative is based on a person's opinion of a subculture and their interactions with the same subculture.

In the films, *Trainspotting* and *The Filth and the Fury*, both Danny Boyle and Julien Temple, explore themes of deviance. Deviance is defined as "the fact or state of diverging from usual or accepted standards, especially in social or sexual behaviour. This definition lends itself to be easily applied to the subcultures explored in both films, these being the punks of the 1970s and the skagboys of the 1980s and 1990s, as both subcultures have both violent and criminal tendencies, which can be considered acts of deviance.

Sarah Thornton, author of *The Subcultures Reader*, in her 'General introduction' defines subcultures as "designate social groups which are perceived to deviate from the normative ideals of adult communities" whereas Webster's online dictionary comments that "Members of a subculture often signal their membership through a distinctive and symbolic use of style, which includes fashions, mannerisms, and argot." This can be

applied to Danny Boyle's film *Trainspotting*, however whether the 'skagboys' and characters in the film can be considered a subculture has been questioned recently. On one hand, the early examples of subculture, particularly the mods and rockers, are much easier to define, this is due to them having more noticeable and clear traits, that make them an obvious part of a subculture. One example is clothing, the fashion choices worn by the mods and rockers, act as a uniform and have become common knowledge. This makes it easy for these subcultures to be portrayed in film and television over the years. A modern audience is familiar with the smart tailoring worn by the mods. They are well known for their parkas and love of Italian scooters such as Lambrettas and Vespas.

Whereas the rocker had a much more masculine style, consisting of jeans, chains and of course, leather jackets. The rockers preferred a more powerful and perhaps masculine transport also, favouring motorcycles such as Harley Davidsons. Phil Cohen, in his essay, *Subcultural Conflict and Working-Class Community*, considers music to be a defining factor of someone's subcultural identity. A certain genre of music is favoured by a subculture and its members. The mods were known for listening to British beat music and ska, such as the Kinks and most notably The Who, whereas the rockers, again preferred more powerful sound, listening to a heavier style of rock, including Led Zeppelin and AC/DC.

A subculture that formed later, yet still had an obvious music theme and distinct clothing choices, was that of the punk era. This subculture is presented in Julien Temple's 2000 film *The Filth and the Fury*. This is a

Rockumentary, like that of Quadrophenia which followed the mods and rockers.

The Filth and the Fury, follows the Sex Pistols and the attitudes towards them. The word "deviate" is relevant here, as it relates to the mods, rockers, and punk subcultures. Whilst the mods were not particularly well known for any violent, rebellious, or criminal activity, it is however commonly considered as alternative and there is well documented conflict between the mods and the rockers on the seafront in Brighton, the most notorious example was in 1964. This revealed a violent side of both the two subcultures and suggests them to be somewhat criminal and therefore can be considered deviant. The mods, were also known for their use of narcotics, including amphetamines, which further fuels the idea of them as deviant. Whereas the punks were explicitly known for their rebellious and criminal nature, particularly the violence towards mainstream society, making the punk subculture easily identifiable as a deviant subculture.

In his piece, Subcultural Conflict and Working-Class Community, Critic Phil Cohen begins to analyse subcultures, particularly in relation to the idea of an unrest or conflict between the younger and older generations subculture, he refers to this as 'youth' and 'parent' culture. Cohen implies that a person's identity with a subculture forms during their adolescence. When a youth may feel an active rift or separation from their parent's culture, whilst remaining a part of their community and having a sense of solidarity with their parent culture. This relates to the mods and rockers subcultures, many of their members are aged in their mid to late teenage years, which further

supports Cohen's studies, as again commented on links to subcultures forming during adolescence. However, the punk subculture doesn't support Cohen's theories as this subculture is seen to be moving away from the conflict between 'youth' and 'parent' culture, as an allegiance with the punk subculture tended to develop in early adulthood, specifically the early twenties, rather than the adolescence of the mods and rockers, this is highlighted in the film, *The Filth, and the Fury*. Both the Sex Pistols and their fans, are of this age group, as they are shown to attend various concerts during the documentary. Whilst the conflict on Brighton seafront in the nineteen sixties suggest the mods and rockers to be more violent in nature. A distinctive 'them' and 'us' style divide seems more appropriate when thinking of the punk subculture, as it further emphasises the violence and conflict provoked by the punks towards mainstream society.

This includes the police, which would make the punk subculture a deviant one, rather than just the member's parents or parent culture. Julien Temple's film, *The Filth and the Fury*, the band, The Sex Pistols are presented to be the inventors and instigators of the subculture. To some extent they are blamed for the violence and deviance that is associated with it. During the film, several news reports are given, the first reports on a "new teenage cult" and is compared to the subcultures of the nineteen sixties. The reports refer to the members as "troublemakers." Later in the film, Johnny Rotten, comments on the band's first few years. He goes on to mention the first lyric they ever wrote, which was the infamous "I am an anti-Christ, I am an anarchist".

The film continues, following the bands rise in popularity. As their popularity rises, so does the media attention. Most it appears to be negative, this is potentially due to the nature of the band and their lyrics, this arguably creates the punk subculture, which the film presents to be like a cult. Throughout the film, there are examples of footage of the violence caused at the Sex Pistols concerts, one band member, describes it as " a little bit of a scuffle". This appears to be him accepting the violence as normal and therefore condoning it amongst the punk subculture. Therefore, to some extent The Sex Pistol's condoning of violence at their concerts, promotes the punk subculture to be a deviant one. This further portrayed them as violent and promoted them amongst the subculture.

The members of the punk subculture can be considered rebellious and deviant, as they are being deliberately so, however with other subcultures the link isn't as transparent. One example of this is the ' skagboys' presented in Boyle's film *Trainspotting*, they cannot be considered completely deviant as their actions are fuelled by an addiction to heroin, rather than a spite for society. Furthermore, the subculture of the skagboys themselves can also be brought into question, as whether they can be classed as such is debatable.

This is due to it developing much later than other subcultures, as well as having less easily classified characteristics. The idea of a Post-subcultural time, stems from Rupert Weinsierl and David Muggleton's essay, what is " Post-subcultural studies" Anyway?' In which they describe, how Post-subcultural theories, focus on an individual's thoughts and feelings, rather than the beliefs formed by a subculture. In their essay they explain "

contemporary youth cultures are characterized by far more complex stratifications than that suggested by the simple dichotomy of "monolithic mainstream". In this quotation they are highlighting the key idea of subcultures acting as more than just an alternative to the mainstream society. They are a fully-fledged culture, this discredits earlier theories of a 'youth' vs 'parent' culture.

A point that further supports this is that members of youth cultures in earlier periods would now be the parents to members of post-subcultural or subcultural groups. The 1996, book to film adaptation of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, directed by Danny Boyle, follows the day to day lives of a group of heroin addicts, commonly referred to as skagboys, living in Edinburgh in the late nineteneighties. The film follows, Ewan McGregor's character Mark Renton.

However, what is interesting about this adaptation, is that the audience is given a unique and very personal insight into the lives of the five main characters. Renton narrates most of the film, which is based strongly on the 'skagboys' and the subculture surrounding drugs and drug use. The online Webster's Dictionary defines drug subcultures as "examples of countercultures, primarily defined by recreational drug use," Due to their continuous drug use, it is easy to consider the characters in this film as criminals, and therefore deviant. However, the circumstances that lead them to heroin addiction should be taken into consideration before any sweeping generalisations are made about both the characters and the drug

subculture in general. Boyle's film opens by introducing Renton and his friend and fellow addict Spud, played by Ewen Bremner.

The pair are being chased through the streets of Edinburgh, by figures of authority. Presumed to be either police or security guards, this is indicated by the suits worn by them. Though it is not mentioned explicitly, an audience presumes the pair to have robbed a video store, as tapes fall from their person whilst running. This initial scene presents the pair as both deviant and criminal, traits which are often assumed of someone who is a part of a drug subculture. The film continues by introducing Renton and the other skagboys.

During which the infamous 'choose life' speech is heard, this highlights Renton's disdain for the mundane, everyday activities he is no longer a part of, due to his addiction. Personally, I feel, Boyle chooses to introduce us on a person level with the characters, so the audience views them as people, rather than just criminals or junkies. Undoubtedly Boyle doesn't spare any details regarding their criminal activities, however we still learn to view the characters as people, with different strengths and weaknesses. Sick Boy, played by Jonny Lee Miller, appears to be the most intelligent, and is particularly articulate when discussing films, specifically James Bond. The use of Renton as a narrator throughout the film, not only gives more personal information an audience may not know otherwise.

It also appears like that of a voiceover in a documentary, he reveals an intimate but mature sense of self. Whilst appearing almost authoritative, similar perhaps to David Attenborough. It's his voiceover, that makes it easy for an audience to side with him. Therefore, he can't be considered a

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representative or archetype of drug culture and deviance, but rather as a sensitive human being with both negative and positive qualities. Again, there is definitely a strong argument that *Trainspotting*, should not be analysed from a subcultural perspective, as perhaps post-subcultural theories are more appropriate. The characters in Boyle's adaptation, don't conform to the typical requirements more traditional subcultures have.

Fashion being a good example of this. The group seem to only share one common interest, that being heroin use, and how it has influenced them to view society from a different perspective. Therefore, they should not be considered a subculture, especially not one like the mods or the rockers. An important part of Post-subcultural theory, is again individualism. This should be considered when analysing *Trainspotting*. From the beginning of the film, it is clear the different characters all have different opinions on many different topics.

To say they didn't agree on everything, would be a massive understatement. This is symbolized at the end of the film, by Renton's betrayal. During which he steals the money the group made from selling drugs and flees to Amsterdam. He only leaves four thousand, an equal cut, to his closest friend Spud. The drug deal is the most deviant act during the film.

It is the most illegal act the group take part in. Therefore, due to this it's arguable the group are deviant. However, Renton is initially opposed to the deal, but is forced into it by the most aggressive and violent member, Francis Begbie. Played by Robert Carlyle. Carlyle's character is perhaps the most paradoxical. The opening scene of the film, reveals how he is

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completely against taking illegal drugs. His line "no way would I poison my body with that shite, all these fucking chemicals" highlights this view clearly.

However, Boyle creates irony here, as a pint, a shot and cigarettes are all present in the foreground whilst he makes this claim. Even from the start of the film, Boyle presents Begbie as being very anti-drugs. This separates him from the rest of the group. However, it also acts to argue the taking of drugs isn't criminal, as the biggest criminal is anti-drugs. The drugs do not make the skagboys deviant, but rather the act of taking them makes them deviant. As despite the strong association with the skagboys being a deviant group, there are more deviant people not part of such groups. Therefore, *Trainspotting* should not be judged as a film about subcultural deviance, but rather as a film from a post-subcultural perspective, where characters all differ regarding deviance and perhaps morality. Both *The Filth and the Fury* and *Trainspotting* reveal an insight into two different subcultures and question whether they should be classed as subcultures.

They also reveal an insight into themes of deviance regarding said subcultures. In *The Filth and the Fury*, the punks are portrayed to aim to be as rebellious and deviant as possible. Their actions centre themselves deliberately on deviant acts, whereas the Skagboys in *Trainspotting*, aren't centrally focused on deliberate deviant acts. Therefore, Boyle's film is more about people, than the drug subculture. There has been some critical opinion, that Boyle condones the use of heroin, however he instead gives an insight into the culture. It is the voiceover by Renton that makes the characters feel human.

Therefore, to summarise Trainspotting allows an audience to come to its own conclusion on members of a drug subculture, and where they are in fact deviant.