

# CRIM316 - Week 5: Culture of Crime



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## Terms in this set (10)

Outline of Albert Cohen's work	<p>Wrote a landmark book - Delinquent Boys 1956</p> <p>Sought to find why crime was increasing with low unemployment numbers.</p> <p>Research is based of young men in gangs in NYC.</p> <p>Examined relationship between culture and crime through gangs.</p>
Social context that Cohen observed	<p>Late 50s setting, US.</p> <p>WW2 ended in 1945, soldiers returned to work.</p> <p>Relative prosperity.</p> <p>The idea of the middle class American Dream</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Peaceful leisurely life</li><li>- Own house with white picket fence</li><li>- Seeking shelter from the trauma of war</li></ul>

### Delinquent Boys 1956

- Sought to find why crime was increasing with low unemployment numbers
- Did not fit Merton's explanation (crime occurs along the pathway of the extreme American Dream)
- Why was crime increasing in a period of affluence?
- Why did crimes occur that was not financially motivated?
- Why did petty and trivial and gang crimes occur?
- Why was working class men involved in these types of crimes?

### Relevance of status and culture

Cohen argues that status is missing if affluence already exists.

Division of two cultures:

Dominant Middle Class Culture - the majority of people who conform with the middle class culture.

Delinquent Subculture - the people who reject the middle class culture and criminal behaviour is learned (differential association) and reinforced by cultural values).

Cohen argues that blocked structural opportunities lead to the separation of values.

### The Delinquent Subculture

Middle and lower class youths can be socialised into the delinquent subculture.

Importance of collective unity.

Provides status and allows members to act tough and steal (norms rejected by the dominant middle class culture - allowed in delinquent subculture, denied in dominant middle class culture).

The delinquent subculture provides status to those seeking it.

Importance of standing out with clothing and symbols. It carries the values of the collective which is something that the dominant middle class culture does not provide.

### Cohen's highlighting of schooling as an impact

Cohen focuses on non-achievers

- Schooling is important as it is an institution that youths spend a lot of time at and the impact of development and growth.

- School system favours middle class values using the middle class measuring rod - favored middle class values, mannerisms, and etiquette.

- Non-achievers do not fit with middle class values, they fall into a self-fulfilling prophecy of failing

- Individuals who do not fit leads to status frustration.

Also focuses on not fitting in and deprivation

- Not fitting in - feeling of no respect and disrespect

- Deprived background leads to disadvantages in schooling - lack of uniforms, stationary, extracurricular activities, camps, and other events.

- Class streaming separates achievers and non-

Middle class measuring rod	<p>A metaphor for judging how individuals fit according if they conformed to the middle class especially in their values.</p> <p>Individuals who do not fit leads to status frustration.</p>
Crime and status frustration	<p>Status frustration leads to reaction formation (the creation of delinquent subcultures - gangs). Individuals unable to meet the measuring rod, leads to frustration, and leads to forming a gang while they leave the dominant subculture.</p> <p>Qualities for not leaving dominant culture (qualities valued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mannerisms</li> <li>- Politeness</li> <li>- Valuing property</li> <li>- Wholesome recreation/middle class pursuits - chess, theaters, polo.</li> <li>- Career ambition</li> <li>- Sacrifice in delayed gratification for end goals.</li> <li>- Individual independence and responsibility</li> </ul>
Delinquent subculture: inversion and subversion of the majority middle class values	<p>Qualities that the delinquent subculture provides and value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thrill seeking</li> <li>- Physical prowess and bravery</li> <li>- Taking advantage of opportunities, in the moment</li> <li>- Ease in not working hard</li> <li>- Risk and danger</li> <li>- Immediate gratification</li> <li>- Collective responsibility - safety in numbers</li> </ul>

## Critiques of Cohen

Self-fulfilling prophecy - Status increases in the delinquent subculture but does not address the decrease of status in the dominant middle class subculture.

The place for women - no mention or very dismissive.

Contemporary appropriation - Gangs are very complex today, gang initiation, underlying complex histories, and result of systemic issues.

Dismisses that crime can be committed by everyone, states that crime is a product of the working class (a working class problem). Does not address that anyone can join gangs.

Doesn't address the structure of society as a potential cause of crime

- Focus on youths as the issue
- Does not address systematic structures.