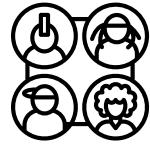


Phil Cohen (1972): Subcultural Conflict and Working-Class Community



Phil Cohen's 1972 study examined how youth subcultures in East London emerged as responses to urban redevelopment and social change in post-war Britain. His work highlights how working-class youth used subcultures to symbolically address displacement, loss of identity, and structural inequalities.

Methodology:

Cohen employed ethnographic methods, including observation, interviews, and analysis of subcultural practices. He combined these with historical research on urban redevelopment, showing how these changes reshaped working-class life. His methodology also included examining symbolic aspects of subcultures, such as dress and behavior, to uncover their deeper social meanings.

Key Findings:

Urban Displacement:

Redevelopment projects destroyed tight-knit working-class communities, moving residents to new areas with weaker social bonds. This loss of place-based identity created a cultural vacuum for young people.

Subcultures as Symbolic Resistance:

Youth subcultures like skinheads emerged to reclaim working-class identity. Their exaggerated styles, such as Doc Martens and braces, symbolized pride in traditional values threatened by urban change.

Masculinity and Crisis:

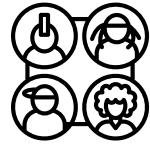
The decline of industrial jobs disrupted traditional masculine roles. Subcultures provided a space for young men to assert their masculinity through dress, music, and physicality, often in ways that emphasized toughness or aggression.

Community Nostalgia:

Skinheads and other subcultures drew on symbols of a romanticised working-class past, such as pub culture or football, to restore a sense of belonging amidst social fragmentation.



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Developments and Applications:

Gender and Subcultures:

Cohen's focus on male-dominated subcultures can be expanded by examining how urban redevelopment impacted girls differently. For example, Angela McRobbie's bedroom culture concept highlights alternative ways girls expressed identity.

Contemporary Gentrification:

Cohen's framework remains relevant in analyzing modern gentrification. Subcultures emerging in urban spaces today, such as street art collectives or grassroots music scenes, reflect similar resistance to displacement and cultural erasure.

How did urban redevelopment contribute to the formation of youth subcultures?

In what ways did skinheads symbolically resist displacement?

Can Cohen's ideas about urban displacement apply to modern youth subcultures, such as streetwear or drill music?

How might girls have responded differently to these social changes?

