

A final drawback with the CCCS's subcultural approach is the very limited definition of youth that it suggests. By focusing on youth as an age category (that is, sixteen to twenty-one), the CCCS failed to appreciate the symbolic value of style and other popular cultural resources for transforming youth into an ideological category, a state of mind rather than a particular stage in life. This quality of youth' has become more noticeable in recent years as subsequent generations of youth have reached adulthood yet refused to 'grow up', using music, style and various forms of memorabilia as a means of retaining a sense of youthfulness' even as they approach middle age (Ross, 1994; Calcutt, 1998; Bennett, 2001). Thus, for example, as Ross (1994) observes:

an entire parental generation [is] caught up in the fantasy that they are themselves still youthful, or at least more culturally radical, in ways once equated with youth, than the youth of today ... It is not just Mick Jagger and Tina Turner who imagine themselves to be eighteen years old and steppin' out; a significant mass of baby boomers partially act out this belief in their daily lives. (p. 8)

Post-subcultural Theory

The problems identified with subcultural theory, combined with the apparently increasing fragmentation of youth style since the

1980s, has given rise to an emerging analytical approach to the study of youth culture which can loosely be termed 'post-subcultural theory'. Introduced by Redhead (1990) and developed by Muggleton (1997, 2000), this approach argues that the structurally grounded concept of subculture, if always problematic, has become increasingly redundant in relation to contemporary youth culture which, according to Polhemus, 'reside[s] in a sort of streetstyle themepark' (1997, p. 149). Underlying the move towards post-subcultural analysis is an argument that subcultural divisions have broken down as the relationship between style, musical taste and identity has become progressively weaker and articulated more fluidly. This alleged breakdown of subcultural divisions was first noted by Redhead in his study of the early British rave scene. According to Redhead, rave was 'notorious for mixing all kinds of styles on the same dance floor and attracting a range of previously opposed subcultures' (1993a, pp. 3–4). During the early 1990s, Redhead and a group of researchers based at the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC) used the developing dance music scene as a means of applying a postmodern critique of the CCCS work. Thus, it was argued, the combined effects of post-industrialization and the increasing amounts of unstructured free time available to young people had given rise to a new clubbing culture' which dissolved structural divisions such as

class, race and gender as the dance floor crowd became collectively immersed in the club experience (see Redhead, 1993b).

The increasing centrality of retro-culture is another factor that many postsubcultural writers believe has led to the new sensibilities of style exhibited by contemporary youth. Thus, according to Polhemus (1997):