

MicroCase Exercise #6: An exploration of culture conflict and Marxist theories

INTRODUCTION

In this data analysis exercise, we will use Wave VII data from the National Youth Survey to briefly explore culture conflict theory, which is discussed in Part VII. Then, we will use the same data to briefly explore Marxist theory, which is also presented in Part VII.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATASET

See the MicroCase exercise #3 for a description of the NYS dataset. Before we start our analyses, we'll need to load up the second version of our dataset, which is 'NYSCRIM2.' The reason we are switching datasets is so there are not too many variables in any one set (this reduces your need to hunt around for variables in MicroCase).

BRIEFLY EXPLORING CULTURE CONFLICT AND MARXIST THEORY: GETTING A HANDLE ON THE DATA AND USING CROSSTABULATION TABLES

Part VII presents three theories that are based in the idea that laws and ideas of deviance are created by the powerful to control the less powerful. The powerful may gain their control through political or financial clout, and use it to their advantage (e.g., the rich enact laws to protect their property from the poor).

Culture conflict theory, first published by Thorsten Sellin, acknowledges that where cultures co-exist in the same area, there will be conflict and crime even if there is no identifiable controlling entity. Although not designed to test culture conflict theory, the NYS does contain a relevant question that we can use in a brief exploration. The NYS asked respondents how much of a racial conflict was in the neighborhoods in which they lived. Under culture conflict theory, one would expect a more crime in those areas.

Marxist theory, on the other hand, focuses on economic factors. Marx argued that the poor were forced into crime through desperation and that they were also more likely to be victims of violent offenses. He asserted that class differences make society somewhat masochistic; that is, when a society has citizens who are much poorer than others that violence and other crimes will occur due to the desperation and frustration experienced by the poor who are continuously exploited by the rich. The NYS asked about two items that are relevant to testing Marxist theory: unemployment and victimization. We have already learned (in the exercise for social disorganization theory) that when unemployment is more of a problem, so are burglaries/thefts, but we can still check to see if respondents who live in neighborhoods characterized by greater unemployment are more likely to be victimized in violent crimes. Unfortunately, unemployment isn't the best measure of class differences, but the NYS wasn't designed to test Marxist theory.

As we learned in the earlier exercises, the NYS did not collect actual crime rates, but it did ask respondents how much of a problem several crimes were in their neighborhoods. Among the list were two items we will examine: burglaries/thefts and assaults/muggings. We will look at burglaries first, leaving assaults/muggings for you to look at for the "further exploration" questions.

To see if culture conflict theory helps us predict crime, first run a frequency of RACECONF, then run a crosstabulation table with whether or not burglaries and thefts are a problem in the respondent's neighborhood (BURGLARY) as the dependent (row) variable and RACECONF as the independent (column) variable. The frequency table shows that about one-fourth of the respondents' neighborhoods could be characterized as having some racial conflict.

What does the crosstabulation table show? In what type of neighborhood are burglaries/thefts the most problem? In what type of neighborhood are burglaries/thefts the least problem? What is the strength of the relationship shown in the table? Is it statistically significant? How can we summarize this table? Does this table support culture conflict theory?

Now, let's turn our attention to Marxist theory. I created a victimization measure for violent

crime by counting as victimized anyone who experienced during the previous year at least one violent offense from a list of four crimes (i.e., threatened/beaten up by others, attacked with a weapon, sexually attacked, or sexually pressured or pushed to more than the respondent wanted to do).

To see if Marxist theory helps us predict victimization, first run a frequency of VICTVIO, then run a crosstabulation table with whether or whether the respondent was victimized by a violent offense (VICTVIO) as the dependent (row) variable and whether unemployment is a problem in the respondent's neighborhood (UNEMP) as the independent (column) variable. The frequency table shows that 20% the respondents had been the victim of a violent offense during the past year.

What does the crosstabulation table show? In what type of neighborhood was victimization the most likely? In what type of neighborhood was victimization the least problem? What is the strength of the relationship shown in the table? Is it statistically significant? How can we summarize this table? Does this table support Marxist theory?

FURTHER EXPLORATION OF CULTURE CONFLICT AND MARXIST THEORY

Remember, good theories apply in multiple situations. In the "further exploration" questions, you'll see whether culture conflict theory helps us predict assaults/muggings. With respect to Marxist theory, we will see if high levels of unemployment lead to increased victimization in property crimes, although Marx argued that it was violence that was more likely to result from class differences.

CULTURE CONFLICT AND MARXIST THEORY ON YOUR OWN

Now that we have explored a few tenets of the culture conflict and Marxist theories, you could devise other ways of measuring and testing the theories. For example, you could look to see if those who lived in areas characterized by racial conflict were more likely to engage in violence themselves (VIOLENCE), as would be predicted by culture conflict theory. With respect to Marxist theory, you could see whether respondents with lower incomes (INCOME) are more likely to be victimized by violent offenses.

While you are further examining culture conflict and Marxist theory, reflect on how it helps us explain why some people break the law. Think also about crimes and/or situations that it cannot adequately address and other weaknesses of the two theories.

[PLEASE DO NOT TURN IN THESE PRECEDING SHEETS WITH YOUR ASSIGNMENT- THEY ARE FOR YOU TO KEEP]

Homework for MicroCase #6: General questions
(culture conflict and Marxist theories)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Answer the following questions by filling in the blanks or circling the appropriate responses. A few answers have been filled in for you.

Exploring culture conflict and Marxist theories:

Getting a handle on the data and using crosstabulation tables:

1. In Wave VII of the NYS dataset, _____% of the sample said racial conflict was a big problem in their neighborhoods, _____% felt it was somewhat of a problem, and _____% felt it was not a problem. _____% of the sample had been the victim of a violent offense during the previous year.

2. In the RACECONF --> BURGLARY crosstabulation, _____ (____%) of the respondents who said racial conflict was a big problem in their neighborhoods also said that burglaries/thefts were a big problem, compared to 56 (____%) who felt racial conflict was somewhat of a problem, and _____ (____%) who felt that racial conflict was not a problem. Conversely, 688 (____%) of those who felt that racial conflict was not a problem in their neighborhoods said that burglaries/thefts were also not a problem, compared to _____ (____%) who felt racial conflict was somewhat of a problem, and _____ (____%) who felt that racial conflict was a big problem. Overall, it appears that as racial conflict becomes more of a problem in a neighborhood, burglaries/thefts go *up* / *down*. This relationship is *weak* / *moderate* / *strong*. This relationship *is* / *is not* statistically significant.

The relationship between racial conflict and crime (as measured by burglaries/thefts) found using Wave VII of the NYS data *is similar to* / *differs greatly from* the findings expected under culture conflict theory.

3. In the UNEMP --> VICTVIO crosstabulation, _____ (____%) of the respondents who said unemployment was a big problem in their neighborhoods had been the victim of a violent offense during the previous years, compared to 88 (____%) of those who said

unemployment was somewhat of a problem, and _____ (_____%) of those who felt that unemployment was not a problem in their neighborhoods. This relationship is *weak / moderate / strong*. This relationship *is / is not* statistically significant.

The UNEMP --> VICTVIO table *does / does not* show that respondents who live in neighborhoods characterized by unemployment are more likely to be the victims of a violent offense.

The relationship between living in a neighborhood that is characterized by unemployment and victimization in a violent offense found using Wave VII of the NYS data *is similar to / differs greatly from* the findings expected under Marxist theory.

4. What does all of this mean? Please answer in essay form, summarizing what you have learned about culture conflict and Marxist theories from this part of the MicroCase.

Homework for MicroCase #6: "Further exploration" questions
(culture conflict and Marxist theories)

Name: _____

Date: _____

TASK: See if the racial conflict we developed for culture conflict theory helps us predict assaults/muggings (MUGGINGS). Also, to see if unemployment (the measure we used to test Marxist theory) helps us predict victimization in a property crime (VICTPROP).

Answer the following questions by filling in the blanks or circling the appropriate responses. A couple of answers have been filled in for you to make sure you're on the right track.

1. In the RACECONF --> MUGGINGS crosstabulation, _____ (____%) of the respondents who said racial conflict was a big problem in their neighborhoods also said that assaults/muggings were a big problem, compared to _____ (____%) who felt racial conflict was somewhat of a problem, and _____ (____%) who felt that racial conflict was not a problem. Conversely, _____ (____%) of those who felt that racial conflict was not a problem in their neighborhoods said that assaults/muggings were also not a problem, compared to _____ (____%) who felt racial conflict was somewhat of a problem, and _____ (____%) who felt that racial conflict was a big problem. Overall, it appears that as racial conflict becomes more of a problem in a neighborhood, assaults/muggings go *up* / *down*. This relationship is *weak* / *moderate* / *strong*. This relationship *is* / *is not* statistically significant.

The relationship between racial conflict and crime (as measured by assaults/muggings) found using Wave VII of the NYS data *is similar to* / *differs greatly from* the findings expected under culture conflict theory.

2. In Wave VII of the NYS dataset, _____% of the sample had been the victim of a property crime during the previous year.
3. In the UNEMP --> VICTPROP crosstabulation, _____ (____%) of the respondents who said unemployment was a big problem in their neighborhoods had been the victim of a property offense during the previous years, compared to _____ (____%) of those who said

unemployment was somewhat of a problem, and _____ (_____%) of those who felt that unemployment was not a problem in their neighborhoods. This relationship is *weak / moderate / strong*. This relationship *is / is not* statistically significant.

The UNEMP --> VICTPROP table *does / does not* show that respondents who live in neighborhoods characterized by unemployment are more likely to be the victims of a property crime.

The relationship between living in a neighborhood that is characterized by unemployment and victimization in a property offense found using Wave VII of the NYS data *is similar to / differs greatly from* the findings expected under Marxist theory.

POINTS TO PONDER: Marx argued that belong to the lower socioeconomic strata elevated one's chances of victimization in a violent offense. Can you come up with an explanation to link belonging to lower socioeconomic strata and victimization in a property crime?

4. What does all of this mean? Please answer in essay form, summarizing what you have learned about culture conflict and Marxist theories from this part of the MicroCase.

5. Design your own study to test either culture conflict or Marxist theory. Please answer in essay form, summarizing what variables would you include and why. What sample would you use and why? What do you expect to find, under your theory?

Affirmation of Independent Work

Submission of this assignment constitutes a statement on your part that apart from technical help, you completed this assignment on your own. Plagiarism will be reported to University authorities and can result in expulsion from the University.

Your Name: _____ *Signature:* _____

Homework for MicroCase #6: "On your own" questions
(culture conflict and Marxist theories)

Name: _____

Date: _____

TASK: Try to think of other ways to measure the tenets of culture conflict and Marxist theories. If any of your ideas appears in the dataset, run some analyses to test it. Otherwise, run some tables using unemployment to predict the respondents' own participation in violence (VIOLENCE). For Marxist theory, check to see whether respondents with lower incomes (INCOME) are more likely to be victimized by violent offenses.

Directions: Answer the following questions. NOTE: Please print out and include your tables with these questions so your work can be graded.

Culture conflict and Marxist theories on your own:

1. Which variable did you choose as your dependent variable for culture conflict theory and why did you choose that variable?
2. How did unemployment (or whichever variable you chose) affect your dependent variable? Make sure to provide a description that includes the percentages, Cramer's V value, the strength of the relationship, and the significance value.
3. Can you say your testing supports culture conflict theory? Why/why not?
4. Which variable did you choose as your independent variable for Marxist theory and why did you choose that variable?

