

2. Concepts related to subcultures

I. Match the vocabulary word to its definition and then find them in the text below:

1. Dominant culture	2. Mainstream culture	3. Traits	4. Striving	5. Heritage
6. Ethnocentrism	7. Othering	8. Countercultures	9. Cultural appropriation	10. Culture lag

A. The values, traditions, culture, and artifacts passed down by previous generations, which is a person's unique, inherited sense of his/her ethnic, cultural, or national identity.

B. The belief in the inherent superiority of one's own culture.

C. A distinguishing quality or characteristic, typically one belonging to a person or group.

D. Notion that culture takes time to catch up with technological innovations.

E. Adoption of elements of one culture or identity by members of another culture or identity.

F. Make great efforts to achieve or obtain something; struggle or fight vigorously.

G. View or treat (a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself.

H. Majority culture, with power and control.

I. A subculture whose values and norms of behavior differ substantially from those of mainstream society, often in opposition.

J. Widespread current thought that seems the most common to those who live in a specific area.

What are subcultures?



Subcultures are distinctive segments of the larger and **dominant culture** of a region or society that are marked by shared interests in music or cultural phenomena, membership in a specific ethnic or religious group, or shared socioeconomic status. The qualities that determine a subculture may be linguistic, aesthetic, religious, political, sexual, geographical or a combination of factors, among others.

A subculture is technically a culture shared and actively participated in by a minority of people within a broader culture. For instance, like-minded individuals who feel neglected by societal standards, are brought together through subcultures and these allow them to develop a sense of identity. It is just what it sounds like—a smaller cultural group within a larger culture and there are thousands of subcultures within and across nations. A subculture can have its own beliefs, norms and values, but they are generally able to exist within **mainstream culture**. Other subcultures are united by shared experiences (e.g. biker culture revolves around a dedication to motorcycles). Some subcultures are formed by members who possess **traits** or preferences that differ from the majority of a society's population. But even as members of a subculture band together, they still identify with and participate in the larger society.

A subculture resembles a culture in that it usually includes a relatively large number of members and represents the accumulation of generations of human **striving**. Ethnic and racial groups share the language, food, and customs of their **heritage**. Race and ethnicity are two concepts related to human ancestry. Race is defined as "*a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits*", while ethnicities is more broadly defined as "*large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background*", according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Race is usually associated with biology and linked with physical features such as skin color or hair texture. *Ethnicity* is linked with cultural expression and identification. However, both are social constructs used to categorize and characterize seemingly distinct populations.

There are two concepts that are linked to conflict among subcultures and these are **ethnocentrism** and **othering**. *Ethnocentrism* is a major factor in the divisions among members of different ethnicities, races, and religious groups. It's the belief that one's ethnic group is superior to another. Ethnocentric individuals believe they're better than other individuals for reasons based solely on their heritage. Clearly, this practice relates to problems of both racism and prejudice. While *othering* is a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that lead to marginality and persistent inequality across any range of human differences based on group identities. Dimensions of othering include, but are not limited to, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (class), disability, sexual orientation, and skin tone.

Sociologists distinguish subcultures from **countercultures** which are a type of subculture that disregards some of the larger or mainstream culture norms and values and create new ones. They have their own beliefs, problems with cultural integration, and have their own material culture. In contrast to subcultures, which operate relatively smoothly within the larger society, countercultures might actively defy larger society by developing their own set of rules and norms to live by, sometimes even creating communities that operate outside of greater society. Nevertheless, the term counterculture is not entirely an adequate way of describing all of the changes that took place for several reasons: some changes were a progression of events throughout the century, other changes were due to scientific discoveries which have always produced new ideas and ways of looking at the world, and many changes can be better described as movements or ideologies.

Furthermore, the study of subcultures often consists of the study of symbolism attached to clothing, music and other visible affectations by members of subcultures, and also the ways in which these same symbols are interpreted by members of the dominant culture. According to Dick Hebdige, members of a subculture often signal their membership through a distinctive and symbolic use of style, which includes fashions, mannerisms, and argot.

Cultural appropriation is the adoption of an element or elements of one culture or identity by members of another culture or identity. This can be controversial when members of a dominant culture appropriate from disadvantaged minority cultures. It may be difficult to identify certain subcultures because their style (particularly clothing and music) may be adopted by mass culture for commercial purposes. This process of cultural appropriation may often result in the death or evolution of the subculture, as its members adopt new styles that appear alien to mainstream society.

Subcultures certainly play an important role in any individual life and help to explain how each person develops a frame of reference. Everybody has their own perceptions on society, values, and life in general and these tend to stem from the dominant culture in one's life. They also allow individuals who share similar interests to assimilate, socialize, and have a sense of belonging and fellowship among peers.

Moreover, culture is always evolving and new things are added to material culture every day, and they affect nonmaterial culture as well. Cultures change when something new (i.e. railroads or smartphones) opens up new ways of living and when new ideas enter a culture (i.e. as a result of travel or globalization). Through invention or discovery, cultures evolve via new ideas and new ways of thinking. In many modern cultures, the cornerstone of innovation is technology, the rapid growth of which can lead to **cultural lag**. Technology is also responsible for the spread of both material and nonmaterial culture that contributes to globalization.

After reading, answer these questions:

1. How is a subculture similar to a culture?
2. What is the difference between race and ethnicity?
3. Why are ethnocentrism and othering related to racism and prejudice among subcultures?

4. How have these elements of subcultures been culturally appropriated into mainstream culture?



5. How much do you know about these subcultures?

- a. Hipsters.
- b. Guaracheros.
- c. Skaters.

- d. Punk rockers.
- e. Coletos.
- f. Cholombianos.

3. A brief summary of the major world religions



Religion is an organized collection of belief systems, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions, and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the Universe. From their ideas about the cosmos and human nature, they tend to derive morality, ethics, religious laws, or a preferred lifestyle. According to some estimates, there are roughly 4,200 religions in the world.

There exists an interrelationship between religion and culture not only in our families or societies but in every aspect of our human lives. Religion and culture remold an individual for better consciousness and awareness. Religion and culture are both the foundations where both ancient and modern norms and values of societies were rooted. Societal values, norms, rites of passage, and rituals associated with one's culture can be traced to the kind of religious practices.