



The Culture of Poverty, the Poverty of Culture

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CULTURE: IF ANYBODY DOES ANYTHING

λ CULTURE: CREATION/ PRODUCTION/ CONSTRUCTION (norms, values, meanings)

λ „WAY OF LIVING”

λ CULTURE: CONSUMPTION OF OBJECTIFIED CULTURE

Functions: as integrating / as distinguishing

OSCAR LEWIS

λ (SUB)CULTURE OF POVERTY

LIFE OF THE LONGTERM POOR IN TIMES OF SHIFTING PERIODS FROM TRADITIONAL SOCIETY TO MODERN SOCIETY

It tends to perpetuate itself from generation to generation

Both an adaptation and a reaction to a marginal position

Efforts to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair (not achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society)

Carpe diem- attitude

- λ Inability to put off the satisfaction of immediate desires
- λ Fatalistic view / Resignation
- λ Intensity of emotions (Bliss & Dispair)
- λ Lack of organizing
- λ Lack of belonging to bigger communities/ideas/group disintegration
- λ Family disorganization

Context

- λ Cash economy
- λ High rate of unemployment
- λ Low wages
- λ Difficulty of sustaining the basic institutions in the neighbourhood
- λ Dominant set of values stresses the accumulation of wealth and property and blames the poor for their low economic status

The CONSUMER SOCIETY

- λ THE POOR ARE WRITTEN OFF:
NEITHER PRODUCERS, NOR
CONSUMERS
- λ IN A CONSUMER SOCIETY,
CONSUMPTION IS THE HALLMARK OF
INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM, IT IS A
SYMBOLIC ACT OF CONSTRUCTING
SELF-IDENTITY.
- λ „I BUY, THEREFORE I AM”

Self-esteem / prestige

λ EVERYBODY IS DEFINED BY HIS/ HER
CONSUMPTION

CHOICES WHAT SEEM TO COUNT

λ RIGHTS TO CHOOSE JOBS/
PARTNERS/HOLIDAYS / HOBBIES/
PLACES/

Dominant value

λ PLEASURES / INTENSIVE/
INTERESTING/ CHALLENGING/
CREATIVE LIFESTYLES

VERSUS

VERY LIMITED CHOICES

BOREDOM / FRUSTRATION
/DEPRESSION / FEELING „BEING A
FAILURE”

LIFESTYLE GROUPS in HUNGARY -2003 SURVEY

λ LEISURE-TIME ACTIVITIES:

λ ACTIVE, INTENSE CULTURAL
CONSUMPTION / USER OF DIFFERENT
MIX OF INSTITUTIONS: 16 %

Versus

PASSIVE TV- VIEWER-type : 43 %

Richard Wilkinson

λ MIND THE GROWING GAP BETWEEN
THE RICH AND THE POOR

λ THE GAP BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASSES
GROW TOO WIDE



WORLD DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD WEALTH

- λ The richest 1 % of adults own 40%
- λ The richest 5 % 71%
- λ The richest 10 % 85 %
- λ The bottom half 1 %
- λ GINI figure: same as a group of 10 where 1 gets 1000 USD, other 9 each get 1 USD

INEQUALITY MATTERS

- λ WIDENING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES GENERATE LOWER STANDARDS OF POPULATION HEALTH
- λ LOW SOCIAL STATUS/ LACK OF SOCIAL RESPECT/ FELT SOCIAL INJUSTICE/ HUGE SOCIAL DISTANCES/BEING DEVALUED AND LOOKED DOWN ON/ LIVING AT THE BOTTOM DESTROYS HUMAN HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

IT LEADS TO

- λ PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGES
- λ MORE WIDESPREAD DEPRESSION
- λ INCREASED LEVELS OF STRESS
- λ DECREASE IN AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY FIGURES
- λ PREMATURE DEATH
- λ INFANT MORTALITY
- λ HIGHER LEVELS OF VIOLENCE

LIFE EXPECTANCY

- λ GREECE WITH HALF THE GDP PER HEAD HAS LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCY THAN THE US
- λ THE PEOPLE OF HARLEM LIVE SHORTER LIVES THAN THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH
- λ 17 years of difference in Hungary between degree holder males and those without basic education

SOCIAL CAPITAL FORMS

STRONG TIES - BONDING

(solidarity, reciprocity, strong identity, social sameness) EXCLUSIVE

WEAK TIES - BRIDGING

(crossing class/ethnic etc.cleavage lines



LEWIS' WAY OUT

- λ EFFECTIVE PUBLIC POLICY OF INTEGRATION (ACCESS TO INSTIUTIONS, STABLE JOBS and INCOME GENERATING TO BELIEVE IN FUTURE GOALS REALIZED
- λ CHANGE OF ATTITUDES/ DISPOSITIONS THROUGH ORGANIZING COMMUNITY STRUCTURES (BELIEF-SYSTEM)

**SOCIAL CAPITAL (networks,
norms, trust that facilitate
cooperation)**

**DOES IT PROTECT FROM
MARGINALIZATION ?**



THE ROMA IN HUNGARY

- λ 2003 Survey / Kemény István – Janky Béla- Lengyel Gabriella
- λ Proportion in the Population:
- λ 6% (3 % in 1971)
- λ Number of BIRTHS
- λ 25 per 1000 Roma inhabitants - 32/1000 in 1971)
- λ 9,3 compared to 1000 non-Roma -14,5/1000 in 1971
- λ Territorial segregation: 56 % of them in areas where only or dominantly Roma people live

THE EDUCATION OF ROMA

Kindergarten: 42 % Roma 3-5 year olds compared to 88 % of non –Roma

- λ Completed primary education: 82,5 % of 20-24 year old youths
- λ 5 % of the age group 20-24 had maturity exam
- λ 1,2 % higher degree.holders
- λ Every fifth child goes to special education classes

INCOME POVERTY

λ 56 % of ROMA HOUSEHOLDS: NO ACTIVE EARNERS

λ 8 %: all adults are earners

λ 82 % of HOUSEHOLDS: NOT EVEN REACHING POVERTY LINE

λ Census: 1980: 30.000.-

λ 1990: 143.000.- (32 %)

λ 2000: 190.000.- (33 %)

EMPLOYMENT/LIFE EXPECTANCY

21 % of 15-74 were employed (Males: 28 %;
Females:15 %)

λ In Budapest: 49 %

λ In Northern/East Hungary: only 14 %

• λ Above 60: 3,9 % compared to 20,2 % of
non-Roma

λ The life-span of a Roma is 10-15 years
shorter than that of non-Roma