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# Social and cultural anthropology

## Higher level

### Paper 1

11 November 2025

Zone A afternoon | Zone B afternoon | Zone C afternoon

2 hours

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#### Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Section A: read the passage and answer questions 1 and 2. Choose either question 3 or 4. Answer question 5.
- Section B: answer the question.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[40 marks]**.

## Section A

Read the passage.

Passage adapted from Willis, G., 2022. Eating pizza in prison: Failing family men, civil punishment, and the policing of whiteness in São Paulo. *American Ethnologist*, 49(2), pp. 221–233.

“Who ordered pizza?” shouted a detective as a deliveryman entered the police station in an upper-middle class part of São Paulo, Brazil. I, a White anthropologist doing fieldwork about policing, watched as policemen walked to a cell and gave a man the pizza he’d ordered on his cellphone from behind bars. He’d been arrested for not paying child support. He ate his pizza, wearing expensive shoes, jeans, and a button-down shirt.

In the next cell sat a shoeless Black teenage boy, his T-shirt torn. He was arrested when he tried to get a USD 12 refund on cinema tickets bought online with stolen credit card details. The next day, both had gone: the pizza-eater, on payment of child support, was released. The young ticket-thief was sent to juvenile detention. The difference in treatment reflects the punitive differentiation of race in Brazil, where young Black men are stereotyped as “irredeemable criminals.”

Alongside the racialization of young Black men, there is another, less visible, subject of everyday police work: the White father who fails to support his children. This category is also racialized, but his punishment is provisional; he must be redeemed.

The police enact an idealized vision of the family and fatherhood for some and deny it for others, “whitening” some people because of their real or imagined family condition and work history, whether or not the person before them is perceived as White. Whiteness is a source of status. However, neither blackness nor whiteness is reducible to specific White or Black people. Whiteness is revealed by how people are treated in bureaucratic processes and in legal judgment. Thus, jailing someone for trying to steal USD 12 becomes about blackness and biology, while allowing someone in the cell next door to order pizza, having denied food to his own children, is about whiteness and redemption.

Additionally, the idea of the family man is connected to that of the good citizen. This rests on two social categories, mutually produced and mutually exclusive: the worker and the criminal. Being seen as a worker “whitens” a person.

Detectives regularly investigated homicides by policemen. I observed how they described and enacted a moral frame when deciding to arrest policemen. One evening, policemen sprayed a van with bullets, killing two people. As evidence that the victims were criminals, the policemen claimed that they had been shot at. However, it was obvious that the policemen, both White, had lied and tampered with the scene by planting a gun. The detective’s job was to decide whether to arrest them.

The victims were low-paid but employed workers, with no criminal records. But the policemen considered them Black and out of place, not realizing that they were employed, nor that they were husband and wife in a delivery van, not a getaway car. For the detective investigating this case, these things mattered, but there was something more emotive: the victims were parents. With the couple dead, a child was left without a family. The detective saw a working man who was raising a family and was now dead through no fault of his own. This father did not threaten whiteness; he had embraced its assumptions.

40 The policemen made a mistake: good people were dead and a child orphaned. The logical action was to arrest them. But this would impact the policemen’s families too. As the detective told me during a conversation, “it would make more children fatherless.” Yet, he arrested them, feeling guilty that, by doing the right thing, he was responsible for something almost as bad.

45 For the police, the question is never whether policemen should kill and detain, but, rather, whether violence can be correctly categorized. Where racial order can be messy, it helps to view race as socially ascribed, based on traits of whiteness that include the subject’s “work ethic.” This reveals how privilege is granted and denied in cases that defy categorization by skin colour alone. Policemen’s judgments can then be seen as validating notions of human worth and innocence blended with concerns for economic productivity, dedication to family, and appearance. This echoes a saying among Black Brazilians in the context of everyday denials of race: If you want to know who’s Black, ask the police.

Answer question 1 **and** question 2.

1. Define the term **status** and describe how it can be understood and applied in the context of the passage. [4]
2. Analyse the ethnographic data presented in the passage using the concept of **power**. [6]

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

3. Compare and contrast the ways in which the key concept of **society** or **identity** is evident in this passage with how it is evident in **one** other ethnographic example you have studied. Make reference to theory in your answer. [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, ethnographic material, and theory in your answer. [10]

Answer question 5.

5. What does it mean to be a person? Discuss with reference to **at least two** sources of ethnographic material **and** examples from the passage. [10]

## Section B

Answer question 6.

6. With reference to **either** stimulus A **or** stimulus B, **and** your own knowledge, discuss the defining features of anthropological ethics.

[10]

### Stimulus A

Gaztambide-Fernández illustrates the limitations of an accommodating approach to research ethics when describing challenges encountered at an elite boarding school in the United States. Gaztambide-Fernández sought the school’s permission and agreed to let it review his work, pre-publication. This went well until he wrote about “wienie-night,” which the school didn’t want published. In his account, wienie-night is a clear case of homosocial bonding – semi-secret, all-male, shirtless competitive hot-dog eating contests where participants eat, cheer and puke communally before a noisy crowd. Wienie-night illustrates how boarding schools are where (largely) white male future elites consolidate class status through extracurricular homosocial bonding. This account runs counter to notions of boarding schools as places where deserving, talented people receive an exemplary education that allows them to meritoriously compete for powerful positions.

Naturally, the school didn’t want Gaztambide-Fernández to write about this, as it could undermine this meritocratic narrative. Gaztambide-Fernández ultimately wrote about wienie-night, arguing that because researchers create narratives about the people they study, they are “implicated in the production of elite status even while seeking to expose it.” Researchers focusing on elites sometimes need to adopt an “un/ethical” position. For Gaztambide-Fernández, when empirical findings contradict the narratives that certain elites want, such representation isn’t neutral, leaving the researcher with an ethical dilemma: either censor findings and support elite representational propaganda, or break agreed ethical commitments and publish a narrative that undermines the elite status of the people they work with. Gaztambide-Fernández chose the “un/ethical” path.

[Source: Souleles, D., 2021. How to think about people who don’t want to be studied: Further reflections on studying up. *Critique of Anthropology*, 41(3), pp. 206–226. doi: 10.1177/0308275X211038045. Source adapted.]

## Stimulus B

In 2022, the Horniman Museum's (UK) board of trustees agreed to return to the Nigerian government 72 ethnographic objects forcibly removed from Benin City during the British military incursion in 1897.



[Source: Peel, M., 2010. *Benin bronzes at the Horniman Museum*. [image online] Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benin\\_Bronzes,\\_Horniman\\_Museum\\_6.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_Bronzes,_Horniman_Museum_6.jpg) [Accessed 9 May 2023]. Source adapted.]

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**References:**

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- Stimulus A** Souleles, D., 2021. How to think about people who don't want to be studied: Further reflections on studying up. *Critique of Anthropology*, 41(3), pp. 206–226. doi: 10.1177/0308275X211038045. Source adapted.
- Stimulus B** Peel, M., 2010. *Benin bronzes at the Horniman Museum*. [image online] Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benin\\_Bronzes,\\_Horniman\\_Museum\\_6.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_Bronzes,_Horniman_Museum_6.jpg) [Accessed 9 May 2023]. Source adapted.