

MARKSCHEME

MAY 2005

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Standard Level

Paper 1

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1. What similarities to and differences from mainstream America do the women express through their stories?

[6 marks]

This question allows candidates to provide descriptive material of the September 11 attacks as the women understand them. The divergence of the women's stories from those of mainstream America reflects their socially marginal positions. They share with the rest of the American public the immediate shock at the attacks, but soon come to realize that the attacks have not affected their lives as much as they have done for dominant segments of society. These women live with racism, poverty and violence and hence incorporate the attacks into a world view in which violence, structural and actual, is an everyday feature of their lives. The dramatic "before" and "after" split in time which has come to typify public discourse does not apply to those whose identity is formed in relation to lives lived in terror.

The women are set apart from white America by race and while this divides them from their own society, it serves to unite them with oppressed peoples of the world. Race becomes the most salient aspect of identity at these moments and gives the women what they believe to be a greater sense of insight and compassion into the plight of oppressed peoples of the world as well as reinforcing a sceptical position in relation to the media representations of the Islamic terrorists.

As mothers who wish to protect their children, the women reject violence as a response to the attacks. In this respect they unite along gender lines against men, both black and white, who are more ready to use violence and military options in retaliation for the attacks. However, the woman who both opposes violence and is proud of her Marine son illustrates the complicated nature of identity and the possibility of holding contradictory positions.

Candidates answering this question can use the material in the passage in order to produce more abstract discussions of the nature of social marginalization for the formation of identity. They may also consider that identity is always in process and that the first reactions of the women compared to their later understandings show how the women are thinking through and reworking the September 11 attacks in relation to their own position in society.

A clear and well-organized discussion of a few relevant aspects of identity, explicitly linked to the question, will receive better marks than a long list of identity markers with little or no explanation. Stronger responses will avoid dependence upon quotations from the text.

2. **Discuss in your own words what the women’s sceptical response to the media representation of September 11 tells us about their understanding of the global context in which these events took place.** **[6 marks]**

This question requires candidates to produce a more analytical answer than the first question. There are many ways to answer this question. For example, candidates can demonstrate that the women view world news stories not as passive recipients, but in the light of their own social context, class and race position and come to their own understanding of world events.

This understanding is primarily mediated by issues of race and the women directly compare the way white Americans deal with black Americans to the way in which the media (by implication white) deal with Islamic terrorists. The women reveal a “double consciousness” – an understanding of the media and how it makes sense for the dominant segments of the population but also an understanding of what the media does not say or distorts.

The women use this experience of oppression to reach an understanding of the shared identity of all peoples of colour across the globe – “an imagined community” united by an experience of oppression by whites. However, the foregrounding of issues of colour necessarily downplays other differences between black identities in America and those elsewhere in the world, such as religious and cultural differences.

Successful answers may opt for other logical schemata. However, good answers will all demonstrate the candidate’s ability to adopt an analytical approach, to develop a logical and well-organized answer, and to do so in the candidate’s own words.

3. **Compare the way in which the black American women construct their identity with the way in which a group you have studied in detail constructs its identity.** **[8 marks]**

A wide range of comparative case studies may be used for this question, and they need not focus on race, gender or class, or be based on the construction of identity through story-telling. However, candidates must demonstrate that it has clear social consequences for the people involved. Answers must be organized in a clear manner, and highlight similarities, differences and generalizations. To receive more than **[4 marks]** candidates must explicitly structure their answers as comparisons, and clearly situate the comparative case in terms of group, place, author, and historical context.
