

## **In Search of Respect: Chapter 3 Handout- Crackhouse Management**

### **Authority and Exercise of Power: Systems of Stratification**

#### *The Game Room*

- The Game Room, a crackhouse owned by Ray, was left to the management of Primo
  - Primo was granted power to hire and employ his own lookout and workers
    - Lookouts like Benzie and Caesar however let their status as crack dealers to empower themselves
      - Benzie would insult his customers and mock their crack-addiction (84)
- Both Primo and Benzie, ironically, were able to “kick” their crack habits(89)
  - Their status as crack dealers forced them to decrease the amount of crack intake in order to sell their products instead of using them

### **Social Organization of Space**

- Ray expands and creates a crack joint at the Social Club, targeting high class customers and “hardcore intravenous cocaine users” (99)
- The Social Club was renovated and had a “pool table, a powerful sound system, a flush toilet that worked some of the time, an air conditioner, and a heater” while the Game Room was “fucked up” (93)
  - This differentiated the Social Club with the Game Room

### **Kinship: Alliance**

*Alliance, cohesion – to ensure the loyalty of his workers, Ray mainly hired blood-related kin, people affiliated through marriage or who had established a fictive kinship. (82)*

- By hiring blood-related kin, Ray was able to build strong relationships and connections
- Ray asked Primo to be his son’s godfather (82)
  - Established a compadre relationships
  - A relationship deeper than the boss-worker relationship
- Growing up with Ray, Gato was spared further injuries from stealing from Ray’s Game Room
  - “That he was still alive with no broken bones was a testimony to his childhood friendship with Ray” (105)

### **Division of Labour and Specialization**

Employees are divided into roles according to their area of expertise

#### *Owner—Ray*

- Obtained rights of the Game Room for \$3000
- Ray was a “brilliant labor relations manager” (82) – over the years he would “systematically extract higher and higher profit margins from his problematic workers...he knew how to discipline his workforce firmly without overstepping culturally defined rules of mutual respect” (82)

#### *Managers—Primo and Tony*

- The role of the managers, Primo and Tony, was essentially to ensure that things ran smoothly
  - Explaining to Felipe, Primo states that he “has to keep things from getting too fucked up because I [he’s] responsible. If anything goes missing, I’m [he’s] gonna hear it from Ray” (84)

#### *Employees*

- “the majority of his [Ray’s] employees were blood-related kin, or were affiliated through marriage, or had been incorporated through a fictive kinship arrangement” (82)

#### *Older Family Members*

- “a subtle touch of ‘normalcy’ was added by the presence of Primo’s adopted grandfather, Abraham” (106)
  - role—to diverge attention from the police

#### *“The Hang-out Crowd” (105)*

- “parasitical friends, acquaintances, and wanna-be employees who congregated in front of the Game Room on most nights” (105)
- This “crowd of friends” became an effective army of detectives for investigating foul play; for warning Primo of potential stickup artists who might be casing the premises; for shielding and witnessing when an attack occurred

#### *The Look-Outs*

- Hired and paid by Primo; they were “a step lower in the hierarchy” (83)

- Their job was to protect the Game Room from excessive violence and aggression

#### The role of Bourgois

- A white face in the crack house—“deterrent to potential stickup artists, [...] stickup artists are simply not willing to take the risk of assaulting anyone who could possibly be confused as an undercover police officer” (108)

#### Use of Production, such as Sustenance

The desperate living conditions of Primo is immediately established at the beginning of this chapter, as Primo “had lost his job as a messenger-clerk at a typesetting shop and had abandoned all pretense of supporting their two-and-a-half-year-old son.

- Primo’s “own dependence on Ray for steady cash” (86)
  - Since the selling of crack was the only income of cash for these people, it is a source of sustenance, necessary for survival
- Primo recognizes that “the only legal jobs he can compete for fail to provide him with a livable wage”, and that he makes “more money here [crack-selling] than [Primo] could ever make working legit” (97,98)
  - so many crack-sellers are ultimately dependant on the crack economy
- Bourgois confirms this dependence when he states that:
  - “none of the crack dealers were explicitly conscious of the linkages between their limited optiaons in the legal economy [...] and their dependence on the crack economy for economic survival” (98)

#### Market and patterns of Consumption

Crack houses are dependant on the changing facets of the market, and like any regular business, the price of its commodities changes based on rules of supply and demand.

- There are certain days of the week where there are more sales than other days, which demonstrates patterns of consumption
  - “Thursday is an especially coveted night to sell on because its payday for municipal employees” (103)
  - “everything comes on the first of the month: all the checks [...] The first of the month is definitely *monneeey*” (103)
- The quality of the products is a large factor in the market of crack-selling
  - Increasing the quality of the crack and lowering the price “made business boom” (82)

Thus is it clear that the market severely affects the business of the Game Room as the quality, amount and price of the crack available to Ray controls the sale of the crack at the Game Room.

#### Individual and Society:

##### Status

- Status in street culture determines one’s privileges and is linked with respect, money and women.
- In El Barrio it is hard to always maintain one’s status and power. There is a hierarchical system in the crack-dealing business and influence is never guaranteed solidly.

##### Gender Relations

- In a male dominating patriarchal society, women do not seem to hold much authoritative power
- Women are something that accompany high status. Primo in particular is surrounded by teenage girls all striving for his attention.

#### Moral Systems:

- Candy threw a knife at Felix and stabbed him in the stomach, for sleeping with his sister. (81)
- Ray “knew how to discipline his workforce firmly without overstepping culturally defined rules of mutual respect.” (82)
- Primo did not like Benzie working for him because he always disrespected the customers.
- Caesar states that “*morenos* (African-Americans) be more fucked up and eviler than Puerto Ricans. Because when she fell I said “Oh, shit, are you all right there?” But her man, he was like...he jumped over her and walked out in front of her”
- While dealers rely on the underground economy for sustenance, they see their practice as evil, and long to go back to the legal economy.
- As a dealer rises in status, he becomes less dependent on drugs. Primo shook away his addiction after he became a dealer, but became more dependent on substance abuse when he was demoted.

#### Processes of Change and Transformation:

- There is a newly found desire by the many drug dealers to enter the legal economy
  - In chapter one, Ray tried to open a series of legal businesses.

- Benzie- “the best way to be, is legal. Survive. Make your money and make everybody love you.” (95).
- Primo- “In private, Primo admitted that he wanted to go back to the legal economy.
- The reason most of the dealers on the street turn to the illegal economy is because of the “intolerable working conditions at entry-level jobs”
- Since the crackhouse runs on basic supply and demand, they must compete with the other dealers, who offer their product at a lower price, and at increased quality. To compete with these, Ray developed La Farmacia and The Game Room’s amenities.