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Subculture is Mainstream

# Introduction

Society functions on the basis of culture. If society is the machine, culture is the structure that it works within: you can't have society without culture. Within mainstream culture we have various pockets of subculture. Do subcultures inhibit or enhance the machine of society? Today, I'm going to argue that subcultures contribute to the mainstream culture, and do not threaten the mainstream culture.

# body

1. Definition of mainstream culture and subculture

Let's start at the broadest level, and paint a picture of what mainstream culture looks like in comparison to subcultures. We all have a general sense of what culture looks like: it's the common elements of our lives that we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell every day. It's our fashion choices, the music we love, the food we eat, the smell of the forests or oceans we live near, the plastic chairs and wooden desks we sit at.

Mainstream culture is simply the choices that the majority of people in our society make. Subculture is any group of people that make choices that vary from the mainstream.

1. Example: EDM

Here's a specific instance: electronic dance music, EDM for short. (You might know it better as techno or dubstep.) EDM has been around since the 40s, but started back then as a subculture of dance music. Mainstream dance music in the 40s was jazz. Today, the roles are vastly different: the core elements of EDM are a huge part of modern popular music. These include simple beats, bass-centered riffs, synthesizers, simple-happy-go-lucky lyrical content, and so on. (For an example of the infiltration of EDM, just listen to "Shake it Off," or "Everything is Awesome"). What started as subculture has made its way into mainstream, and what was mainstream has become a subculture. Is this bad for mainstream culture? No!

1. Further examples

Consider the "hipster" look. What started as an intentional deviance from mainstream culture has become, in many places, the mainstream fashion. Nerds used to be demonized and hated, now they're starring in shows like Big Bang Theory. Computers were once a thing for specialized technicians, now everyone carries at least one of them in their pockets. Where we once glorified scientists, we now glorify actors.

1. Cultures aren't static

Cultures are products of people: always changing, always shifting, always ebbing and flowing as generations come, grow, and produce new generations. It is the nature of cultures to change, so a subculture cannot be a "threat" to the mainstream culture. The only thing a subculture can do is influence the mainstream culture to do what it does by definition: change.

Diversity among people leads to diversity among culture. We can't change the fact that people are going to be different from one another. If you were born in America, no matter how much you conform to the society of China, there will always be a part of you that is inherently American. Whether it be your accent, the way you put your socks on in the morning, or the way you hold your chopsticks, you will be different from the Chinese.

# Conclusion

Even as an American, you are different from other Americans. Just consider how different Texans are from New Yorkers. But at the same time, think about how similar they are: they speak English, have an appreciation for thick, fluffy pancakes, and hate the "other" political party with a burning passion. It's not that Texans are better than New Yorkers, and it's also not that New Yorkers or Texans are more American than the other. Culture is intangible, and imperfect. Mainstream culture is nothing more than always changing, always evolving sets of values. Since there is no way to stop the influence of subcultures, it makes a lot more sense to embrace them. We can't change the fact that we live in a multicultural world -- rather than fear it, we should recognize that our multiculturality has only enhanced our society. The thing that inhibits mainstream culture most is fear of other cultures.



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