



**In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio.**

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better model for dealing with the adolescent population, because of its greater emphasis on relevance in training schemes and its promotion of specific work programs for the young.

The argument is coherent and persuasive, if not without blemish. The authors are historically inaccurate in suggesting the beginning of the twentieth century as the time when biological theories of adolescence first developed. Burrow has clearly described such theories in classical and medieval times. Further, they are, at times, inconsistent. They reject biologism, but then suggest themselves that there is something "natural" about adolescents leaving the parental nest earlier than is now the case. There are plenty of viable societies in which young people never leave the nest. The concept of the psychosocial moratorium proposed by Erik Erikson, for which they show enthusiasm, is also doubtful support for their theoretically relativistic position.

It is always dangerous to point to a particular social system in Western society as providing a model to emulate, and these authors' admiration for Sweden can also be questioned. The rates of youth crime in Sweden are quite unremarkable in relation to other Western countries. Indeed, between 1950 and 1990 there was an exceptionally steep rise in Sweden, compared to other Western countries, in overall crime rates, with theft of motor cars and theft generally (both crimes committed mainly by young people) figuring prominently. Comparative cross-country data for depression are not available, but suicide rates for 15–24-year-old males and females in Sweden are again unremarkable among Western countries—higher, for example, than in England and Wales, but lower than in Switzerland and Hungary.

These problems do not, in fact, detract from the central message of the book. Adolescents in Western society are indeed infantilized in relation to their competence. Their prolonged period of dependency is indeed based on a series of fictions invented by adults with good intentions but poor social judgment. It may be that the shrinkage of the "employed" sector of the population and the diffusion of roles, tasks, and identities previously thought of as specific to adolescence into the rest of the life span may

require an even more radical appraisal of the adolescent predicament than these authors provide. Nevertheless, the book makes available useful data and represents a serious contribution to a discussion of a highly problematic but socially important issue.

## Criminology, Deviance, Law

*In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*, by **Philippe Bourgois**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 392 pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-521-43518-8.

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Philippe Bourgois has given us much to think about in his ethnography of the "drug world." A product of years of fieldwork and personal sacrifice, *In Search of Respect* is far ahead of other studies of urban underground economies. The primary setting is a crack house in New York City's Spanish Harlem. But unlike most social science research on drug economies (or street gangs), Bourgois takes the reader far beyond the walls of the "ethnic apartheid." He uses the lives of Primo, Cesar and other modern-day *jibaros* to traverse the metropolitan scape: Petty accumulation in the crack economy buttresses their social reproduction. Nevertheless, their experiences with the judicial system, corporate America, schools, and even Puerto Rico are determinative of their decision to "embroil themselves in the underground economy and proudly embrac[e] street culture."

Bourgois's ethnographic skills are evident throughout the work. The care with which he navigated dangerous situations—ones that threatened his own life and the lives of his informants—and employed creative techniques to document the different sides of his informants' lives are a lesson for any student of participant observation. His willingness to call upon multiple theoretical perspectives—from feminism to cultural production theory—to approach matters ostensibly deviant sets his study apart from much of American

criminological research, which has not adequately grasped the political or cultural dimensions of (marginal) youth practice. For these two reasons, his work should be included in the canon of deviance, street gang, and urban-related research.

What remains perplexing is Bourgois's own understanding of the contribution of the book—which is its weakest leg. He states quite early in the narrative that “I feel it imperative . . . to expose the horrors I witnessed among the people I befriended, without censoring even the goriest details” (p. 18). Throughout the book this overly self-indulgent lamentation persists. While one can empathize with his desire to “speak openly” about the “pain and terror of the experience of poverty and racism in the United States,” this need to counter liberal ethnographic “timidity” is certainly not enough justification for the way in which he interweaves gang rapes, domestic abuse, or street-based violence. In certain chapters, narratives of violent incidents appear from out of the blue, and, at times, Bourgois abdicates the commitment to analyze these practices with the rigor he gives to other events. At worst, representational politics becomes “racist voyeurism”; at best, the reader is left wondering exactly how (and why!) Bourgois conceives of this mode of anthropological writing as a “site of resistance.”

Given Bourgois's need to make violence, terror, and suffering central in the narrative, it is ironic that the best chapter in the book is one that contains few incidents of violent interaction but shows that terror for ghetto dwellers can also be found in their encounters with the “mainstream.” In “At Work: Disrespect and Resistance,” Bourgois brilliantly and subtly demonstrates that the myriad practices we take as self-evident (or insignificant) are undeniably “terrifying” and demeaning from the perspective of those in the inner city: Acknowledging the impersonality of the bureaucratic world (e.g., prioritizing the title instead of the person), understanding the codes in an office memo scribble, following the “logic” of menial tasks without using initiative or improvisation, all have unforeseeable effects. Like a flap of the butterfly's wing that “caused” the large weather disturbance, these mundane actions lead to the humiliation of the inner-city

worker, his/her withdrawal from mainstream labor markets, and the consequent reproduction of macro patterns such as low “labor force participation.”

In these descriptions of Primo and Caesar's encounter with mainstream economies (and educational systems), Bourgois's study (like Mike Davis's “excavation”) has the potential to serve as an anthropology of America, not just of the nation's ghetto spaces. However, he limits himself theoretically and analytically by overly relying on cultural reproduction theory. To be sure, “people like Primo and Caesar have not passively accepted their structural victimization,” and they are “actual agents administering their own destruction.” But the danger in stopping here is that Bourgois's analysis falls prey to the type of liberalism he wishes to avoid: He retreats to the “individual” and misses the opportunity to show that the “culture of terror” is rooted in American social structure. And the discipline misses the chance to learn that the “dark ghetto” can be studied in order to shed light on the “mainstream.”

Bourgois's ethnography can and should spark debate about the usefulness of studying the poor and their experience of violence. Its lack of theoretical development in certain areas is outweighed by Bourgois's craft as an ethnographer and as a thoughtful researcher. *In Search of Respect* is a well-written book that can be helpful for rebuilding undergraduate interest in the “sociological imagination,” as well as for shaping social science research on the city.

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*Corporate Crime: Contemporary Debates*, edited by **Frank Pearce** and **Laureen Snider**. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. 426 pp. \$60.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-8020-0667-1. \$21.95 paper. ISBN: 0-8020-7621-1.

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This volume is comprised of original papers delivered in 1992 at Queens University, Canada, for the “Corporate Crime: Ethics, Law, and the State” conference. It is aptly titled. Most papers indeed confront debatable