

Hipsters in their Natural Habitat

Alivia Boddie, Applied Social Science; Dr. Nels Paulson, Faculty Sponsor
University of Wisconsin-Stout

What was I looking investigating?

- How this counterculture contributes to the ever changing modern world
- Hipsters in their 'natural habitats'
- Determine different classifications of hipsters

Methods:

- Participant observation, cross referencing, and literature review
- **Participant Observation Locations:**
Minneapolis, MN and Menomonie, WI

The Acoustic Café, Menomonie



The Raw Deal, Menomonie



The Urban Bean, Minneapolis



What is a hipster?:

- A postmodern subculture
- Young, urban, middle class adults and older teenagers
- First appeared in 1940 movement, particularly prominent beginning in 2010
- "Non-mainstream"
- Progressive or independent political views
- Alternate lifestyles

Previous Literature:

- Many elements of this counterculture coincide with other countercultures throughout the world
- Act of not being mainstream was a clear similarity between all peer reviewed literature pieces
- Hipsterism consists of stylistic innovations
- Hipster identities can cross, but those who associate with a certain group with crossing identities may be seen as a phony
- Classifications of hipsters: foodies, avant-garde (literary hipsters), bohemian, the clubber and the loner
- Common trend among young people, but they will not identify with a certain group affiliation, but rather identify with a larger development or movement
- "I'm not a hipster"
- During the 90's, the nerd identity of hipsterism became widely accepted and 'cool'
- Steve Urkel made it cool for an African American to take on the nerd identity
- This led to the status of being intelligent is hip in any race and soon African American actors began playing non-stereotypical roles (such as Morgan Freeman in *Batman*)

Some Hipster Identity Classifications:



The Foodie: Food as a cultural pursuit; concentrates on healthy eating and strives for the best organic food



Avant-Garde: Experimenting with new or unusual ideas; intellectuals (literary hipsters); post war subculture;



Bohemian: Informal, 'hippie', outdoorsy



The Clubber: Frequents the party scene (raves and nightclubs), wear ornate/loud clothing, branch of the "Club Kids" from the 80's and 90's



The Loner: Prefers not to associate with others, introverted (horn rimmed glasses)

Results:

- Different classifications of hipsters were actually apparent in settings that those practicing hipsterism would occupy (locations previously stated)
- Those in the UW-Stout area that occupy the hipster status were seen with Mac computers, indicating perhaps some type of art major student
- Observations in Uptown Minneapolis resulted in quiet, 'loner' types to outspoken hipsters who seemed intense in conversation (about political beliefs, environmental causes, literature, etc.)
- Rare communication outside of their 'hipster friends'
- Diverse crowds, ranging from 'classy', upscale hipsters to those who looked more 'grunge'
- Frequency of male facial hair; mustaches, goatees, to full-fledge beards

Theoretical Framework:

- Erving Goffman's (1956) theory of dramaturgy
- All people are actors in their own life story, striving to convince the audience of their character or role
- The roles played in our everyday life gives a general idea of what's expected from any given actor

"Props":

- Through Goffman's theory of dramaturgy, hipsters can define their differences in identity through the use of certain 'props'
- Clothing, material objects and specific behaviors
- Specific to each individual identity
- Goffman calls this content

Conclusion:

- Belonging to a subgroup, especially hipsters, prolongs their youth by socializing primarily within their selective group and using various designated props
- Gives a sense of prolonged adolescence
- Hipsters often forego the usual expected route of going to college, getting married, move to the suburbs and have the usual 2.5 children.
- Specific aspects of cultural capital are used to create their life's drama
- We argue that neo-liberalism, considered in solely its economic dimension, is not only one of the structural causes responsible for the current financial crisis;
- Neo-liberalism in its cultural dimension have made being politically charged also 'cool' and consumable