WARM-UP [3 min]

(1) What do you think about the idiom “pull yourself up by your bootstraps?”

(2) How did you get to where you are in life today?
Key Research Question and Main Argument(s)?

1) How do they view their prospects for social upgrading, and **how does this estimation affect their aspirations**? What unseen social and economic forces daily influence these boys?

2) How do they make sense of and act upon the complex and often contradictory messages emanating from their **family, peer group, workplace, and school**?

3) What is the cause of **underachievement in low-income areas**?
Significance of Question and Argument?

• Shines a light on the American underclass, observing students of different racial backgrounds

• Exposes how the middle and low class must conform to an academic standard not conducive to their aspirations.

• Helps teachers in urban areas (such as Syracuse NY) have a better understanding of what is occurring in these impoverished communities
Karl Marx, Paul Willis, Henry Giroux – **social reproduction** - analyzes how the class structure is reproduced from one generation to the next.

Pierre Bourdieu – **cultural capital** - the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed from one generation to the next.

Basil Bernstein – **linguistic codes** - ultimately are rooted in the social division of labor, derived from the social relations and roles within families.
MacLeod touches upon many theoretical issues

1) the role of education in the perpetuation of class inequality
2) the influence of ethnicity on the meanings individuals attach to their experiences
3) the causes and consequences of racism
4) the relationship between structural determinants and cultural practices
MacLeod touches upon many theoretical issues

5) the degree of autonomy individuals exercise at the cultural level
6) the destabilizing roles of nonconformity and resistance in the process of social reproduction
7) the functions of ideology
8) the subtlety of various modes of class domination.
Contribution to Scholarship

1) Exposes how school systems can condition certain people of different backgrounds to accept prevailing biases in their society.

2) Helps identify the causes of underachievement in impoverished areas.

3) Addresses the difficulty of dismantling these structures in society
Reflection on Ethnographer

1981
Male, white, 19 years old, lower middle-class
College sophomore at Harvard University
Summer Youth Enrichment Program in low-income housing developments in East Cambridge, MA
Undergraduate thesis defense (1984)

1991
Personal interest: what happened to them?

2006
Anglican priest in England
Publishers wanted a follow-up
Reservations; fieldwork; outsourced analysis

https://vimeo.com/203879968

Jay MacLeod
https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/146175.Jay_MacLeod
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Reflection on Ethnographer

Intellectual/Political Commitments
- None declared
- Socialist leaning
  - wealth: to be fairly distributed
  - restructuring / central planning
  - cooperation, social responsibility
  - social welfare

Assumptions and claims
- There is a better way of living
- Structural inequalities are more powerful explanations than individual differences
- Schools punish vs. reinforce
- “Achievement ideology” is an illusion

Jay MacLeod
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Reflection on Ethnographer: Positionality

-1-  
“... in the summer of 1981 when as a student at a nearby university I worked as a counselor in a youth enrichment program in Clarendon Heights. For ten weeks I lived a few blocks from the housing project and worked intensively with nine boys, ages eleven to thirteen. While engaging them in recreational and educational activities, I was surprised by the modesty of their aspirations.” (p. 4)

-2-  
“But my methods are unique in some ways because of my previous involvement with the community. Having worked and lived in the neighborhood for three summers directing a youth program, I was already close friends with many Clarendon Heights residents prior to the beginning of my research. Without this entrée into the community, as a college student from rural New Hampshire I would have faced massive problems gaining the trust and respect of my subjects. As it was, acceptance was slow, piecemeal, and fraught with complications. But with the hurdle of entrée partially overcome, I was able to gather a large amount of sensitive data, most of it during a twelve month period of participant observation in 1983 when I lived in the community. [...] Nevertheless, my roles as community worker and researcher were never entirely distinct” (p. 8)
Data Collection, Analysis, and Writing
Part 1:

Prior to the study, MacLeod worked in the community for three summers directing a youth program. During the study he conducted a 12 month participant observation from 1983 to 1984. He used his work at the youth program, and basketball to build relationships with community members.

He generally abstained from alcohol, and drugs. He often ignored the Hallway Hangers’ sexism and racism because his goal was to understand the boys and not change them. When relating to the Brothers he found that authenticity was most effective, and stuck to his position as an outsider to black culture.

He revealed his intentions as a researcher later on because he wanted to secure his position in the peer-groups, once he disclosed his full intentions it became clear to the peer-groups what his role was, and his involvement with the other group.

In the beginning he was unable to record or take notes of the exchanges so he relied on his memory, during this period he conducted unstructured interviews.

Analyzed a course catalog of Lincoln High School, conducted semi-formal interviews with teachers, school counselors, and conducted participant-observations at Lincoln High School.

In September 1983 he moved across the street of Clarendon Heights.

In October he introduced interviews and group discussions in his apartment along with a tape-recorder.
Part 2:
1991 (eight years later) he returned to Clarendon heights for intensive fieldwork.
Located and interviewed all the participants
Collected almost 800 pages of interview transcripts and fieldnotes

Part 3:
Between April 2006 and November 2007 he traveled to the United States four times.
Two of the chapters are oral history interviews.
He was able to interview almost all of the participants.
Data integration and analysis presentation

Part 1:
He sets the scene, provide background for the conversation, inserts a direct quote from his data, and then explains how this quote connects to a larger theme in his book.

He makes a general claim, provides a direct quote from a data set, and discusses the person he just quoted in a larger context or provides an example from his participant-observation.

Part 2:
He provides a general update on the participant, states a point of interest, inserts a direct quote from the interview, provides some context that is missing from the quote, he analyzes the quote by comparing and contrasting to the theoretical framework.

He compares and contrasts one participant’s finding to another’s, offers a direct quote to support his claim, and discusses the larger context that is not addressed by the direct quote.

Part 3:
Each section is broken down by participant. Summarizes how he contacted the participant and provides a general update. Presents oral history interviews in the form of question and answer (no data interpretation). The last chapter is divided into different themes, under each theme McClelland and Karen discuss each participants’ experience with that theme, there are rarely any direct quotes in this section and when there are, they are included as part of a sentence rather than stand-alone data.
Main Findings of the Research

- Two different racial groups (Hallway Hangers & Brothers) who live in the same projects have the same status, circumstances, and opportunity. Yet, have two different outlooks on the future.
  - Hallway Hangers “White” (Content) & Brothers “Black” (Aspired)
- Sociological Study of Inequality - No equality of opportunity for residents.
  - Neighborhood is 65% white, 25% black, and 10% other minorities in poverty, lower class, low education, and low employment.
  - 85% Headed by Single Mothers, 70% of the population are on additional public aid, a family of 4 had to have an annual income of less than 14k
- Classic study of poverty in America
  - MacLeod after first study returned two more times 8 years and 20 years later.
  - Social mobility status stayed the same
- Cultural Capitalism & Social Reproduction
  - The odds of succeeding in life are remote for those who start at the bottom, and the class you are born into is the class you will most likely end up in.
- Ultimately, The American Dream is not a reality for most born into Poverty
Unanswered questions

Equality of Opportunity is rejected, the alternative is … Equality of Opportunity

• Against ephemeral Equality of Opportunity (“achievement ideology”)
  ○ “the achievement ideology promulgates a lie” (p. 264)
  ○ “…a restricted opportunity structure clothed in an ideology of equal opportunity” (p. 214)

• Suggests ideas that _are_ instances of Equality of Opportunity
  ○ “Rather than reaching for the dizzying heights of the Eiffel Tower, the occupational structure could be shaped more like an onion.” (p. 262)
  ○ “... universal health care; parental leave; living-wage policies; better unemployment insurance; day care and early education programs; adult training and education programs; etc.” (p. 458)
  ○ “... we believe that the United States has the resources to ensure that no one is without adequate health care and that no one is below an adequate guaranteed minimum income” (p. 461)
Limitations

The veracity of the participants’ statements.
Did not hang out at Pops (a frequent hang out location for the participants).
Was only able to interview two family members.