

Music Consumption as a Therapeutic Process: Subcultures at the Convergence of Affective, Cognitive, and Conative Conditions

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Abstract

This opinion article aims to highlight the critical role music consumption may play both at the individual and subcultural level simultaneously: it provides a means through which consumers enter into a therapeutic process that may culminate into the convergence of cognitive, affective, and conative conditions. Contrary to prior studies that concentrate on such conditions, largely in a mutually exclusive manner, this article aims to pave the way for a more holistic picture that may help us have a complex comprehension of the multifaceted music consumption phenomenon.

Keywords: *Music Consumption; Subculture; Therapeutic Process; Consumer Well-being*

Music consumption is a therapeutic process that holds a potential to transform the self and to improve consumer psychological and social well-being [1]. Also through music, subcultural meanings circulate as they are embedded in, and fostered through, certain styles, sounds, images, and discourses [2-5]. Therefore, music provides a means through which affective, cognitive, and conative conditions may converge at the individual and subcultural level, and represents a dynamic interplay within alternative subcultural spheres.

Music elicits strong emotional reactions and is a catalyst for satisfying consumers' affective needs that are largely unmet in their everyday lives. Music, in the antithetical subcultural context, also works to channel consumers' feelings of frustration and alienation (caused largely by their discontent with the dominant social institutions of contemporary society), into productive, creative, and expressive modes of release and discharge for emancipatory and transformative experiences. In other words, such frustrations engender feelings of anger and resentment which, in turn, find a voice in the cultural codes of much subcultural music.

Whilst music via style, sound, beat, dance, discourse and praxis encodes these affective codes, thus capturing the attention of emotionally disrupted individuals, it facilitates the process of drawing these individuals into music subcultures. In that, music subcultures are venues where consumers can express their authentic selves and emotions, discharge their frustrations, ameliorate their sense of alienation, and develop alternative collective experiences and consciousness with other participants. Subcultural members are said to "discharge their resentment and frustrations through radical, extreme, and chaotic modes yet in a relatively controlled and secure environment relying on the codes, norms, and rituals embraced by subcultural members. As they seek solace in membership in subcultures, they also seek to reinvent the passion, creativity, and fun" [6]. Music consumption is therefore therapeutic in that it offers consumers redemptive values and generates an impulse for recreation praxis that can be actualized in everyday life [1].

The affective codes that are embedded in music subcultures pave way to cognitive foundations. The more engaged consumers are with music subcultures, the more they learn about the ideals, ethos, and value systems of these collectives; thus, they develop cognitive foundations with respect to the codes, signs, symbols, and meanings converge into the ontology of subcultures as well as that of the conception of

mainstream culture. In other words, consumers' increased involvement with the music subcultures results in their committing to subcultural attitudes and internalizing the value systems and ideals of music subcultures. Music subcultures perceived to be antithetical offer not only the means for constructing collective memory and experiences, but also resistant qualities and identities. Music subcultures provide a venue as an alternative learning site where consumers learn about social causes, socio-cultural conditions, and political realities; additionally, they begin to question the status quo and to seek alternative ways of living and being. Hence, subcultures are arguably "educational sites for social learning and ideological awakenings which result in gradual disjunction from the mainstream. Subcultures offer consumers an exciting, effective, and multi-perspectival learning experience by incorporating the following aspects of identity construction, social imagination and interaction, critical mindset, presentationality and creativity into this mutual learning process for social change" [7].

Cognitive foundations, formed as a result of internalization, forge the conative aspects of music subcultures. Consumers learn about alternative, radical ideas, and develop sympathy for alternative modes of living and social and economic orders; this incites them to incorporate activist identities into their subjective identities for broader social and cultural change. Thus, they also enrich their fragmented subcultural subject positions and experiences as they construct and work on their identity projects. Eventually, this awareness and development of a socially active identity renders them more active in broader social and cultural issues, thus mobilizing them to participate in social movements with a subcultural activist role. In other words, while consumers pursue personal empowerment and constantly work on their dynamic and fragmented subcultural subject positions, they also pursue interest in bringing about broader social and cultural change [8].

Consequently, the significance of music and its potential in forming

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social relationships [2,3,8,9] and in developing and converging affective, cognitive and conative conditions is apparent. Thus, the objective to explore this complex reality, embedded in aspects of music and its impact on aforementioned conditions via holistic, multiperspectival, and multidisciplinary accounts, is a necessary and a virtuous pursuit.

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