**The Concept of Youth Subcultures**

The word 'culture' suggests that there is a separate entity within the larger society with which the larger society must contend. A subculture group is a social-cultural formation that exists as a sort of island or enclave within the larger society. One definition of subculture is: "subcultures are meaning systems, modes of expression or life styles developed by groups in subordinate structural positions in response to dominant meaning systems, and which reflect their attempt to solve structural contradictions rising from the wider societal context" (Michael Brake). For Brake membership of a subculture necessarily involves membership of a class culture and the subculture may be an extension of, or in opposition to, the class culture. The significance of subcultures for their participants is that they offer a solution to structural dislocations through the establishment of an achieved identity - the selection of certain elements of style outside of those associated with the ascribed identity offered by work, home, or school. He suggests that the majority of youth pass through life without significant involvement in deviant subcultures. He says that the role of youth culture involves offering symbolic elements that are used by youth to construct an identity outside the restraints of class and education.

Snejina Michailova, in Exploring Subcultural Specificity in Socialist and Postsocialist Organisations, presents the following definitions of subculture: (1) Subcultures are distinct clusters of understandings, behaviors, and cultural forms that identify groups of people in the organization. They differ noticeably from the common organizational culture in which they are embedded, either intensifying its understandings and practices or deviating from them" (Trice and Beyer). (2) Subculture are a "...compromise solution between two contradictory needs: the need to create and express autonomy and difference and the need to maintain identifications to the culture within whose boundaries the subculture develops" (Cohen)." Snejina adds: "Subcultures posses their own meanings, their own way of coping with rules, accepted to be valid for the organization, their own values structured in specific hierarchies, they develop their own categorical language for classifying events around them, they create their own symbolic order." A key element in subcultures is sharedness - the sharing of a common set of perspectives.

The common elements of a subculture include: (1) relatively unique values and norms, (2) a special slang not shared with society, (3) separate channels of communication, (4) unique styles and fads, (5) a sense of primary group belonging seen in the use of 'us' and 'them', (6) a hierarchy of social patterns that clarify the criteria for prestige and leadership, (7) receptivity to the charisma of leaders and (8) gratification of special unmet needs.

To suggest that there is a youth subculture requires proof that they are a distinct group with their own set of characteristic. This is true in terms of (1) aesthetics: youth have a distinct style and taste that is expressed in their personal appearance and an artistic flair expressed in spontaneity and creativity. Their values include an emphasis on community, a sense of belonging and on collectively shared ecstasy. Youth culture also exists as shown in their distinct (2) morality: there is a strong emphasis on liberation from all restraints and on a guiltless pursuit of pleasure. In the area of sexuality we find an aspect of life where the individual is to experience themselves and others with complete freedom and honesty. There is a combination of both individualism (youth culture affirms the autonomy of each individual who has the 'right' to do their own thing) and collectivism (many individuals are fused into a common experience). The search for identity is at the core.