

SUBCULTURAL STYLE SERIES



BODY STYLE

Theresa M. Winge

Body Style

Subcultural Style series

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The *Subcultural Style* series comprises short, accessible books that each focus on a specific subcultural group and their fashion. Each book in the series seeks to define a specific subculture and its quest to exist on the fringes of mainstream culture, which is most visibly expressed within a subculture's chosen fashions and styles. The books are written primarily for students of fashion and dress but will also be of interest to those studying cultural studies, sociology, and popular culture. Each title will draw upon a range of international examples and will be well-illustrated. Titles in the series include: *Punk Style*, *Queer Style*, *Fetish Style* and *Body Style*.

Body Style

Therèsa M. Winge



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Preface

Body Style is the first book in the Subcultural Style series. Future books in the series will look at Punk Style, Goth Style, Fetish Style, Queer Style, and Rap and Hip Hop Style.

Therèsa Winge's pioneering book reveals the subcultural body as a site for understanding subcultural identity, resistance, agency, and fashion. Analyzed, theorized, politicized, and sensationalized, the subcultural body functions as a framework on which a sense of self and a subcultural identity is built. *Body Style* is the result of over twelve years of research with urban subcultures from North America, Europe, and Australia, such as Urban Tribals, Modern Primitives, Punks, Cybers, and Industrials.

As a result of intersections between the subcultural body and dress, the subcultural body has been understood, misunderstood, co-opted, and consumed by the masses. Drawing on specific subcultural examples and interviews with subculture members, *Body Style* explores the subcultural body and its style within the global culture.

Each book in the Subcultural Style series seeks to define specific subcultures and their quest to exist on the fringes of mainstream culture, which is most visibly expressed within a subculture's chosen fashion and styles. The books provide a solid opportunity to reach an academic audience in dress and fashion eager to learn more about subcultures and subcultural fashion.

Professor Steve Redhead
(University of Brighton),
series editor

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Introduction to Subcultural Body Style

The body is a house of many windows: there we all sit, showing ourselves and crying on the passers-by to come and love us.

—Robert Louis Stevenson, “Truth of Intercourse,” *Viginibus Puerisque and Other Papers, Memories and Portraits*, 1879/2004

The human body exists as an analyzed, theorized, politicized, and sensationalized entity, concurrently functioning as a medium for physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual transformation. Every human being has *body style*; that is, the body’s appearance reflects individual identity, politics, ideology, and lifestyle.

The subcultural body, however, often amplifies and accentuates body style. When displayed, the subcultural body is a visual celebration of the body: its modifications and supplements; its movements and performances; and its explorations and rituals. In this way, the body becomes a representation of a subculture’s visual and material culture and ideology. The subcultural body style encompasses more than just the physical body of a subculture member (dress, adornment, exterior, presentation, etc.), extending the ways the subcultural body is presented, displayed, disguised, and celebrated inside and outside the subculture.

What is subcultural body style? What body modifications and/or supplements signify or qualify as subcultural? Is it a body that has physical modifications, such as a facial tattoo, septum piercing, or green hair? Is it a body donned with a corset, baseball cap, or leather jacket? What piercing loci are subcultural? How many and what kind of body modifications are necessary to create a subcultural body?

The subcultural body is highly time-sensitive and complex in its existence. What was once considered a subcultural body style over time becomes the societal norm instead of the exception. For example, flat-ironed long hair for women in the 1960s was considered subcultural, while in the twenty-first century the usage of hair-straightening devices and chemicals is considered fashionable. When does a subcultural body style cease to exist as subcultural? The body that qualifies as a subcultural body is highly dependent on the perception of what a subculture is defined as within a specific cultural and social context, often in contrast to norms and ideals.

Toward a Working Definition of “Subculture”

After World War II, subcultures surfaced with prominence in urban spaces within Western culture (Thompson 1998). Scholars speculate that these subcultures formed because of shared issues and common needs that set them apart from mainstream culture and society (Cohen 1955). Over time, the term “subculture” gained negative connotations for four primary reasons. First, the very term “subculture” has a prefix of “sub,” which suggests something lower or below. Second, subculture members often come from socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds that are overgeneralized and misunderstood by mainstream culture. Third, subcultures often reject their parent culture. In turn, the parent culture quickly associates emerging societal issues with the next generation, often faulting subcultural ideologies as the source of unrest. Fourth, and often influenced by the previous three reasons, the media interprets and presents subcultures as alienated, subordinate, and/or alternative, suggesting that subculture members reject mainstream mores, conventions, and dress in order to achieve *contentious* objectives. Consequently, the media influences the interpretations and representations of the term “subculture” within mainstream society. In fact, the media frequently name emerging subcultures with derogatory or inaccurate labels. In turn, subculture members often embrace the name or label as a subcultural moniker.

The media creates a feedback loop centering on the appearance and style of the subcultural body. The loop perpetuates negative connotations and stereotypes about subcultures when projections of subcultural appearance are linked with certain activities. The media is selective to choose deviant activities, such as crime, disobedience, and civil disturbance, that best suit its agenda. Drawing attention to certain elements of the individual that deviate from normative dress, the media has the power to establish the wearer’s possible involvement in questionable activities. Kenneth Thompson explores in *Moral Panics* (1998) the role of the media in drawing attention to any group different from the more homogenous mainstream, and further identifying these groups with the hyperbolic and multilayered terms “moral panics” and “deviant,” and thus warranting the label of “subculture.”

The news and other nonfiction media make the linkages between subcultural activities and specific body styles for their audiences. Accordingly, fiction writers and screenwriters utilize these overgeneralized and stereotyped items of dress for their characters and storylines, which nonverbally communicate subcultural identity (often with negative and suspicious overtones). Subcultural body style, for example, is referenced in television shows (e.g., *Freaks and Geeks*, *Glee*, *Skins*, and *The Big Bang Theory*) and films (e.g., *Animal House* [1978]; *The Breakfast Club* [1985]; *Hairspray* [1988]; *House Party* [1990]; and *Across the Universe* [2007]). Consider movie directors John Hughes and John Waters, who established successful careers on exploiting stereotypical subcultural body and dress. These directors were successful not only because of their portrayals of diverse subculture members, but also in

revealing the three-dimensional qualities of their characters that defied expectations of their subcultural appearances.

In John Hughes's movie *The Breakfast Club*, consider the presentation of five teenagers during a Saturday afternoon detention. Each character portrays a subcultural stereotype found in a North American high school in the 1980s: nerd, jock, freak, popular, and outcast. The viewer assumes they know a great deal about each character based on his or her dress, but throughout the movie the diverse and complicated qualities of the characters are further revealed. As a result, an informative letter, written by the character Brian to the detention monitor, is read to the audience at the end of the movie:

Dear Mr. Vernon:

We accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday in detention for whatever it was we did wrong. What we did was wrong. But we think you're crazy to make us write an essay telling you who we think we are. What do you care? You see us as you want to see us. In the simplest terms, the most convenient definitions. But what we found out is that each one of us is a brain, an athlete, a basket case, a princess, and a criminal. Does that answer your question?

Sincerely Yours, *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes 1985)

Similarly, John Waters's film *Hairspray* (1988) presents a campy tale of urban youth who participate in a weekly televised dance show in racially tense 1960s Baltimore. The movie draws on the audiences' familiarity with 1960s cultural and subcultural members and exaggerates their dress for the sake of humor. The movie also addresses controversial topics, such as segregation, sex, body size, and popularity. Throughout the film, youth subcultures infiltrate and reject the parent culture causing suspicion, fights, and rebellion; Waters exaggerates these conflicts through the chosen body styles and dress of the parents and youth.

Recapping, nonfictional and fictional media often interprets the term "subculture" as pejorative and negative, which cultivates similar views in the general public. This combined with linguistic bias of the prefix "sub" aids the interpretation that a group is "less important than" or "below" mainstream culture. The term "subculture" promotes generalizations and stereotypes about the described groups, which are often seen as the *Other*,¹ leading to misunderstandings, discrimination, and exploitation. Furthermore, a label such as "subculture" is often perceived as a biased way of recognizing a portion of human diversity. This is a hindrance in understanding both the profound similarities and differences in all human beings (Dilger 2003).

History of the Term "Subculture"

Moreover, the term "subculture" is rarely defined and used correctly in the media and academia (see Yinger 1960). American anthropologist Ralph Linton first used

the term in 1936 in relation to a group as a subset of a culture, and stated in *The Study of Man*:

While ethnologists have been accustomed to speak of tribes and nationalities as though they were the primary culture-bearing units, the total culture of a society of this type is really an aggregate of sub-cultures. (Linton 1936, 275)

Still, the more contemporary connotations surrounding the term “subculture” stem from the research of Milton M. Gordon, a cultural studies scholar. He discusses in “The Concept of the Sub-Culture and Its Application” that subculture is a subdivision

of a national culture, composed of factorable social situations such as class status, ethnic background, regional and rural or urban residence, and religious affiliation, but forming in their combination a functioning unity which has an integrated impact on the participating individual. (Gordon 1947/1997, 40–41)

Early subcultural scholars speculated that subcultures formed with deviant, delinquent, and/or disenfranchised individuals, based on their common problems and goals (Becker 1963/1973; Cohen 1955; Hebdige 1979; Irwin 1970). Much of this subcultural research resulted from direct and indirect studies being conducted at the Chicago School and the Birmingham University’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). While the CCCS received only mild criticism, both institutions were critiqued for oversimplifications and generalizations disseminated about subcultures from early research (Edgar and Sedgwick 1999; Hodkinson 2002).

In *The Subcultures Reader*, Sarah Thornton identifies the two ways the negative connotations reflect the label of “subculture”:

First, the groups studied as subcultures are often positioned by themselves and/or others as deviant and debased. [. . .] Second, social groups labeled as subcultures have often been perceived as lower down the social ladder due to social differences of class, race, ethnicity, and age. (Thornton 1997, 4)

In *Subculture of Violence*, Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracutti contend that the prefix “sub” refers only to a subcategory of mainstream culture, which should not necessarily indicate that a subculture is deviant or delinquent (Wolfgang and Ferracutti 1967, 95). Wolfgang and Ferracutti also assert that sociologists, anthropologists, cultural studies theorists, and similar academics often use the label “subculture” without a value judgment. They, however, support the assertion that popular media promotes the negative connotations attached to groups labeled as subcultures (Wolfgang and Ferracutti 1967, 97–98).

The term “subculture” contains understood and value-laden meanings that are not always useful to understanding the described group(s). Still, I chose to use “subculture” over other possible terms, such as “counter culture” or “micro culture,” because some subcultures are not rebelling or contrary to the dominant, mainstream, or *parent* culture, and some subcultures are not small in numbers. The following scholars informed my research about subcultural groups and assisted in my working definition of the term “subculture,” which attempts to describe in a broad sense the groups and individuals within my subcultural dress research. In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* Dick Hebdige informs my research by defining a subculture as “a subordinate group, which has expressive forms and rituals, which denounce public order” (Hebdige 1979, 2–3). Also useful to this study, Hebdige states that the meaning of subculture is always in dispute because the term applies to so many different groups recognized solely by their appearances (Hebdige 1979, 3). Sarah Thornton asserts that “subcultures [. . .] have come to designate social groups, perceived to deviate from the normative ideals of adult communities” (Thornton 1997, 2).

Furthermore, in *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style* David Muggleton questions the authenticity regarding subcultural membership and identity, suggesting that authentication may be part of the subculture’s visual culture and inherent to the observer’s perspective. Muggleton argues subculture members appear more homogenous inside the subcultural group, but, at the same time, are differentiated from the surrounding (dominant or mainstream) culture (Muggleton 2000, 20–22). Perhaps, most influential to my development of a working definition of “subculture” was *Profane Culture* by Paul Willis (1978), which captures and documents the chaotic and unexpected natures of subcultural research and suggests that the researcher must be flexible (see also Muggleton 2000). Therefore, my research attempts to critically examine the continuous flexibility needed to cope with unpredictable situations and behaviors within subcultures and between insiders and outsiders.

I developed a working definition of “subculture” that captures individuals who occupy multiple roles and identities outside of mainstream society, common in Western culture. For my research I define *subculture* as:

a group smaller in population than mainstream culture as a whole, and who consciously set themselves apart from the mainstream society with any combination of the following: dress; ideology; music; language; technology; geography; and/or activities.²

I acknowledge that this definition is broad. My research, however, with subculture members suggests that individuals frequently belong to more than one subculture simultaneously or over their lifetime. Furthermore, as is the case in North America, many of the individuals whom I interviewed were reluctant to be labeled as belonging to one specific group or another, but accepted the “subculture” moniker for their

rejection of mainstream lifestyles, fashions, ideologies, and homogeny. Accordingly, I also draw on the postmodern assertion that individuals have fragmented existences and are resistant to being defined as one thing and not another, suggesting alienation (Appignanesi and Bennington 1989; Lyotard 1984). Thus, my definition allows for a vast array of groups to be considered as subcultures; it also accounts for individual members from one group to freely move into other groups, and even have memberships existing in multiple groups at the same time. This definition is particularly useful in subcultural dress research where I have found examples of members whose dress exhibits more than one group membership at one time.

Dress, Body Modification, and the Subcultural Body Style

The phenomenon of the subcultural body may be discussed and better understood within the context of Joanne B. Eicher's concept of *dress*:

A system of nonverbal communication that enhances human beings' interaction as they move in space and time. As a coded sensory system, dressing the body occurs when human beings modify their bodies visually or through other sensory measures by manipulating color, texture, scent, sounds, and taste or by supplementing their bodies with articles of clothing and accessories, and jewelry. (Eicher 2000, 422)

Body supplements are items of dress that attach to, adhere to, and/or insert into the body, and may be substantial additions for some body modifications, such as jewelry inserted into a piercing hole, or bone or metal wrapped around dreadlocks; body modifications include tattoos and piercings, and modifications can extend the change or transformation of the hair, skin, nails, muscular system, teeth, eyes, and/or breath, all which can be classified as a form of dress (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992).³ In this study, I also rely on Rufus C. Camphausen's explanation of body modification as a "term for a variety of techniques aimed at changing one or more parts of the body from the natural state into a consciously designed state" (Camphausen 1997, 110).

Accordingly, "[d]ress lies at the margins of the body and marks the boundary between self and other, individual and society" (Entwistle 2001, 37), and in these margins there is space to understand the subcultural body and its complexities. This space is ever changing, in that the boundaries of the subcultural body are continuously in flux, as are most things subcultural. The subcultural body style is a complex visual amalgamation of dress elements. Consider the hairstyle examples presented at the beginning of this chapter; hairstyles worn by subculture members often in time return to become fashionable styles. Both inside and outside the subculture the body is assigned labels in order to differentiate, categorize, research, discuss, and even artificially limit subcultural members.

For my research, I sought contemporary and noteworthy examples in Western culture of the subcultural body since World War II that illuminate the varied and



Image 1 The subcultural body style is a complex visual amalgamation of dress elements, which can sometimes be difficult to decipher, yet at other times the message is very clear. (Photo: Thèrsa M. Winge, unpublished research image)

diverse styles associated with recognized, celebrated, and lesser-known subcultures. I primarily draw on examples from North America and Europe, but recognize the global influences and culture in which subcultural body styles are conceived, formed, worn, and known. I also include subcultural celebrities, such as body modification performers The Enigma, The Lizardman, and Fakir Musafar. These celebrities are known for their body modifications and distinctive dress within public performances, and illustrate the new role of the subcultural body, challenging and redefining previous subcultural labels and roles of “folk devils” and “moral panics” portrayed within the media (see Thompson 1998).

I examine the subcultural body for major themes, primarily focusing on the modified body. I reveal the subcultural body as a site for understanding the unique context of subcultural identity, resistance, agency, and style. I explore the appearances, styles, practices, purposes, and meanings associated with the subcultural body for visual clues and cues that reinforce the subculture’s ideology and the postmodern experiences. I concentrate on the subcultural body styles within the Urban Tribal movement. This movement includes several distinct subcultures, such as Punks and Modern Primitives, who share body style commonalities but at times conceal their subcultural identities and identifiers in order to disassociate themselves from subcultural labels.

Introduction(s) into Subcultural Research

In 1992 I attended my first Lollapalooza concert in Wisconsin, where I was introduced to the Urban Tribal movement and several of its subcultural members. I was also introduced to the subcultural body in an entirely new way. While the Urban Tribal movement existed as early as the late 1950s with the Modern Primitive subculture, it was not until the early 1990s that this movement truly gained a place of significance within the subcultural and popular media landscape. In 1991 Perry Farrell, lead singer for Jane's Addiction (a North American alternative music band), organized a collection of musical acts—Lollapalooza—that toured North America. In this concert setting, Farrell brought together diverse musical and performance talents outside the “corporate rock” arena (Thompson 1995). In doing so, Farrell exposed concertgoers to music genres ranging from the industrial songs of Nine Inch Nails to the gangsta rap of Ice-T. Farrell also invited “alternative” vendors who sold hemp clothes, independent music, and handmade jewelry; and showcased “alternative” live entertainment, such as the Jim Rose Circus, which was a loud, humorous, and risqué blend of the extravagant sideshow acts inspired by the Barnum & Bailey Circus⁴ and Moulin Rouge.⁵

The Jim Rose Circus performances primarily involved physical acts by individuals who emphasized and displayed styles and feats of the subcultural body for the audience's entertainment. Typical acts included, but were not limited to, the following: the Amazing Mr. Lifo, who covered himself in shaving cream and then lifted heavy weights from his genital piercings; Slug (later known as The Enigma), who swallowed random items—worms, dirt, knives, and swords; and Bebe the Circus Queen, who laid on a bed of nails while heavy weights were placed on her body, or applied a mechanical grinder to her metal chastity belt to shower her body with hot sparks. Most performers of the Jim Rose Circus were heavily tattooed and pierced; their body supplements were often large in size and made of bone or metal.

Later, within my research, I identify these performers as part of the Urban Tribal movement because of their subcultural body modifications and displays. Having a personal history with performers from both vaudeville and sideshows, I appreciated how each performer engaged the audience and modified her or his act according to audience responses.⁶ Performers in the Jim Rose Circus not only waited for the gasps and chuckles, reactions to the raw physical humor, before moving on to the next feat, but they also repeated the feats that did not receive the desired responses. Each performance exceeded the expected limits of the body according to (and despite) the screams of both amazement and abhorrence from the spectators.

Then, in 1995, I was reintroduced to the Urban Tribal movement when I began ethnographic research focusing on subcultures that frequented an industrial music nightclub—Ground Zero in Minneapolis, Minnesota. During the study, I also observed members from the Goth, Vampire, Industrial, Punk/Neo-Punk, Cyber, Fetish, and Skater subcultures. From 1998 to 2000 I collected qualitative data from ob-

servation, participant observation, and informal interviews with various subculture members about their subcultural dress and social groups. I compiled this data as a comparative model of the subculture social systems where dress was a significant identifier and mode of nonverbal communication.

From 2000 to 2004 I continued my research with an in-depth phenomenological study of the body modification experiences of members of Urban Tribal movement, specifically individuals who had significant body modifications and subcultural bodily experiences (often identified as Modern Primitives). In 2003 I conducted nineteen qualitative in-depth interviews with photographic documentation of body modifiers and body modification practitioners.⁷ (The interview quotations provided in this book reference these participants by their own self-selected pseudonyms.) From 2000 to 2009 I collected data from observations and participant observations at subcultural clubs, coffee houses, and body modification establishments in North America. I also attended several body modification performances, and was present for four body modification appointments with individual study participants. In this study, I use hermeneutic thematic analysis, interviews, photographs, and fieldnotes to interpret common themes (Madison 1988; van Manen 1998).

The Urban Tribal Movement and Subcultural Body Style

As a result of my research, I understand the *Urban Tribal movement* as a collective of subcultures and individuals who explore and experience elements of belonging to a “tribe” or subculture within an urban environment, extending beyond the mere physical spaces to the social, cultural, and political contexts. The characteristics and connections these subcultures share within the Urban Tribal movement are frequently bodily experiences and body modifications. The Urban Tribal movement demonstrates interconnectivity of urban subcultures, which was first evident during my research studies in Minneapolis. The Urban Tribal movement also led me to broader research of subcultures and their body styles in North America and Europe. My research revealed how individual subculture members from the Urban Tribal movement share their body modification experiences with each other in social settings and through new media, such as email, blogs, and Internet social networks. Technology-driven cultures within a globalized world create fertile spaces for these diverse individuals and groups to experience and celebrate their unique body styles within the Urban Tribal movement as a global subcultural phenomenon.

I am fortunate to be part of this connectivity, and grateful to all of the people who have spoken openly and privately with me about their subcultural body styles. My research primarily focuses on North American Urban Tribal subculture members, who contribute to the origins of the phenomenon of body modifications and its global presence within today’s subcultural environments. I include global examples where appropriate, with a constant focus on the visual and material cultures of the

Urban Tribal body style. My subcultural research is responsive to and acknowledges the subcultural *lived body*,⁸ in that I include portions of the interviews (indicated with italicized font), images, and observations about the subcultural body within the Urban Tribal movement.

Introducing Subcultural Body Style

This book contributes to the existing scholarship in Youth Studies, Cultural Studies, Subcultural Studies, and Dress Studies. My research offers new insights for understanding the subculture members and style motivations through the lens of dress (Eicher 2000; Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992; Taylor 2002). I completed over twelve years of qualitative research that includes a span of distinct and, at times, interconnected urban subcultures. I examine the subcultural body and dress practices (i.e., body modifications and supplements; see Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992) of urban subcultures and draw on specific subcultural examples and quotations in order to give voice figuratively and literally to the subculture members introduced and discussed. I also supplement these examples with additional subcultural scholarship that contributes to the discussion of the subcultural body, in order to sketch a global illustration with rich and diverse representations of the subcultural body style.

My research focuses on subcultural dress relative to the subcultural body style. This focus provides a crucial understanding of the significance of subcultural dress and related practices for the individual members of the subculture. Specifically, I explore the appearances, style, practices, purposes, and meanings of the subcultural body using qualitative research with an emic perspective, from an insider's point of view.

Subcultural Body Style and Dress Research

Scant research exists on the subcultural body and its style or dress; most of the available subculture information results from insiders documenting their subcultural experiences. The very idea that subcultures have style or fashion is controversial and even disputed, which may be the reason that the term "antifashion" became closely associated with subcultures and their dress. Postmodernists argue the fragmentation of society produces diverse and vast choices in nearly everything, suggesting a wide array of fashion or style choices available to subculture members (Sweetman 2000). In opposition, dress scholars suggest that abundance of variety and choice should not preclude the existence of subcultural (anti)fashions and styles (Lind and Roach-Higgins 1985). Ted Polhemus and Lynn Proctor (1978) claim that the term "antifashion" refers to any type of dress not strictly part of the Western "fashion system." In this way, the term "antifashion" is problematic; its definition is murky and changes as fashion changes.

Many mainstream fashions are inspired by the dress and styles of subcultures, demonstrating that antifashion is fashionable in the correct context. The North American fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger, for example, drew inspiration from the Hip Hop and Rap subcultures to create his sportswear lines in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hilfiger 1997). Anna Sui, another North American fashion designer, continues to draw inspiration from the North American 1960s Hippie subculture to create her many highly stylized romantic bohemian fashion lines (Steele and Solero 2000). And British designers Alexander McQueen and John Galliano drew inspiration from the Goth subculture for couture fashion lines (Steele and Park 2008).

Most of the research about subcultures only briefly addresses their appearance and dress, and then only mentions the latter as a means of visual description and identification that launches another discussion (see Hebdige 1979; Leblanc 1999). The limited research on subculture dress usually focuses on controversial or spectacular appearance and styles, such as the Modern Primitives' extensive body modifications (see Featherstone 2000; Kleese 2000; Strauss 1989; Sweetman 2000; Torgovnick 1990). Still, the above research informs my text with discussions about the subcultural body. Historically, dress scholars rarely focus research and discussions on subcultures (see Eicher, Evenson, and Lutz 2008; Kaiser 1990; Steele 1996). But in recent years, subcultural dress has a greater focus within Dress Studies publications, such as Suzanne Szostak-Pierce's chapter "Even Further: The Power of Subcultural Style in Techno Culture" (1999) about the Raver subculture; Paul Hodkinson's book *Goth: Identity, Style, and Subculture* (2002) about the Goth subculture; David Muggleton's book *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style* (2000) about the British subcultural scene; and select passages in the anthology *The Post-Subcultures Reader* (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003). I expand the latter body of work and address the gaps in the discipline by focusing on the subcultural body and its styles, dress, and fashions.

Summary

The body styles within the Urban Tribal movement are fertile for exploration and analysis, which may provide a deeper understanding of the bodily experiences of the subcultural lived body. In this chapter I explored the definitions of subculture, subcultural body style, and dress. Subcultural body style exists as symbolic representations of the subculture's ideology manifested in its material and visual cultures. I also examined the available research in subcultural dress, as well as the scholars and discussions informing my research into the Urban Tribal movement and its subculture members.

The contemporary subcultural body has a diverse and varied history, which is the focus of chapter 2. Significant scholarship about the body is presented pertinent to subcultural body styles; this scholarship is further explored for evidence and contri-

butions to the discussion of the subcultural body. I review a variety of sources about the subcultural body from subcultural music lyrics to scholarly texts, in order to establish a framework for connections to its history, identity, styles, and future. Chapter 2 concludes with an examination of normative and nonnormative labels associated with the subcultural body.

Since World War II, subcultures have flourished in Western culture. Each subculture carves out a niche at the fringes of mainstream culture, distinguishing itself and creating a subcultural postmodern identity with its unique and often controversial appearance and style. I examine, in chapter 3, the identities associated with and created by the subcultural body, and draw on specific examples from the Modern Primitive subculture within the Urban Tribal movement.

I explore specific body styles and fashions, along with related themes of the subcultural body in chapter 4. Some subcultural appearances and styles are highly dependent on the role of the body, while others have more passive roles by simply displaying associated clothes and hairstyles. The body is actively engaged and presented within bold displays of subcultural identity. I conclude chapter 4 with a discussion about Modern Primitives' subcultural body styles.

As the consumerist cycles spiral in ever-tightening patterns, the subcultural appearance is co-opted, bought, and sold at the local shopping mall more rapidly than ever before. The result is the *body renaissance*,⁹ which is pushing the subcultural body into new realms with consequences perhaps too extreme for mainstream culture to follow. In chapter 5, I present the possible futures for the subcultural body with examples of the body and new technologies in the light of this body renaissance.

Subcultural Body Style History

A woman with artificially enlarged breasts and a face lift, meeting someone who wears a few piercings in lip or eyebrow, may easily judge herself as normal, but her fellow human as deviant.

—Rufus Camphausen, *Return of the Tribal:
A Celebration of Body Adornment*, 1997

Subcultures have been an enduring part of the urban cultural landscape for centuries, and while some dissipate within months and remain undocumented, others persist for decades and attract attention from the media and scholars. The post–World War II subcultures captivated wide attention and thus these groups are better documented, creating rich reservoirs of information about the subcultural body. I focus on the histories of the contemporary subcultures within the Urban Tribal subculture movement because of the extensive secondhand information and ability to gather firsthand information from existing groups.

This chapter establishes the history of the subcultural body style, focusing primarily on the dominant subculture—Modern Primitives—within the Urban Tribal movement. I examine the body and dress in order to confirm the basis from which contemporary discussions about the body stem. This discourse also builds a framework from which I introduce and relate the major sociopolitical and sociocultural debates, issues, and discussions surrounding the subcultural body. I also discuss the body as a component of dress; this information remains pertinent to the discussion of the subcultural body in this chapter and the remainder of the book. I present the history of the subcultural body within urban subcultures since World War II, along with the role that the subcultural body plays both inside and outside subcultures, using the Modern Primitive subculture as an extended example. I position the subcultural body within historical context compiled between academic and subcultural sources. Finally, I conclude this chapter with thoughts about the history of labeling subcultures and the subcultural body as something other than “normative.” To this end, I explore three types of body modifications common to the Urban Tribal subcultures that are also popular within the mainstream society. This is followed by a brief discussion about the resulting labels assigned to subcultures based on the subcultural body.

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