

Australia's New Subculture

They dress like their going to the gym. They have undercuts and spiky hair. They have a few tattoos, hidden from their parents view. They listen to R&B and rap. They hang out in garages, playing cards, swearing and smoking pot. Their ideology of masculinity is a man that won't take 'no' for an answer, has control over his 'Mrs.' and can stand up for himself. They speak with slang derived from the African American slang, with a few Arabic words here and there. They drive fast, done up cars with controversial personalized number plates. Females are not welcome in this gathering nor are adults. Who are they? They are the Lebanese youth. Their offshoot, 'hanging out', is the symbolic axis and working social hub. This subculture is heavily reliant on being 'in the know' - on being cool, calm and dangerous. If one were to describe the social culture of this group, it would have to be 'coolness'. But what is this cultural value? How is it embodied? How is it displayed? Why it is so important to the Lebanese youth? What are its social uses, its demographics, its biases and discriminations?

They belong to a unitary culture. They maintain the same dress codes, dance styles, music genres and catalogue of authorized and illicit rituals. They are a subculture from an ethnic culture. They generally congregate on the basis of shared ethnicity and ideology, their consumption of the same media and, most importantly, their preference for youth of the same ethnicity to themselves.

Taking part in this subculture builds affinities, socialising participants into knowledge of the likes and dislikes, meanings and values of the culture. This community will last for several years until these boys decide to settle down through primarily marriage. This subculture will then melt into the 'mainstream'.

The opposition of the 'mainstream' is undoubtedly how many constituents of youth subcultures characterize their own behaviour. However we can't take youthful discourses literally; they are not a transparent window on the world. This is a constant mistake that has been made by cultural studies. They have been inadequately critical of sub cultural ideologies, first, because they were preoccupied by the task of perforating and challenging prevailing ideologies and, second, because they were biased and tended to correspond with the sub cultural discourses of the youth cultures they study. Academics have acclaimed subcultures, while youth have celebrated the 'underground'. Where young people have condemned the 'commercial', scholars have criticised 'hegemony'; where one has grieved over 'selling out', the other has conceived 'incorporation'.

Youth visualize their own and other social groups through sub cultural ideologies, they declare their idiosyncratic nature and assert that they are not nameless affiliates of an undistinguished heap. The cultural theorists are not giving non-biased explanations of the way things really are, but incorporate ideologies that fulfil their specific cultural agenda. One should therefore not simply delve into the way of life of a cluster community, but consider the way they make 'meaning the service of power'.

The distinctions made by the Lebanese youth are not simply affirmations of equal difference; they entail a strong claim to authority and presume the inferiority of others. They challenge the weight of, namely the police and laws established by the government and see other sub cultural ethnic groups as inferior to them.

Within this subculture, elevated levels of income and property do not associate with high levels of cultural capital, as the two often conflict. Comments about the 'nouveau riche' reveal the likely frictions between those affluent in cultural capital but fairly poor in economic capital (like those Lebanese youth that are academics) and those rich in economic capital but less affluent in cultural capital (like professional football players).

Therefore, the third category-social capital-that stems not from what you know or what you have, but from who know, can be attributed fore mostly to the subculture of the Lebanese youth. Connections in the form of friends, relations, associations and acquaintances can all bestow status. 'Tell the boys that you know so and so and watch them worship you'.

The 'second nature' of their knowledge is a quality that members of this subculture must possess. Nothing diminishes capital more than the spectacle of someone trying to hard. For example, a subdued and pale looking Anglo Saxon male attempting to act, dress and associate himself with the subculture of the Lebanese youth.

K. Gelder and S. Thornton argue that 'the difference between being in or out of fashion, high or low in sub cultural capital, correlates in complex ways with degrees of media coverage, creation and exposure'. In regards to the aforementioned subculture, commercial news and the content of their broadcasting are discussed often amongst each other. They are in passionate resistance to the negative portrayal of their subculture. It can be argued therefore that due to the fact that their subculture is used as the 'topic of the day' so readily, that this actually encourages them to become increasingly rebellious against the 'mainstream' and forms of authority.

The convertibility of cultural capital into economic capital is what ultimately defines cultural capital. Whilst sub cultural capital may not convert into economic capital, in being a market niche, with the same ease or financial reward as cultural

capital, a variety of occupations or increased capital for existing occupations can be gained as a result of 'coolness'. American clothes designers, especially sportswear designers, such as Nike and Adidas, American artists of hip-hop, rap and R&B and sad to say drug dealers all make a living from their sub cultural capital.

Sub cultural capital is not as class-bound as cultural capital, even though it converts into economic capital. Class does not correlate in any uninterrupted way with levels of youthful sub cultural capital. For instance, it would not be uncommon for a Lebanese boy that was raised in an area that was densely populated with Lebanese households, like Bankstown, to remain dressing, acting and speaking in the same way if he was to move to an area that was densely populated with Anglo-Saxons and of a class.

Gender, after age, is the social difference along which sub cultural capital is aligned most analytically to. Generally, the girls associated with this subculture invest more of their time and identity in doing well at school. The boys, in contrast, spend more time and money on going out, listening to music and 'hanging out with the boys'.

The 'refusal of complicity' might be said to categorise the majority of Lebanese youth. These youth are not as anchored in their social place as those younger and older than themselves as they are not settled with a partner nor have they integrated into 'Australian culture'. By investing in this act of leisure, Lebanese youth further reject being fixed socially. They can postpone 'social aging' or that 'slow renunciation or disinvestment' which leads people to regulate their goals to their purposes, to support their state, become what they are and make do with what they have. Acting as a barrier against social aging may be one of the reasons as to why it is so attractive to people well beyond their youth.

Lebanese youth can be seen as temporarily taking pleasure in the taste of independence. Freedom from necessity, therefore, does not mean that youth have wealth so much that they are exempt from adult commitments to the accumulation of economic capital. They simply reveal a methodical dedication, which allows practises that are discouraged by the mainstream.

The term 'subculture' is therefore useful as a means for analysing the position and experiences of the Lebanese youth of Australia. Sub cultural capital is the key player of a substitute chain of command in which the affiliation of age, gender, sexuality and race are operational in order to keep the resolves of class, income and occupation aside. Sub cultural capital discloses itself most clearly by what it dislikes and by what it definitely isn't. The vast majority of Lebanese youth distinguish themselves against the mainstream that, to some degree, can be seen to stand in for the masses- this distance is a measure of their cultural worth. Sub cultural ideology unconditionally gives alternative interpretations and values to young peoples, particularly young men's. It reinterprets the social world. The Lebanese youth jockey for social power through these popular distinctions; they are favouritisms by which members are both given social statuses and endeavour for a meaning of self-worth. This perspective foresees popular culture as a multi-dimensional social space rather than as a flat culture or as simply the end of the social ladder. The Lebanese youth should therefore not be categorised through their cultural differences as being 'resistances' to hierarchy or to the isolated cultural supremacy of some ruling body. They should be looked at as the microstructures of power entailed in the cultural competition that goes on between more closely associated social groups.