

Youth Subcultures and Styles

Student's Name

Title of Course

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Youth is a phase between childhood and adulthood, which is a perfect time for people to experiment with expression of their individuality. Because of this, numerous youth subcultures are brought to life. A subculture is a strand of society that does not follow or use the standards and norms of the mainstream culture. There are numerous example, such as punks, emo, goth, mod, etc.

Following the Second World War, youth subculture came to be identified as a “distinctive social category with its own tastes, styles and values.”¹ They are described by Marxist theorists as being “cultural solutions to structural problems” at certain historical moments.² Subcultures, particularly youth-based ones, are often greeted with fear by the older generation. It is not strange, as subcultures usually pose a threat to the norms on which the society is based, since they are usually born out of the desire to right something that, in the eyes of the young, is wrong. But for the previous generations these norms form a basis and essence of life.

However, the “paranoia” of youth subcultures leading to anarchy and societal problems tends to begin and end in the heads of people. While some adolescents do cause a lot of problems within a community, it is not through any fault of a subculture. As cited by the Hazlehursts, “Although members of ‘spectacular’ subcultures may well look very different from their parents or peers, they will still share the same class position, the same life experiences and generally the same outlook as the parent culture.”² This signifies that joining a youth subculture is simply an act of rebellion against what young people consider to be dull. Studies have shown that girls tend to be less committed to subcultures because they tend to become associated for superficial reasons, such as attracting boys, dressing up, and socializing.³

The level of commitment to a subculture is often demonstrated by the degree to which one adopts the style pertinent to it. For example, punks and goths have an extremely outlandish clothing style that attracts attention and, as mentioned above, breeds a certain amount of fear in the general public. Nevertheless, this reaction is chiefly unfounded: these individuals, invariably, have shared the same life experiences as their parents and, as previously discussed, will re-adopt their parental attitudes with age.

Subcultures are often short-lived things with pockets of popularity. This is due to them being influenced by innovators and a sense of rebellion.³ However, once the subculture has attracted a large amount of followers and initial burst of disparity is lost, young people tend to drop that style and move on to the new subculture or resume their connection with the mainstream. This irony is ahead of every youth subculture.

Notes

1. Matthew Rampley, *Exploring Visual Culture: Definitions, Concepts and Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 79.
2. Cameron Hazlehurst and Kayleen Hazlehurst, *Gangs and Youth Subcultures: International Explorations* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 40.
3. Jonathon Epstein, *Youth Culture: identity in a postmodern world* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 213.

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References

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