



Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style (Dress, Body, Culture)

David Muggleton

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What motivates people to dress in a manner that marks them out as different to the conventional norm? Is it true that, with dress, 'anything goes' in our mix-and-match postmodern culture? Have easily recognizable, authentic subcultures imploded in a glut of ironic revivals and stylistic fragmentation? Does this supposed 'post-subcultural' generation actively celebrate ephemerality, transience and disposability, merely casting off and trying on one alternative identity after another in an ever-accelerating fashion frenzy? This exciting book is a considered sociological examination of such questions. By listening to the voices of the subcultural stylists themselves - their subjective perceptions of their style and the ideas that lie behind them - the author provides original insights into issues of subjectivity and identity.

Situating an empirical case study within a wider consideration of postmodernism and cultural change, the author rejects cultural studies perspectives that attempt to 'read' subcultures as texts. Drawing on extensive interviews with people who dress in what might be deemed a stylistically unconventional manner, he seeks instead to establish whether contemporary subcultures display modern or postmodern sensibilities and forms. He argues persuasively that they do both - a stress on postmodern hyperindividualism, fluidity and fragmentation runs alongside a modernist emphasis on authenticity and underlying essence. He concludes that a Romantic libertarianism has permeated working-class culture and that the distinction between 'individualistic' middle-class countercultures and 'collectivist' working-class subcultures has been over-emphasized.

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