

## Lecture 7 Structure & Agency: Subcultural Theory / Sport and Sexual Assault

### Part 1 Subcultural Theory

#### Introduction

- Structure and agency combine
  - Structure predominates – how people respond to structural position
  - Agency as response
- Emphasis on objective conditions and subjective responses – macro and micro
- Situational accommodation of or response to dominant economic and cultural norms
- Pay attention to what is – and what is not – under scrutiny
  - Critiques of these perspectives point to the absence of gender and race

#### Understanding response

- 1) Those following idea of '**strain**' theory
  - Agency (group) 'response' to social strain (cultural accepted goals & means to achieve them)
  - Through creating subcultures
- 2) **Marxist subcultural theorists**
  - Subcultures as an expression of resistance to capitalist oppression
  - Changing the perspective – **Jock Young** '*The Vertigo of Late Modernity*' 2007
    - Criticise how the 'goals' are shape rather than the basic strain 'equation' (problem of the goal itself)
- 3) **Bourdieu**
  - **Habitus** explaining agency as 'making do' within economic and cultural constraints

#### Historical context

- For early subcultural theorists:
  - Mass immigration (from Europe to the US – economic opportunities)
  - Great Depression then optimism and the New Deal (American dream is open to all, but GD shows society not providing enough opportunities and support)
  - McCarthyism – stifling of critical debate (Cold-War, threat of Communism)
- **Merton** – a radical? (critique of the system)
- **Marxist subcultural theorists**:
  - Time of rebellion of the 60s and 70s (UK and Europe)
  - More recent: **Jock Young** – responding to globalization and 'hyperconsumerism'
- **Bourdieu** and **disillusionment** with the academic project as a way to change the status quo

#### #1 Strain and Anomie

- Quality of the society (Anomie) – and individuals (Anomia)
- Emphasis on:
  - Social regulation
  - Nature of individual integration
- Importance of how society generates norms, values and goals

- And then the (culturally defined) opportunity provided to achieve those goals

### Anomie and Institutional Anomie

- **Merton** (1957)
  - 'Money a consecrated value' (value in itself)
  - The American dream has no final stopping point (always not enough)
  - Insatiable drive for more
  - American Dream Criminogenic
  - Quitting not an option
- **Messner and Rosenfeld** (*Crime and the American Dream*, 1994)
  - Great pressure to achieve – but not the same pressure on abiding by the rules (unquestioned)
- Primacy of the Economy
  - Non-economic institutions devalued
  - Norms and values of the economy dominate
  - Non-economic values give way to economic values
- 'The mood of the society becomes predatory'

### Adaptations to strain

- **Disjunction between goals and means**
- Merton's ideal types of adaptation:
- Can be affected by context

<b>Modes of Adaptation</b>	<b>Cultural Goals</b>	<b>Institutional Means (rules)</b>	<b>Criminality</b>
Conformity	+	+	-
Innovation (e.g. steal)	+	-	+
Ritualism (e.g. inhibit response)	-	+	-
Retreatism (e.g. drop out; drug)	-	-	+
Rebellion	-/+	-/+	+
Maximiser (by Murphy & Robinson)	+	+	+

+ = accept      - = do not accept

### Subcultural Theories

- Focus in criminology on 'criminal/delinquent' subcultures
- Major focus on **agency** as response (group response rather than individual)
- **Structuralist** in the emphasis on relationships and opposition that gives rise to subcultural response
- **Functionalist** aspect: coping (ability to cope with the disjunction; Durkheim)

### Subcultural theorist: Albert Cohen

- Trace origin of delinquent subculture
- Critical role of **school** (reemphasis American dream though education)
- **Functionalist** conception of culture

- **Subcultural values** (some people are excluded and denied in education – subculture as a response to cope with value):
  - Non-utilitarianism (do what you ‘feel good’)
  - Malice
  - Negativism
  - Short run hedonism (vs. long term achievement)
  - Group autonomy, loyalty to the gang (vs. loyalty to school)

### Cloward and Ohlin

- More than one way to response
- ‘War on Poverty’ (US gov emphasis on providing opportunities)
- 3 types of delinquent subcultures:
  - **Criminal** – pursue utilitarian form of activities to reach dream (robbery)
  - **Conflict** – replace American dream by alternative value based on status and honour (e.g. violence; young gangs)
  - **Retreatist** – drop out of society, alternatives like drugs

### Matza – Delinquency and Drift

- Delinquency is but one of a number of possible outcomes (overemphasis)
- **Agency** plays a role in decision-making (underplay agency)
- Techniques of neutralization (SI & labelling)
  - Drift in & out, make choices
- **David Downes** argued that Matza missed ‘ideal type’ quality of gang research
  - Not saying gangs exist, but a particular dynamic in society that lead to the tendency of gangs behaviour (and subculture)

### #2 Class Conflict / Culture Conflict and Marxism

- Theorists working at a later time/context
- Society based on **conflict**
- Creative response to class position
- Appropriate ‘junked’ items
- Active resistance
- The system wins – yet some autonomy salvaged
  - (**Gramscian**: emphasis change rather than autonomy; counter hegemony)
- Is subculture a resistance to dominant culture/class or individual expression / a way of making meaning (post-subculture?) ‘creatively liberating’

### Jock Young: The Vertigo of Late Modernity (2007)

- Drawing on Merton, coming through Left Realism (Marxist; taking crime seriously), then shift to a commentary on late modernity
- Emphasis on norms and ‘culture experience’
- Focus of the critique on late modernity – the condemning of those who condemn
  - Rather than on those who commit crime
  - Critique of the ‘goals’ in strain
- ‘Turbo-charged’ capitalism generates insecurity

- There is ‘an **upper class**, an **underclass** and a **nervous class**’ afraid of slipping down the hierarchy
- Generates punitiveness – fear of the underclass – but dependent on their low skilled labour
- Underclass:
  - Part of a ‘Bulimic society’ (consumerism, commodification) which absorbs them culturally (i.e. they should strive for society’s goals) but restricts them structurally (systematically denied)
  - Experience humiliation, grasp spurious identify centered on machismo, race, religion
  - Experience – and perpetrate – criminal acts (**Left Realism**)
- Tension in the work in over-generalising – projecting motivation ‘globally’ and of overarching values

### #3 Bourdieu

- Emphasis on interaction between ‘objective’ conditions and subject responses
  - Although would have trouble with those labels (objective)
- Objective is relational (structuralism/social constructionism)
  - E.g. we think money has value, but depend on proportion in relation to whole social structure
- **Economic and cultural capital** (division/distribution)
- **Fields** – or sites of struggle for power
- Power of the cultural field depends on people ‘playing the game’
- **State** important in allocating symbolic value to the cultural field
- Space of social positions and lifestyles
  - Vertical axis: total capital volume (of both cultural and economic); the further up you are, the more of both kinds of capital you have
  - Horizontal: proportion of capital (i.e. to the left have more cultural than economic, to the right more economic than cultural capital)

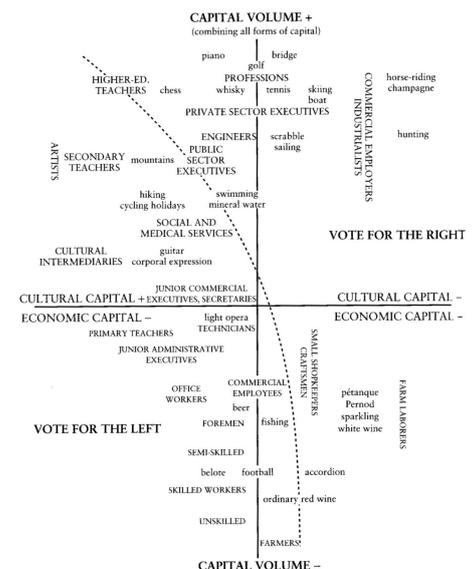


Figure 19.1 The space of social positions and the space of lifestyles (the dotted line indicates probable orientation toward the right or left)

### Bourdieu and Habitus

- Dispositions common to a **group** that share similar position in cultural and economic fields
- Dispositions built into a **style of life**, a ‘feel for the game’
- Importance of ‘distinction’ groups are seen as a ‘cut above’ the rest, to be tasteful
- **Habitus: a social classification system**
  - Lifestyle and manners appear as ‘innate’ but relate to structural position
  - Classification allows description of **styles of life as ‘inferior’ or ‘deviant’** – or as a description of the ‘wrong’ sort of person fitting in
  - **Resistance** in terms of not playing the game or strategically using capital
- Sport – can be understood as a ‘field of struggle’ not only for sporting success but for level of influence and control over the field itself