PERSPETIVES ON YOUTH CULTURE

Functionalist perspective

Functionalists believe if something exist in a society, it must have a purpose and youth culture exists with the purpose as a transitory phase for teens to move from childhood to adulthood.

Functionalists see society as being based on shared values – individuals must feel integrated into society.

Youth as a transition from family to adult roles.

Talcott Parsons 1954

Parsons talks about youth culture being a bridge between childhood and adulthood. He argues youth culture helps to detach young people from their families and they can begin to achieve their own status as an adult.

During the phase of youth culture it is not uncommon for young people to get similar responsibilities as adults such as money management. Young people often get part time jobs while still in full time education..

To expand this view youth culture becomes a 'rite of passage' which all young people must journey throughout in order to integrate into adult society.

S. N. Eisenstadt 1956

Eisenstadt argues that young people need to find a way to distinguish themselves from their parents.

They do this by moving from their ascribed to their achieved status however this can be financially difficult and stressful.

Eisenstadt believes that youth culture provides a way of dealing with that stress by providing a group of peers who are like-minded and of similar age who acquire same styles of dress and attitudes.

However, he believes that the style and dress and content of youth culture in NOT important, only the transition to adulthood is.

Roszak 1970

Roszak argued that a gap emerged between young people and older generations and this was called the 'generation gap'

He implies that the values, interests and behaviour of youths was replacements for divisions based on class, race and gender

Roszak said that age is more important than all differences making the other divisions outdated and irrelevant.

Functionalists have focused a great deal on the way in which such peer groups provide young people with alternative forms of status, a self-identity, room for role experimentation and the opportunity to try out different sorts of relationships (such as living together).

Though young people may occasionally (or even frequently) get involved in deviant behaviour, eventually they will grow up into conformity with dominant societal values.

English writer Quentin Crisp, in his book How to become a virgin (1981) remarks that:

The young have always had the same problem: how to rebel and how to conform at the same time.

They've solved this by rebelling against their elders and copying each other

For functionalists young people have lower status in society because they lack necessary knowledge and experience, which they will eventually acquire through preparation, education and training.
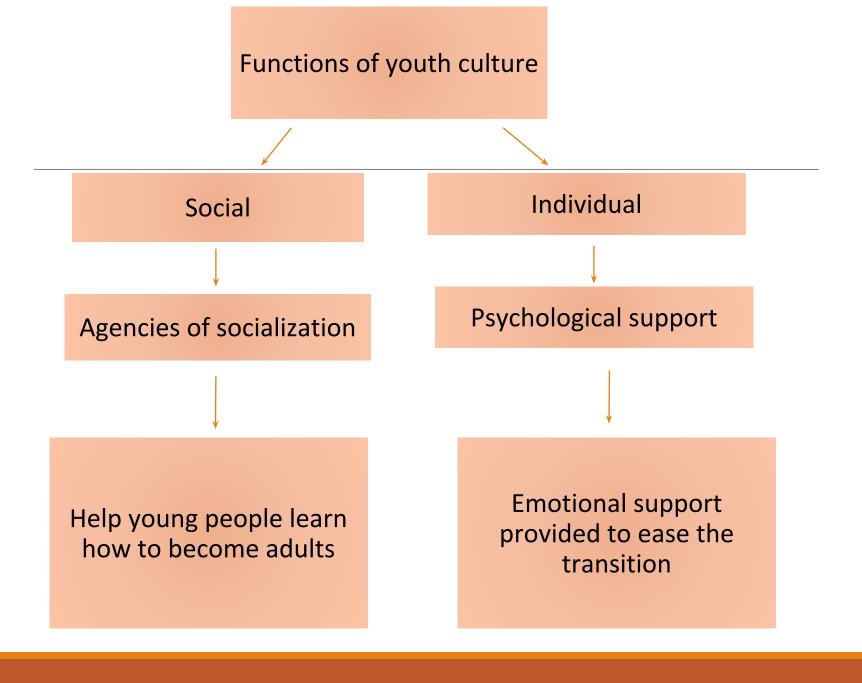
Functions of youth culture

Reducing the gap between childhood and adulthood

Transitioning period to help young people to integrate as adults

Promoting social integration through youth culture and teaching young people the values of adulthood

Functionalists believe that if something exists in society it must have a purpose. And youth culture exists with the purpose as a transitory phase for teens to move from childhood to adulthood.

Criticisms of Functionalism

Functionalists see youth cultures as homogenous (all the same) despite their difference in personal taste and style

This means that functionalists only see youth culture as a whole and not as separate sub-cultures e.g. punks, mods, skinheads

By emphasising shared features of sub-cultures they are ignoring the clear, substantial differences between youth sub-cultures

They treat youth culture as age-specific and therefore to consider youth to be a state of mind if adults or small children adopt similar styles

Conflict perspective

Conflict theorists seek to explain how young people are constrained and shaped by the structures of society: particularly the structural social inequalities of class, gender and ethnicity

If young people are rebellious, if they are apathetic, if they are attempting to shut out the outside world, if they are committing crimes, if they are engaging in the politics of fear or of possibility, they are doing so for specific reasons. The search for a space of their own is a response on the part of working-class young people to a society in crisis, one that has forsaken social principles of justice, equality and humanity for the benefit of the wealthy and powerful.

Ultimately the problems associated with the 'broken transitions of youth' cannot be reduced to a lack of discipline or skill, or the impact of technology, they stem from and are a reflection of social structures that privilege the powerful while consigning the less powerful to poverty, alienation and the ignominious drudgery of hand-to-mouth existence.

Interactionist Perspective

The interactionist approach involves looking at small scale interaction between young people, usually within small groups like gangs or groups of friends.

A key element of this approach is that it focuses on the way in which meanings are created

It is argued that people do not simply reflect the culture or society of which they are a part. Rather they interact with each other to create a shared world: one which incorporates elements of the broader 'culture', but one that also creates its own definitions of reality.

Stan Cohen argues youth subcultures are not coherent social groupings that arise spontaneously as a reaction to social forces, but that mass media labeling results in the creation of youth subcultures by imposing an ideological framework in which people can locate their behavior.

It focussing too much on the minute detail of everyday life while ignoring the broader structures that constrain it.

Feminist Perspective

Sociologists have tended to focus very much on public, male dominated sub-cultures and environments: the street, the playground, and the factory. The lives of girls, which often have a more private and domestic focus, have been largely ignored.

Gender (Social construct)

"The attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex." (APA, 2011)

"A person's self concept of their gender (regardless of their biological sex)..." (Lev, 2004)

Gender Identity refers to An individual's personal sense of self as male, female, or an alternate gender

Psychologically rooted, and internally determined

- Masculine

  Dominant

  Independent

  Rational

  Assertive

  Analytical

  Brave

  Active

  Insensitive

- Feminine
  Submissive

  Dependent

  Emotional

  Receptive

  Intuitive

  Timid

  Passive

  Sensitive

Social Scientist argue that the concept of masculinity and femininity vary greatly historically and culturally and are linked to the unequal distribution of opportunities and resources because of this distinction social construction of gender, young people's life chances and the quality of life they experience are pronouncedly shaped by the gendered nature of institutions and relationships in societies.

Early research into gender and youth focus on young women as victims, documenting the incidence of educational under achievement, poor employment opportunities and sexual harassment and the construction of femininities characterized by passivity, emotionality and fixation on appearance.(Griffin,1985 Wallace,1987).

The discriminations and prejudices has been challenged by some women friendly policies that promote gender equality in education, at work and in wider society.

Millet (1977) and Firestone (1990) argued that gendered inequalities are a structural feature of modern societies where culture, politics and economics   are inherently biased against women. The system of patriarchy means that though new policies improve the lives of young women they suffer a range of injustices and oppression. A more equal society can be establishes with a   profound reform of social structures   in modern societies.

Most recent work on gender and youth studies have focused on the dialectical relation of men and women.

The growth of information technology has transformed the ways gender relationships and be mediated-the use of social networking supporting the friendships and activities of young people.(Elm,2009) Young women in developing societies and authoritarian states have become more conscious and politically active in efforts to challenge gendered inequalities in their societies, "Arab Spring" a popular protest in Middle Eastern societies has been the call for greater opportunities for women. (Gumuchian,2011)

Class ,cultural and racial traditions that inform the use of language and style mediate the forms of dominant gender.

The popular media have associated contemporary aspects of masculine and feminine display with culture of worklessness representing such behavior as causes of disadvantage rather than as responses to economic and cultural insecurity.

Connell (1995) proposed the idea of dominant or hegemonic masculinities. He is of an idea that in recent years researchers explore the differing ways that young people live out way of being boys and girls. There is a shift in power relationships and marginalization and oppression of peers.

Mac an Ghaill,(1994). A dominant form of young masculinity rooted is football and fighting activities whereas a dominant form of young femininity represents there emphasis on their physical allure and attempts to promote their adult female identities. Use of cosmetics and familiarity with fashion style codes are features of lives of young women .

Gender stereotypes and discrimination

Gender differences in the labour market may also be due to gender discrimination. In the presence of equal pay legislation, employers might use gender differentiated criteria in the recruitment process. These criteria may penalize women, not valorising their professional skills or education level, due to women's high probability of leaving employment for care (Azmat et al., 2006).

Gender discrimination may be added to racial discrimination, thereby especially affecting women from specific ethnic groups. Furthermore, employers may find it easier to discriminate on a gender basis during a recession; when unemployment is high it is easier for discriminating employers to hire on a gender basis with no negative consequences in terms of profits (Azmat, et al., 2006).