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Social and cultural anthropology
Standard level
Paper 1

Wednesday 26 October 2022 (afternoon)

1 hour

Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the passage and answer questions 1 **and** 2. Answer **either** question 3 **or** 4.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[20 marks]**.

Read the passage.

Passage adapted from Murray, M. A., 2020. White, Male and Bartending in Detroit: Masculinity Work in a Hipster Scene. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 49(4).

Modern hipsters are young, white and middle class, typically 20 to 35 years old. They contribute to the gentrification of working-class ethnic neighbourhoods by supporting expensive coffee shops and trendy bars. This study offers insights into how gender is constructed in a hipster subculture.

5 The men I spent time with in Detroit [USA] developed an immersive, exclusive, hipster way of life. They chose hipster subculture because it solved an increasingly common masculinity dilemma: the inability to secure a professional career that enables middle-class consumption levels.

10 Subcultures offer members alternative forms of existence that counter dominant ways of being. Subcultural membership is, in theory, open to anyone who can perform the necessary behaviour and consumption patterns. However, scholars argue that subcultural capital is always classed, raced and gendered, meaning not everyone can perform it.

15 The men I interviewed did not meet several norms of hegemonic masculinity. White middle-class men are expected to find a career with an income that meets rising standards of consumption. However, as bartenders or waiters, hipsters do not draw on employment as a primary identity marker. Secondly, these men were not husbands, fathers, or in long-term romantic relationships with women. Thirdly, they did not display homophobia, and some celebrated their homosexuality. At times in American history, the performance of homophobia has been a key aspect of masculinity because it supposedly demonstrated heterosexuality.

20 I conducted a year-long project in Detroit and New York using in-depth interviews and participant observation. I also used textual analysis of hipster print and online media to orient myself to the hipster scene. However, the core of this project focuses on fieldwork conducted with young white men in Detroit. This research was greatly enabled by my friendship with Albert. We went to school together in a suburb of Detroit and he was a key informant and gatekeeper.

25 Interviewees discussed the future in vague terms, or avoided the subject. When I asked Albert what he saw himself doing in 10 years, he stated, “Well, I never think about that”. However, he continued “I know that it’s really hard but I wanna sell art and have a record store. But I’ll probably be bartending at some bar in Detroit. And I don’t want that. I don’t want to be a cliché.”

Art is a feature of hipster subculture, and creative careers seem appealing because these men would not have to divide their energies between work and art. Creative jobs promise fulfilment through work, which is attractive in a society that pressures men to invest heavily in their careers.

30 The strongest relationships for interviewees were between pairs of men. Albert and Jimmy had lived together for a decade. Their girlfriends, jobs, and housing location had changed regularly, but their relationship remained stable. They never called each other partners—neither identified as homosexual—but they travelled, lived, and started bands together. In the absence of steady jobs and live-in girlfriends, Albert and Jimmy provided a safety net for each other.

35 These men hug, share clothes, cook together, and even share a bed after late nights of drinking. Far from hiding their affection, they seem to flaunt their comfort with each other as proof of their comfort with homosexuality. Nathan explained: “I’m not gay, but I can identify with a kind of boundary-questioning lifestyle, an openness to other sexualities, right? But I like girls!” Nathan’s answer clearly positioned himself as heterosexual, yet also presented himself as comfortable
40 with various sexualities. This attitude is surprisingly positive because previous studies have shown how men deprived of hegemonic masculinity have reacted with sexism, homophobia, and even violence.

Hipsterdom is a useful identity resource enabling participants to challenge middle-class norms associated with hegemonic masculinity. Although this study focuses on masculinity, class is woven
45 throughout. Hipsterdom is attractive for these men because they were raised in middle-class families, are highly educated, and yet do not have careers. Many of the men I spoke with have an exit strategy available to them that is not an option for black or Hispanic communities in Detroit facing intergenerational poverty and economic hardship. This unexamined privilege is a much more profound difference than the taste preferences that interviewees often invoked to explain
50 their subcultural exclusivity.

Answer question 1 **and** question 2.

1. Define the term **gender** and describe how it is understood and applied in the context of the passage. [4]
2. Analyse the ethnographic data presented in the passage using the concept of **society**. [6]

Answer **either** question 3 **or** question 4.

3. Compare and contrast the way in which the key concept of **identity** or **culture** is evident in this passage with how it is evident in **one** other ethnographic example you have studied. [10]

OR

4. Compare and contrast the approaches to research adopted by the anthropologist in this passage to the approaches to research used by **one** other anthropologist you have studied. Make reference to concepts and ethnographic material in your answer. [10]

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References:

Murray, M. A. (2020). White, Male, and Bartending in Detroit: Masculinity Work in a Hipster Scene. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 49(4), 456–480. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241620907126>. Reprinted by Permission of SAGE Publications.

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