Free essay on the social-conflict approach and counterculture

Sociology, Social Issues

In sociological terms a counterculture is a cultural group or subculture whose values and norms run counter to those of the established mainstream cultural views. It is in short social and cultural patterns that strongly oppose popular mainstream culture (Ballantine and Roberts 2011). Those involved in the process or act of inventing or embracing counterculture are often in disagreement with the morality that mainstream society advances. Countercultures often develop out of disadvantaged and marginalized groups. They emerge out of conflict with established mainstream cultures. Their mission is to draw attention to particular disparities and prejudice inherent in society and sometimes to distance themselves altogether from the mainstream.

Countercultures are strongly related to the social-conflict approach which Macionis defines as a " framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality, generating conflict and change" (2011, p. 12). There exist countercultures that seek to withdraw from society and they do this by trying to function outside of society's economic and legal means (Ballantine and Roberts 2011).

An example of a countercultural group is the hippie culture that was developed in the cultural movements of the 70s and is still alive today. Anti-war hippies existed in the 1970s and they still do exist now. They are opposed to all military exploits outside and within the American borders. Hippies seek also to revolt against what they believe is the oppressive nature of the consumerist capitalist society. The hip-hop culture is another form of youth counterculture, where music and a distinct form of dress and style are adopted in a revolt against racial inequality and prejudice. The social conflict

approach view countercultures not as bad elements of society but as a reflection of the presence of tensions and some level of inequality that needs to be addressed.

References

Ballantine, J. H. & Roberts, K. A. (2011). Our Social World: Condensed Vision. Pine Forge Press.

Macionis, J. J. (2011). Society: The Basics (11th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.