

The need for such an evaluation is made more urgent by the shifting cultural terrain of youth itself. While arguably always far less tightly bound into style-specific groupings than the CCCS maintained, the increasing proliferation of youth styles since the 1980s (see Polhemus, 1997), combined with increased opportunities for 'style mixing (McRobbie, 1994), has led to the growing fragmentation of youth culture. In his study of British punk rock during the late 1970s, Hebdige (1979) made the then controversial claim that: 'Punk reproduced the entire sartorial history of post-war working-class youth cultures in "cut up" form, combining elements which had originally belonged to completely different epochs' (p. 26). The bricoleurist qualities that Hebdige identified in punk are now far more widely pronounced in the stylistic innovations of youth. This view is supported by Muggleton (2000), who describes the '1980s and 1990s [as] decades of subcultural fragmentation and proliferation, with a glut of revivals, hybrids and transformations, and the co-existence of myriad styles at any one point in time' (p. 47). In such a complex cultural terrain, the question of subculture's applicability, with all its connotations of cultural and spatial coherence, becomes ever more pressing,

There are three principle aims to this collection. First, to take stock of the various ways in which subculture has been applied in CCCS and post-CCCS research. Second, to consider whether

or not there is still theoretical and empirical justification for the application of subculture in a world increasingly characterized by cultural fragmentation (Chaney, 2002a). Third, to consider how flexible the term is, and how far it can be reapplied and reappropriated in new ways – and, conversely, how far the CCCS' use of the term might have for ever predetermined its connotations. In this Introduction, however, we must first revisit briefly the subcultural theory of the CCCS and examine some of the key issues raised in the critical debate that followed the publication of the key CCCS' writings on subculture. This is followed by a summary of the ways in which the chapters in this book progress the subculture debate and reassess the value of subculture as an analytical concept in contemporary youth research.