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A complete framework for reviewing the literature of all examination areas can be found by referencing to a Venn diagram (see Appendix A—figure 1, on page 7) of three intersecting circles, which is derived from the previous discussions on formulating my doctoral dissertation topic.

Comp Area 2: Youth culture studies: lifestyles, identities and boundaries

The possible contribution of contemporary youth culture debates and issues to a globalized consumer society with multi-ethnic youth cultures is explored in this examination area. It consists of two main parts. First, a theoretical review is presented of four major discourses in youth culture and subculture studies. The second part reflects on two major concepts for youth consumption analysis, namely lifestyle and identity, in the context of a 'borderless world' — as the Japanese guru of business strategy, Kenichi Ohmae (1995) named it.

Part1:

'Youth' as a concept has gathered a wide range of meanings and contradictory cultural forms. Also, as Henry Giroux (1996) puts it, youth also represents "an inescapable intersection of the personal, social, political and pedagogical". Its complexity or its multiple meanings are constructed over time.

Or thinking from the negative side, youth is a slippery concept that "the only boundaries which define the teenagers years are boundaries of exclusion which define what young people are not, cannot do or cannot be" (James 1986).

In the first part of this comprehensive examination I will examine the "classics" of youth culture and subculture studies in the West, discussing their relevance in contemporary situation. There are several important themes or discourses on youth in the literature (mainly American and British studies); namely:

- The law and order discourse-- subculture as delinquency; a socio-ecological reading of youth activities or 'youth-as-trouble' paradigm (see William Foot Whyte 1955; Stanley Cohen 1987; Brake 1985)
- A distinct social category discourse or a structural-functionalist discourse—adolescence as a transition or as a generation which is a social category by itself ; a socio-psychological reading (with a biological root) (see Talcott Parsons 1951)
- Market segment discourse— teenager as consumer of products, services and cultures (either in a sense of mass culture theory or from a popular culture theorist perspective) in the affluent society; a cultural and economic reading or 'youth-as-fun' paradigm. (see Frith 1981; Doherty 1988)
- Ritualizing resistance discourse—youth as the key agents of subversion or reproduction of social relations or subcultures as pockets of symbolic resistance; a political reading. (see Hall & Jefferson 1967; Hebdige 1979, 1988; Willis 1990)

With this broad distinction of discourses established, I would like to pay more attention on the latter theme, i.e. youth subcultural styles. For the Chicago School, 'subculture' is recognized as an analytical tool in exploring the issues of deviance, which could be a product of social labeling (Becker, 1963). But in the hands of the CCCS researchers, 'subculture' is no longer just a lens used for examining youth gangs. Their emphasis has moved towards style-based youth cultures. In this sub-area, I hope to trace the development of this (so-called new) subcultural theory and its criticisms.

Part 2: *In this part my focus is on the dynamic interplay between youth and different forms of globalizing leisure and consumption. In other words, this section concerns about youth's relations with the global marketplace.*

At any time certain discourses will become dominant and their versions of youth will assume greater significance to certain people. Possibly, as a common saying among journalists, the year 1989 with its worldwide political upheaval, it marks a shift of phase on a global scale. And then in the early 1990s, there was a famous claim:

'The time is right; the world has changed. There are global media now, like MTV. And there is a global teenager. The same kid you see at the Ginza in Tokyo is in Piccadilly Square [sic; should be Piccadilly Circus] in London, in Pushkin Square, at Notre Dame',
---Peter Sealeay, Director of Global Marketing for Coca-Cola.

"Planet teen" or "global teenager" or "global youth" was originally evolved only as a business concept for some transnational corporations selling goods. Yet as capitalist consumer markets have spread youth cultural styles worldwide, a global youth culture or global popular culture is gradually forming. However, it is not necessarily American or British youth culture which is dominating. For example, using popular music as an illustration, Laba (1996) points out, "while the marketing strategies of planet teen producing a uniform and borderless market for a myriad of image/ style products, a homogeneity of cultural meanings is not the consequence."

With the premise of international marketing, the discourse of "youths as consumers who know no borders" should not be underestimated. For young people growing up in the 1980s and the 1990s, there is evidence to show that class (especially in the case of Britain) has weakened as predictor of their lifestyles and social identities (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Indeed, most young people who have access to the 'necessary' resources are able to participate in youth cultures that crosscut class boundaries or cultural boundaries. Or put it in other words, in late (or post-) modernity, while traditional sources of social differentiation based on class divisions and geographical communities have been weakened, young people are seen as attempting to find identity and fulfillment by lifestyles. The process of globalization is influential here as it seems to expand the choices and opportunities open to young people. At the same time, the global social change becomes increasingly difficult for young people to judge who they are.

In the research oriented towards "youth in a changing world", the concept of lifestyle is central (Bo Reimer, 1995; Steven Miles 2000). The notion of youth lifestyles, as Miles (2000) argues, has the potential to provide a new dimension to the sociology of youth. Yet "youth lifestyles cannot be discussed without reference to the construction of youth identities" (p.147). To put this another way, young people's lifestyles (the issue of exploiting flexibility) are concerned with identities (negotiations of instability or searching for the 'continuity of change' in a rapid changing environment) (p.158).

In this exam sub-area, I propose to address questions concerning how lifestyles do play an important role in young people's lives in the context of globalizing world. As more and more young people are living in an era in which consumerism is a way of life, a discussion of consumer identities is also suitable. My reflection is that 'youth' (no matter as a discourse or a category) is not what it used to be, and the youth culture studies in the global age should adapt to address this.

Examples of suggested question:

1. What are the key elements of studying "youth"? Offer a review of the key texts of youth culture(s) and provide an analysis of their relevance to the contemporary era? How the concept "subculture" has been theorized in the Western "classic" studies of youth? Briefly outline a critique of the subcultural theory.
2. Someone claimed that "an ever more media-pervaded reality is one of the indications of a postmodern condition." Are then young people's lifestyles postmodern? Do young people cross the border between high and low culture and do they blend the individual in with the social? In your view, what is the meaning of "postmodern youth"?
3. "Lifestyle" study has become a central theoretical model in social science research on the nature of consumption and its role in the formation of identity. Do you agree that lifestyle theory is a better alternative to subcultural theory to interpret the cultural sensibilities and activities of contemporary youth?
4. The limitations of an exclusively Anglo-US focus for youth culture studies were first pointed out by a Canadian scholar Michael Brake (1985) in a comparative study. Write a short essay that examines youth cultures either from a cross-cultural perspective or in an international context. In your discussion, briefly note the interplay of local and global forces in shaping youth cultures (of non- Anglo-US regions) around commodities or cultural products manufactured and marketed by American or British culture industries.

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Framework of Comps

Comp 1-- "consumerism and global marketing" (Debates on consumer culture is the theoretical foundation of comp 1)

Comp 2 --"youth lifestyles and identities" (Debates on youth culture is the theoretical foundation of comp 2)

Comp 3-- "cross-cultural issues and Chinese consumption" (Issues on comparative methodology, Chinese values and cultural practices are the theoretical foundation of comp 3)

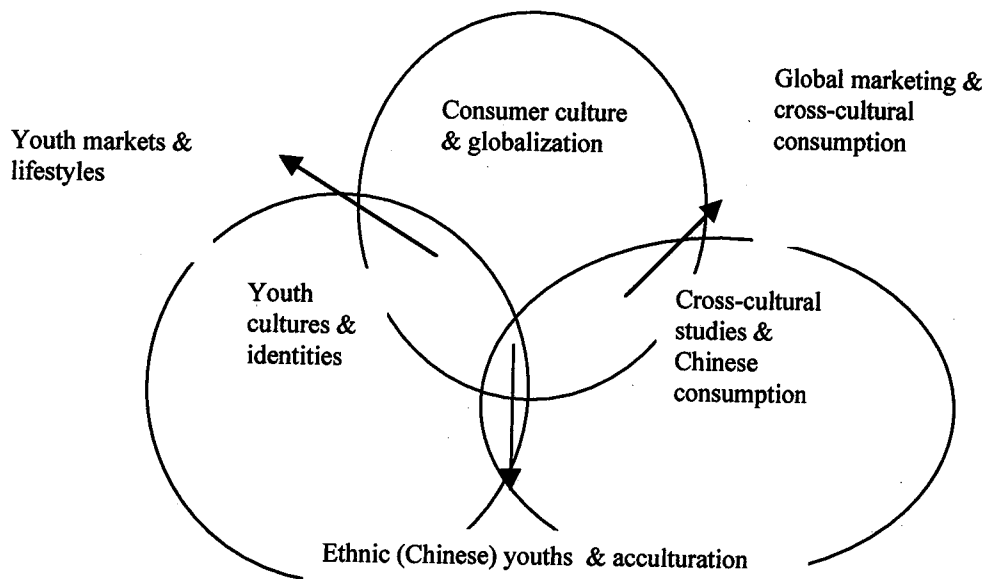


Fig.1 Venn diagram guide to the literature review