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Abstract

Purpose: This research examines postmodernism's influence in social and political change and its relationship to popular culture. It examines how postmodernism changed media studies, cultural anthropology, gender studies, and youth culture. This study seeks to address gaps in our knowledge by analyzing how postmodern notions promote a more flexible cultural analysis and challenge traditional identity and representation theories.

Materials and Methods: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, and Angela McRobbie are among the postmodernists and cultural theorists explored in the book. Ethnographic, empirical, political, feminist, and cultural studies are used to study popular culture's evolution. This multidisciplinary research examines fashion, media, and moral panics in current youth culture to analyse cultural shifts.

Findings: Postmodernism makes individuals doubt their beliefs, which fractures and changes their identities, according to the

research. It concludes that cultural studies must remain flexible and unrigorous to address current social and political issues. The study shows that postmodernism has changed youth culture, media consumption, and gender relations. Additionally, it examines how famous cultural theorists have affected postmodernism and mainstream media discourse.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Cultural studies must evolve to keep up with postmodern society's changing dynamics, according to study. It claims that empirical and interdisciplinary research are needed to understand cultural changes. It also invites cultural experts to investigate popular culture more openly and flexibly and reevaluate feminist theory in postmodern contexts.

Keywords: *Citation Network, Postmodernism, Vosviewer and Bibliometrics*

INTRODUCTION

While postmodernism has become the archenemy of everyone, it has also served as a good argument against the "melting into the air" of many other ideas and, in a weird manner, is a well-timed thought. Thus, postmodernism succeeded in challenging sociology and cultural studies assumptions. When politics, society, and history are at stake, this type of intellectual endeavor will elicit significant emotions. Academic and educational efforts have long relied on these principles (Anon, 2024). In the 1950s and 1960s, postmodernism was laid. In *Against Interpretation* (1966), American cultural critic Susan Sontag praises a "new sensibility". The new sensibility blurs "high" and "low" culture, she says. As a "new sensibility," postmodernism responded to modernism's classism. Modernists were naturally skeptical of popular culture, despite their love of "quoting" it. Despite its claim to fight against "bourgeois philistinism," its comparable relationship to class society's elitism helped it become a cultural institution. Modernism's canonization prompted the postmodern "new sensibility" to rethink popular culture. After modernism's elitism, postmodernism became fashionable in the 1960s. Huyssen says cultural postmodernity is measured by our ability to overcome the "great divide" between mass culture and modernism. The first postmodern art was pop art, which blurred the border between popular and high culture in the US and UK in the 1950s and 1960s (Baca, 2023).

Susan Sontag's "new sensibility," initially articulated in *Against Interpretation* (1966), is essential to comprehending postmodernism's historical and cultural background. Her philosophy challenged the distinction between "high" and "low" culture by arguing that pop art, avant-garde cinema, and contemporary music were as important as classical literature and the fine arts. This perspective shaped the postmodern movement's rejection of creative hierarchies and acceptance of a more flexible and inclusive cultural production. Sontag's "new sensibility" emerged in the 1960s, when the media was at its peak and many were doubting the modernist canon's great narratives. After WWII, advertising, movies, and television dominated art and media consumption. Modernist scholars perceived popular culture through an elitist prism, while postmodernism embraced this transition and denounced their snobbery. Sontag's works support postmodern and poststructuralist interpretation and meaning critiques. In *Against Interpretation*, she claims that traditional critical techniques focus too much on hidden meanings and miss art's immediate, emotional, and sensual experience. She emphasises form, style, and pleasure above scholarly study as crucial to aesthetics.

This follows postmodernism's emphasis on superficial beauty, self-reference, and fun above absolute truths. Sontag's views also align with postmodern trends like camp aesthetics and pop art. Her 1964 paper *Notes on "Camp"* defended popular culture's sarcastic, exaggerated, and artificial elements as artistic expressions. This led postmodern thinkers to allow pastiche, parody, and intertextuality in their visual and performing arts. Sontag's "new sensibility" helped postmodernism destroy cultural hierarchies, redefine critical interaction with art, and embrace the permeable boundaries between popular and elite culture. Her work blurred high and low art, and postmodern culture valued aesthetic experience above interpretation.

Postmodernism and Popular Culture

Postmodernism argues for a multitude of fragmented and often interrupted "looks" rather than the one-sided, scrutinizing gaze of the semiologist. In the 1980s, the visual density and textual thickness of ordinary life supplanted the exemplary text or the solitary, deeply coded image. It was as if the semiologist's leisurely, even sluggish, "look" had become antiquated. Not only does

postmodernism appear frustrated by this relatively slow pace, but it is also becoming more frustrated by its growing failure to establish concrete links between cultural analysis and the general circumstances of modern life. Additionally, structuralist thought has superseded more traditional orthodoxies (Chute, 2011). The rereading of books that are already highly regarded within a literary or aesthetic hierarchy reveals this. In other places, it establishes a new order of importance, with classic Hollywood films at the very top, then selected advertising graphics, and last, lady and girl periodicals. Music and dance, two more types of representation, are nonexistent.

New Eras in the Field of Cultural Studies

From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, cultural analysis was firmly grounded in the neo-Marxist sphere established by Althusser and Gramsci. However, more contemporary questions about modernity and postmodernity have replaced these more recognizable conceptions. The field of cultural studies has undergone a radical transition as a result of this shift. The scholarly domains of media and cultural studies are no longer the exclusive domains of modernity and postmodernism. The arguments that have accompanied their arrival have permeated nearly every area of the social sciences, arts, and humanities. In addition to appearing on television and in the "quality" press, they have made their way into art school studios, where they have shaped the practices of architects, painters, and filmmakers (Corinne Reichert, 2021). The words "good" and "bad" have mirrored a paradigm shift in the late 1980s and early 1990s among cultural scholars and practitioners, who sought new ways of perceiving and making sense of the world. The aesthetic and cultural movement known as postmodernism arose in reaction to the rift it caused between modernism and the avant-garde, as well as the broader condition of postmodernity. Its defining features include an opposition to teleological progress and linearity, and an embrace of quotation, parody, pastiche, and pluralism of style. The 1970s and 1980s saw many intellectual and social upheavals that brought postmodernism to cultural studies, departing from neo-Marxism.

Western Marxist Tradition Collapses. The fall of Marxist ideology in academia contributed to the transition. Structuralist and poststructuralist critics like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard criticized Marxist class struggle, ideology, and historical determinism. Foucault's discourse and power theory shifted attention from economic structures to language, institutions, and knowledge in social reality. Emergence of Poststructuralism. In the late 1970s, poststructuralist methodologies that stressed variety, fluidity of identity, and fragmentation of difference started to replace structuralist theories like Althusser's ideological state apparatuses in cultural studies. This development made power, representation, and identity studies more contextualized and localized than historical materialism. The 'New Times' Debate's Effect Early 1980s British cultural theorists, notably those from Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), engaged in the "New Times" debate. The main topics of discussion were how communication technology, consumer culture, and global capitalism were changing social identities. Left-wingers like Stuart Hall argue that cultural politics shape gender, race, and class relations more than economic determinism. Media and Consumption Culture After the late 20th century media and consumer culture boom, postmodern conceptions of spectacle, simulation, and hyperreality replaced Marxist critiques of capitalism. Jean Baudrillard's hyperreality and simulacra reveal that media depictions create their own realities. Cultural studies began to focus on how media and representation create meaning rather than just reflecting economic processes.

Cultural Studies and Post-Marxism's Influence

In cultural studies, "crisis" is often used. Lidia Curti (1992) uses this term to describe how many of cultural studies' theoretical foundations have crumbled and how intellectuals are increasingly excluded from political life in Cultural Studies, a new anthology edited by Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg. She claims that structuralist, poststructuralist, Marxist, and feminist thinking has weakened belief, devalued 'strong narratives', and moved from binary connections to 'an unending succession of inequalities'. Cultural studies face extra problems that would lead one to think panic best captures its present position. Eastern European events have discredited the socialist concept, and Soviet Union developments have misled Western critics concerning right- and left-wing politics. Marxism's teleological claims, essentialism, economism, Eurocentrism, and role in the Enlightenment have all been criticized by postmodernists. Marxism was central to the UK cultural studies effort (Hamilton, 2022).

A complex web of absorption and tension links postmodernism's growth and Marxism's decline. Postmodernism was a response to Marxist theory's flaws. As it reorganised, it prioritised social identity, language, and authority above economic determinism. Marxism is criticised by postmodernists for its reliance on grand narratives, or the idea that history follows a linear course driven by class warfare. Jean-François Lyotard, who opposed metanarratives, said postmodern society had several conflicting discourses. Michel Foucault believed that Marxism should have focused on language, institutions, and knowledge systems rather than economic structures.

Postmodernism retained Marxist concepts. Fredric Jameson and David Harvey argue that postmodernism is a cultural response to late capitalism, when consumerism dominates all aspects of life, including culture and identity. Postmodernists, unlike Marxists, see ideology as a decentralized process shaped by speech rather than a false consciousness imposed by ruling elites. These similarities don't ease tensions. Postmodernists believe ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation issues shape identities more than economic structures. Marxists counter that postmodernism's political relativism and rejection of universal principles hinder systemic transformation. Postmodernism builds on Marxist critiques but challenges Marxism's structural theory of history and power.

Postmodernism, Feminism, and the Concept of the "Real Me"

Three distinct schools of thought have emerged within postmodernism in recent years. For others, postmodernism doesn't address anything that modernism doesn't cover, and they continue to adhere to modernist principles in their political analysis and intellectual pursuits. This group opposes the others who display what is seen as the excesses of postmodernism from this 'reasonable' vantage point (Holbrook, 2018). "What Butler (1992) terms a slur of infantilism or, at the very least, teenage aberration" greatly damages the postmodernists' image, even when we allow for the unavoidable negative stereotyping in a debate of this intensity. The work of the post-colonialists, which may be found on the third path, combines a persistent critique of modernity with an understanding of what Gilroy (1993) terms "the countercultures of modernity" (by way of Bauman, for example). The writers use postmodern narratives as a jumping-off point to further criticize modernity's exclusive areas and locales.

People Who Are Important to Cultural Theory

A Modernist Approach to Susan Sontag's Style

Who is Susan Sontag? According to contemporary cultural critics and feminists, we should scrutinize book covers meticulously in search of a claimed connection between the author and the issue. That is exactly what Sontag does in her renowned essay "Under the Sign of Saturn" on Walter Benjamin; she compares a picture of Benjamin when he is young with one of him when he is elderly, overweight, and exhausted. "The downward look through his glasses the soft daydreamer's gaze of the myopic" (1983) is how the first picture portrays Benjamin, while "the look is opaque, or just more inward: he could be thinking or listening" (1983) says it all.

The American critic Sontag has traditionally avoided writing about England in favor of Europe, making her a mysterious figure in the British intellectual community. With all due respect, she is cited. The literary elite holds her in high esteem, praising her genius. She almost goes overboard with her brilliance. The writers and artists she mentions are mostly unknown in the UK, but they are famous in France and Germany. Therefore, her intended audience is more likely to consist of UK academics than of people from other nations. One thing that sets Sontag apart as an American cultural critic is how little consideration she devotes to American art. Also, the pervasive American pop culture has not been her primary emphasis (McRobbie, 2019).

Sontag had great success in the realm of high modernism. She has written extensively on several aspects of popular culture, including her groundbreaking work on the connotations of sickness. She is included in the discipline of discursive analysis with other notable authors such as Walter Benjamin from the 1930s and more modern philosophers like Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, and Michel Foucault.

Susan Sontag's "new sensibility" and rejection of modernism shaped postmodern cultural philosophy. With its rejection of aesthetic hierarchy, her *Against Interpretation* (1966) helped the postmodern movement embrace pluralism, pastiche, and intertextuality. Sontag's work blurred "high" and "low" culture by arguing that art should be appreciated for its sensory and emotional impact rather than academic analysis. This approach aligns with postmodernism's rejection of grand narratives and celebration of multi-meaning details. *Notes on "Camp"* (1964) shows Sontag's transition from modernist critique to postmodern philosophy and her interest in camp aesthetics. Sontag predicted postmodern themes like hyperreality, simulation, and media spectacle via irony, artificiality, and exaggeration. Even though she never associated with postmodernism, her concentration on surface aesthetics and cultural hybridity influenced Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson. Sontag links modernist intellectualism and postmodern cultural theory by tracking aesthetic critique's response to changing social and creative settings. Besides criticising modernism and American culture, Susan Sontag participated in postmodern discussions of representation, aesthetics, and media theory. Her critique of modernist interpretations in *Against Interpretation* (1966) influenced postmodernism's emphasis on disintegration, plurality, and surface aesthetics. The hunt for hidden meaning in art may impair its sensory value, she agreed with postmodernists who preferred dynamic, shifting interpretations over Marxist determinism. Sontag's visual culture and media works, notably *On Photography* (1977), influenced postmodern representation and simulation arguments. She studied how images filter reality to predict Baudrillard's hyperreality, in which pictures become self-referential simulations. In *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), she contemplates violence, cruelty, and conflict, following postmodern

critiques of media-driven narratives that aim to understand how images affect political consciousness. Sontag linked modernist critique to postmodern discourse, albeit she did not fully embrace it. Her perspectives on aesthetics, media, and cultural reception deepen current discussions about representation and meaning in our fragmented and media-saturated world.

The Passagework and Walter Benjamin's Position in Cultural Studies in the Field of Literature

Walter Benjamin swiftly became a contentious figure in cultural studies with the English publication of his two seminal 1930s writings, "The Artist as Producer" (Benjamin, 1970a) and "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (Benjamin, 1970b). Their contributions were tremendously important to the development of cultural politics and Marxist ideas about art.

Although Benjamin's writings were well-received in the 1970s, particularly among the small cultural studies community in Birmingham, this acclaim did not last long, as stated in his 1972 Working Papers in Cultural Studies. Material from Benjamin's earlier writings was either too literary or too esoteric to be of much use to industries like cinema and television, which were developing at a quick speed, in contrast to Althusser's literature, which provided a more pragmatic collection of concepts, particularly ideology. Hegemony and Gramsci's works had a renaissance a few years down the road. Terry Eagleton (1981), a Marxist literary critic, was tasked with rehabilitating Benjamin as a great Marxist thinker by exploring more into his more inaccessible works, notwithstanding the Messianic undertones in Benjamin's work (Pavlov, 2019). Except for Eagleton's efforts, most of Benjamin's research has taken place in Germany and the US. Unless you include Dick Hebdige (1979, 1988) and Iain Chambers (1985a, 1985b), who have persistently searched out Walter Benjamin's lesser-known works for their strikingly obvious and even beautiful insights, most cultural studies researchers in the 1980s paid little attention to Benjamin. The intellectual melancholy and despair that Benjamin felt about the world's destiny may have been recognized and shared by these thinkers as well.

The three groundbreaking essays written by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and published in Yale French Studies (henceforth referred to as YFS) and Social Text (henceforth ST) are far more well-known in the United States among literary scholars and feminists than they are in Britain.¹ Many works by Lacan, Derrida, and others have been introduced to the American audience through YFS, a literary periodical. Additionally, it has served as a platform for the growing body of structuralist and poststructuralist critique in the United States. American audiences have been greatly introduced to Foucault and his critics through Social Text, which covers a broad range of political and theoretical topics. In addition to this, ST has consistently participated in discussions on cinema, popular culture, imperialism, racism, and Marxism, making valuable contributions to these discussions by authors such as Edward Said and Fredric Jameson (Rokhila Bafoeva, 2024).

Postmodernity, Youth, and the New Media

The Role of the Rag Market in the Acquisition of Second-Hand Dresses

Understanding "retro-style" has recently been the subject of multiple attempts. Their common denominator is the seemingly random and diverse trend that began to gain momentum in the 1980s: the search for essential garment pieces from the past.

Most postwar youth subcultures have used discarded garments from rag markets and jumble sales as their foundation for fashion. A sort of vox pop of street style emerged in the early 1980s at ID

magazine, when the publication would stop young people and ask them to describe their outfits, including where they bought them and how much they cost. This became a standard element of fashion magazines after that, as many other weekly and monthly publications followed suit. However, in the more scholarly domain of cultural analysis, the act of purchasing and the procedures of searching and selecting are still largely unexplored (Shen and Wang, 2024).

Shut Up and Dance: The Culture of Young People and the Shifting Boundaries of Femininity

It is crucial to continue asking how young people, regardless of gender, understand and express themselves in their social settings. The kids of today nevertheless have a special symbolic importance for society at large. From the extensive and complex terrain of social change in Britain, beginning with the Thatcher period and continuing forward, I will choose a few significant instances in the field of youth culture and young mass media to discuss in this part. These instances demonstrate that individuals are taking part in transformation, which points to the emergence of new gender roles and tells us a lot about our modern culture (Anon, 2024). Postmodernism has changed how young people see gender roles in popular culture by supporting performative self-expression above established gender standards. The decrease of masculinity and femininity in youthful subcultures, androgynous attire, and the transgender movement in popular culture are all effects of this. David Bowie, Annie Lennox, and Boy George challenged gender norms with their public personas, music, and dress in the late 1970s and 1980s punk and new wave movements. The DIY fashion trend, inspired by rag-market secondhand clothes, allowed a new generation of young people to defy gender stereotypes and embrace hybrid identities. Judith Butler's gender performativity theory supports this idea. Gender is a result of socially and culturally created performances. In the 1990s rave and club scenes, young people could openly explore gender fluidity and mix styles from previous periods to develop new identities. In the 2000s, social media and internet platforms provided young people a say in constructing their gendered identities across borders, accelerating these transformations. This helped postmodernists emphasize young culture's multiplicity and self-construction.

Towards A Cultural Sociology of Youth: An Examination of Diverse, Youth-Related Subjects

Before delving further into the intersection of cultural studies and sociology as it pertains to youth, we will review and revise previous work. Only then will we move on to a more comprehensive examination of sexuality and ethnicity? Finally, we will make the case for a fresh meeting place between sociology and cultural studies, where the two fields may share knowledge and put an end to the all-too-common practice of drawing clear boundaries between them. Cultural studies has come under fire from sociologists who feel it lacks rigorous methodology and is too focused on texts and interpretations.

Sociology, according to culture studies, doesn't care about problems that don't fall under the 1970s Marxist and feminist theoretical framework (Corinne Reichert, 2021). Cultural studies take great pride in its wild manner, in stark contrast to sociology's masochistic posture. This dispute is currently not making headlines. Consequently, resentment has been building up, showing up as critical comments and footnotes and even exploding into full-on battles from time to time.

Cultural studies and sociology, with diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, have historically disagreed. Sociology uses empirical research, statistical analysis, and structural theories to identify social patterns and causal links. Large-scale social systems are examined using

quantitative methods including surveys, demographic studies, and ethnographic research. Data is interpreted using positivism, Marxism, or functionalist frameworks. Sociology can track wealth disparities, social mobility, and institutional power with this methodological rigour. Cultural studies, an interdisciplinary response to sociology's inflexibility, emphasised discourse theory, textual interpretation, and qualitative investigation. Cultural studies, influenced by poststructuralist and postmodernist philosophers like Michel Foucault and Stuart Hall, examines the social production, contestation, and circulation of meaning through media, literature, and everyday cultural practices. Cultural studies uses semiotics, ethnography, and ideological critique to study representation, subjectivity, and identity, unlike sociology, which uses statistical models. This technique gap has led to competing criticisms. Sociologists say cultural studies is too subjective and lacks empirical rigour, while cultural theorists say sociology is too deterministic and fails to account for meaning and identity's dynamic and constructed nature. Sociology's analytical depth and cultural studies' representation and discourse expertise may be used to investigate current social transitions, notably in youth culture, gender identity, and media impact. Cultural and social interactions may be better understood if the two fields can set aside their differences and collaborate.

The Moral Panic that Has Arisen in This Age of Mass Media in The Modern Era

It has degenerated into a standard response a cliched, overused, and oftentimes ridiculous bit of rhetoric rather than an original, immediate step to take. Similarly, journalists often take part in media moral panics, which they either quickly become tired of or, in some cases, even blame themselves for. About the problem of "new juvenile crime," Sue Cameron asks on BBC2's News Night, "Is it not the media itself that has helped to create this phenomenon?" Domestic, societal, and current events are constructed every day based on the 'moral panic,' according to one theory. However, the previous way of thinking oversimplified these everyday moral panics. Hotly discussed as well are these. Political tensions have escalated to a boiling point due to the moral panic (Baca, 2023). The right continues to rely on moral panic to garner support, even as pressure organizations have transformed into the campaigning arms of the opposing side. When a moral panic breaks out, everyone starts debating it. The same pressure organizations that were so effective in fighting the new right policies under Thatcher's leadership are now fiercely defending the folk villains they helped create. Postmodernism challenges the concept that everyone respond to immorality in the same manner, changing moral panic. Traditional moral panic theories like Stanley Cohen (1972) and Stuart Hall (1978) emphasize the importance of media and authority people in instilling public fear about social issues, which promotes dominant ideologies. Postmodernism challenges the truth, power, and social norms that underpin moral panics. Moral panics are narrative discourses that are changeable, contested, and debated, according to postmodern theory. Media-driven moral panics blur the lines between real and virtual hazards, according to Jean Baudrillard's hyperreality thesis. Media cycles that emphasize themselves rather than facts might exacerbate fears about youth subcultures, video games, and online radicalism. Postmodernism also doubts that a "moral community" can solve moral breaches alone. The article discusses pluralism and resistance, showing how marginalized groups oppose moral panic narratives. Mass media domination has given way to digital, interactive societies, challenging old moral panics. Postmodernism sees moral panic as a battleground between ideas, not a societal reaction.

CONCLUSION

All in all, postmodernism in association with popular culture shows that there exists a certain social interaction between cultural theory, media policies, and changes. McRobbie's work thus emphasizes the progressive character of postmodernism, explaining how it can turn into a means of social and political change, which encourages differences and radical thinking. The analysis of moral panics in connection with postmodern mass media demonstrates how moral panics have shifted from genuine social alarms to regular and often sensational events. This is an indication of the fact that the media is both a producer of these panics and a commentator or observer, which means, in effect, that the interplay between people's fears and politics is not as straightforward as one might imagine. Since moral panic can be viewed as a political construct it is indicative of the current tendencies in which societies are becoming increasingly polarized and political battles are being waged through rival definitions of threats. In sum, the postmodern culture, representation, imagery, as well as the interfaces of/with popular culture and media practices, present an ever-evolving picture of cultural studies. This dynamic field obliges researchers and professionals to develop new approaches, inquire into the existing presumptions, and reflect on the postmodern reality. It is in this sense that cultural studies have to remain 'un-disciplined' and willing to constantly adapt in terms of the ideas it wants to entertain as well as the social and political environments within which it operates.

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