

# What is a subculture sociology essay



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What is a subculture. A subculture is a cultural group within a larger culture, often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture. Hippies are a subculture off of cultures or examples like peace and togetherness. They are the most popular subculture even today even though it started decades ago. The Hippie movement started in California and spread across the United States and into parts of Europe. It had its best influence in America. During the 1960s a fundamental group called the Hippies surprised America with their alternative lifestyle and beliefs. The hippie movement had a significant impact on the outlooks of American society in the 60s. It made the ideals of people who started to follow hippie's beliefs. This subculture influenced American point of views in such subjects as attitudes, drug use and political and traditional believes. Hippies created movements and many social conflicts, clashing with sociologists and sociological perspectives. Functionalism, the conflict perspective and symbolic interactionism perspective all are three completely different sociological perspectives. The hippie subculture supports, and other times does not support these perspectives and the sociologists that created them. Hippies are still talked about today and their ideas and motives are still used today. There is much more background to the hippie movement other than flowers and tie dye.

The functionalist perspective, also called functionalism, contends that each aspect of society is codependent and contributes to society's functioning all in all. Functionalists believe that society is held together by social agreement, or unity, in which members of the society agree upon and work together to achieve what is best for society as a whole. Functionalists would

have either completely agreed or disagreed with the hippie subculture. The hippies were a full blown subculture that protested against wars and tried to spread peace across the world. The functionalists were all about conformity and everyone coming together as one. Some functionalists today may have agreed with the hippies and their attempt to bring the world together and create peace, while on the other hand some may have thought that hippies were being deviant and acting out against society, working against communities as a whole which defeats the purpose of a functionalist perspective. Although the hippies became a huge subculture, they were just a smaller part of a whole function; that being the world. Among the functionalist sociologists is Robert Merton, who coined the terms manifest function and latent functions. Manifest functions are intended and obvious, while latent functions are unintended and not obvious. Merton may have said that the manifest function of being in the hippie subculture is to help promote peace around the world, while the latent function would be brainwashing people and putting ideas into their head to join social movements that the hippies started. It may be safe to say that hippies could have once been trying to be functionalists, along the lines that they were trying to get society to agree and work together as a whole, although in the end it didn't carry out.

The conflict perspective, founded by Karl Marx, concentrates on the negative and conflicted environment of society. Conflict theorists like Marx encourage challenges among society and social change, sometimes causing movements and revolutions. Conflict theorists would have supported the hippies. The hippies challenged the government and took a stand; exactly what conflict

theorists would do. Hippies went against what the norm in society was and did nothing but try to make a difference, without letting anything or anyone get in their way. There is a clash, however, between the hippies and the conflict perspective. Conflict theorists focus on the negative nature of society and influence the conflicts. The perspective finds any conflict between any group of people to try and debate. Although the hippies did cause many problems and uprisings, their intent wasn't to start conflict among society. They were a positive subculture that was justifying their beliefs and trying to make a positive change in society. The intent of conflict between the hippies and conflict perspective is where they differentiate.

The symbolic interactionism perspective, also known as symbolic interactionism, leads sociologists to consider the symbols and details of everyday life; like what symbols mean and how people interact with each other. In other words, it is the symbols that people connect with common things. When people think about hippies, for example, some symbols that come to mind are tie-dye shirts, flowers, psychedelics, drugs and music. This goes along with the symbolic interactionism perspective. Most of the credit for this perspective goes to Max Weber, who stated that individuals act upon their interpretation of the world. Like some critics say about the symbolic interactionism perspective, many people focus too much on the little symbols; like drugs, music, and tie dye instead of what the hippies were truly about. The symbolic interactionism perspective only looks at the little, not so important part of subcultures like that of hippies.

Karl Marx would be a sociologist that would be interested in the hippie subculture. Marx founded the conflict theory. Inequality, social structure and

social dynamics are some of the views that he focused heavily on during his studies. Marx would have been interesting to observe during the hippie times. He was all for the conflict and standing for equal rights. He claimed that the conflict between groups created social equality. The hippies were a subculture that created their own community. They were anti-war and protested against the government, causing conflict. Marx would have liked to see the hippies protesting their rights. He claimed that progress only comes from 'rulers' that are overthrown. The hippies were trying to progress freedoms and peace by being heard from the 'rulers' or government. Marx would have supported the hippies in that they were trying to generate equality among everyone and stop the war that was going on. The hippie subculture is a mix between conflict and equality, some topics that Marx studied and cared for.

People can be socialized into subcultures like hippies if they have the same beliefs or interests as that subculture. Hippies were all for freedom, living life, peace and anti-war, which was a broad group of people back in the 60's, considering many people felt that way about what was going on. Two agents of socialization that had a big impact on people and becoming part of the hippie subculture were families and peer groups. Families establish initial values and beliefs in us. Their choices and experiences sometimes get passed down to their children, and so on. Families have the biggest impact on a person. They give one an idea of who he/she is and what he/she thinks they deserve. If children were to see their parents take part in the protests, drugs, peace meetings and festivals, they are more than likely to partake in that subculture and type of activity when they are older. Peer groups have a

big impact on people. As children start to expand their socialization, they start to lean away from their families and more towards peer groups, like friends. Children do not want to be the outcast in a group, so they are more likely to conform to what all the other children are doing. If the then children, now teenagers, start to do drugs and listen to psychedelic music, more than likely other teenagers will start to do that also. Peer pressure can make many people conform to what the authoritarian leader wants. This kind of conformity brings a whole new age group to the subculture of hippies. Many people see the positive outlooks of the hippies and all the protests and end up wanting to partake; causing resocialization and another way people are socialized into this subculture.

The hippie movement in the United States began as a youth movement. Composed mostly of white teenagers and young adults between 15 and 25 years old, the ages expanded much bigger over the years. In 1965, the hippies expanded into a social movement which attracted even more people of all ages. Age is a big impact factor of the hippie subculture because it all started with young adults. Not only do young adults conform to what others are doing more than any other age group, they can make a bigger impact on society. These young adults are still young, which means they will have the same views for years to come as they get older. Not only that, but they are influencing adolescents, which will end up in even more people joining the movement. Age isn't everything, but for the hippie subculture it helped gain more supporters and made more of an impact because of the age group that was involved and that started the movement. Hippies were welcoming of all genders and races. During the 60's there was still racism, but the hippies

accepted everyone. This had an impact on the outsiders that were not involved in the hippie subculture, considering all the hippies loved everyone. It had a positive impact on society considering there was no judging of any kind because the hippies were a 'brotherhood among people of all races and ethnicities'.

There was much opposition to the Vietnam War. Because of this, the hippies started to arise. Since the hippie subculture made such a huge impact, there were many groups and communities that branched off. Yippies are an offshoot of the movement that parodied a political party. They went on to gain national attention when they took over Grand Central Station in New York. This resulted in sixty-one arrests. This group is a branch off of the hippies because they aren't nearly as big as a subculture, but they got their ideas and their anti-war protests from being a hippie. Another group of people that stemmed off of the hippie subculture are the neo-hippies, some of whom are children and grandchildren of the original hippies, who now advocate many of the same beliefs of their ancestors. There are slight differences, however, between the hippies and neo-hippies. The original hippies found drugs as an outlet and it was popular among that subculture. Neo-hippies do not find drugs to be necessary anymore. The Brotherhood of Eternal Love was an organization of psychedelic drug users and distributors that operated from the mid-1960s through the late 1970s. They were dubbed the "Hippie Mafia" and distributed drugs hoping to start a psychedelic revolution in the United States. This organization started from the hippies because of all the drug use during the 60s. It became very popular to where people started to make groups and organizations promoting drug use.

There was no one ruler or starter during the hippie movements and subculture. It is said that the hippie movement historically came from the ancient Greek and philosophers that showed early signs of the hippie culture. In the 60s, it was revamped and was a movement started by young adults. Everyone that was involved in that subculture somewhat all had a status or a role to partake in. All the followers of the hippies participated in all the protests and politics that came along with it. There may have been a few people that lead organizations and protests, but in the end hippies are a subculture in which everyone has the same views and participates in all the activities that they did. Hippies saw everyone as equals, therefore there was no social stratification, or divisions of people into groups, because power and prestige did not matter. Everyone was equal and treated the same. All member of this subculture united in all the protests, no matter who they were.

The hippie subculture more than not supported deviance. Not intentionally, but this subculture was full of deviance. The protests go against social norms and the people who partook in the protests were looked at as bad people ‘breaking the law’. Hippies stood out among other people who were not a part of that subculture, causing them to be stereotyped and considered out of the norm. Although hippies just wanted to make life happy and create peace, they were looked at as causing havoc among areas with their anti-war protests. This subculture stood up for what they believed in and took a stand against the government with their drug use and protests. Outsiders gave a negative sanction response to the hippies. Hippies were not afraid to share their views on war, and outsiders were not afraid to express their



disapproval. Even though something minor, like trying to create peace and not having a typical mainstream lifestyle, hippies could be considered deviants. They went against social norms. A functionalist would look at hippies being deviant and say that it is functional for society. Every society has deviance; it is not completely out of the norm. Symbolic interactionists believe that people learn deviance through others. In this subculture, that is true. Hippies influence one another and although don't intentionally cause trouble; they express their views and ideas to others, causing the 'deviance' to spread because of hippies associating with others. It is not intended, but the hippie subculture supported deviance just because they were not considered doing things that were of positive sanction and not conforming to society's way of doing things.

Two social institutions that are relevant to the hippie subcultures are family and politics. As stated before, one's family has a big impact on how they are going to be when they grow up. Parents are some of the biggest influences on children. If children were to see their parents take part in the hippie subculture, the children are more than likely to partake in the same subculture and perform the same tasks as their parents once did. The family social institution has a huge impact on hippie subcultures. The ideas and motives are passed down from elders and adults to adolescents who will soon be the adults that start protests and try to make peace with everyone. Not only that, but this period of time in the 60s was also known as the 'baby boomer period'. This brought many new lives into the world. Politics is relevant to the hippie subculture because at the time, the government is part of the reason the social movement started. The hippie movement could

be considered as the last remarkable revival of an ideal communalism.

Hippies were protesting the Vietnam War, and the subculture went from there. Hippies are all about peaceful protests, but they usually went against the government and laws of what was going on at the time. Some of the values that go along with the politics social institutions are that people must 'trial by ones peers'. This means that if one's peer is on trial you stay by their side. When one hippie went down at a protest of some sort, many others ended up going down with them. The political ideals of hippies influenced other movements. During many protests, for example, another influenced movement, the Yippie's that took over Grand Central State in New York City and sixty-one of them were then arrested; multiple people get caught and put in jail.

Hippies somewhat benefitted the environment. As for helping with the environment, a lot of hippies set up mini-communities outside of the city. They wanted to get away from the discrimination and social norms so they created their own little communities. Hippies grew fruits and vegetables without the use of chemical insecticides and they also tended to carpool in highly fuel efficient VW minibuses. Hippies were some of the first people to try and use fuels other than gas to fill up their cars and buses. Not only those examples, but they raised awareness for the environment by doing protests. The environmental movement started because of the Hippies and is why we still have an Earth Day to this day. Hippies also started recycling and finding alternative energy sources. What environmentalists are still doing to this day, the hippies were trying to do 50 years ago.

The Hippie subculture has to be one of the biggest subcultures out there, even though it started and took places over 50 years ago. This subculture started many other social movements that still exist today. The hippies made a huge impact on the world, just like they had planned.