

We now inhabit a Supermarket of Style where, like tins of soup lined up on endless shelves, we can choose between more than fifty different styletribes. Jumbling geography as well as history, British punk circa 1976 sits on the shelf next to 1950s American Beatnik or late Jamaican Ragga (p. 150).

Polhemus goes on to note how this has resulted in the assembling of individual styles from the many different images and looks available: 'In the end, in the mix, the possibilities are unlimited: an Armani suit worn with back-to-front baseball cap and "old school trainers, a "Perfecto™ black leather jacket worn with tartan flares, a Hippy caftan worn with rubber leggings, DMs and a Chanel handbag' (ibid.). A more balanced view of post-subcultural youth's relationship to style is offered by Muggleton, who argues that, although notions of style and identity are certainly not as rigidly composed as was argued in CCCS and post-CCCS work, nor are they as arbitrary in design as supposed in the post modern-tinged writing of Polhemus et al. Certainly there is scope for innovation and style-mixing, claims Muggleton, but even among post-subcultural youth conventions apply. Thus, he observes:

Stylistic change... is best understood in transformative terms, as a gradual, partial and evolutionary process, not as sudden shifts in whole identities, as some postmodern commentators would

have it... Appearance is not free-floating, available to be put on and cast off as a mere whim. To engage in such acts would be seen as evidence of one's superficiality and inauthenticity, for style is viewed as an expression of one's inner self (Muggleton, 2000, p. 103).

Other theorists whose work has been associated with the post-subcultural approach have focused on the increasing fluidity of youth cultural memberships and attempted to provide analytical frameworks to account for this while still acknowledging the collective dimensions of youth cultural groupings. Bennett (1999a; 2000) examines this issue using Maffesoli's concept of *tribus* or neo-tribes. Underpinning Maffesoli's use of this concept is a concern to illustrate the increasingly fluid and unstable nature of social relations in contemporary society. According to Maffesoli (1996), the tribe is 'without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form' (p. 98). Bennett applies Maffesoli's ideas to contemporary dance-music culture. According to Bennett, the dance club setting, through its provision of a space for expressions of 'togetherness' based on articulations of fun, relaxation and pleasure, can be seen as one of many forms of temporal engagement through which such neo-tribal associations are formed.

The concept of neo-tribalism is also used in Malbon's work on contemporary dance music culture. Malbon makes effective use of neo-tribal imagery together with Maffesoli's (1996) attendant notion of 'sociality' as a means of underscoring the 'tactile...forms of communality which characterize the contemporary club crowd (Malbon, 1999, p. 26). However, Malbon is critical of Maffesoli's failure to empirically situate his work, which, it is argued, renders Maffesoli's analysis insensitive to hardened discourses of stylistic convention and cultural competence' which may persist even as collective associations became more multiple, fluid and transitory. Thus, observes Malbon: