

### **Ideology & Exploitation: the problem of consent**

1. **The Problem:** Exploitation = a relation in which the exploiter depends upon the effort of the exploited --> at some level the exploited must cooperate with the exploiter.

2. One image of this process = purely coercive: why do the exploited work? Because of threats and fear.

3. Sophisticated version = Bowles & Gintis, "Contested Exchange"

3.1 The paper is primarily addressed at neoclassical economists. Neoclassical view of production process = production function consists of function that transforms inputs into outputs: labor + capital (raw materials, means of production, etc.) --> output.

3.2 Critique of this position = there needs to be a "labor extraction function" = an additional function that tells us how much actual labor you get from a give labor input. Why? Because the labor contract is not costlessly enforced.

3.3 Labor extraction is a function of: a) surveillance (probability of catching shirking) and b) the punishment of being caught (especially being fired).

3.4 **punishment:** for being fired to "hurt" the wage of an employed worker must be greater than the income the worker would get if fired --> wage must be at least slightly above the market clearing wage.

3.5 **surveillance:** surveillance costs money. The more spent on surveillance, the higher the chance of catching shirking.

3.6 BUT: [On the basis of the logic of "expected utility" of compliance vs shirking] Compliance depends upon pain of being caught and Probability --> a trade-off for employer between paying higher wages (therefore creating more pain) and putting more money into surveillance.

3.7 Implications:

1) permanent unemployment (because wages are not market clearing: there will always be people willing to work for less);

2) workers wages contains a "rent" component -- a component above the cost of producing labor power. [Note this is different from the "rent" component of the wages of employees in contradictory locations -- it goes to all employees simply by virtue of being employed].

3) the rent component of the wage → divisions within the working class between employed and unemployed. This pretty complex: by pushing their wages up, employed workers indirectly increase equilibrium unemployment.

4) The welfare state blunts the fear of firing → greater rent.

#### 4. Critique:

The model operates with an impoverished of the ideological practices (subjective underpinnings of the actors) within production. This is true in two respects:

- 1) there is an unsatisfactory specification of the normative underpinnings of coercion itself;
- 2) compliance is not simply bound up with coercion.

Cognitive process	Nature of the Immediate Relations in Production	
	<i>Domination</i>	<i>Asymmetric Reciprocity</i>
<i>Strategic rationality</i>	threats & rational submission	promises & rational consent
<i>Nonstrategic ego norms</i>	obedience	responsibility
<i>alter norms</i>	legitimacy	justice/fairness

**Note:** The columns in this table constitute a gestalt: Rational submission without the corresponding normative order would constitute *despotism*. Rational consent without the corresponding norms of responsibility and fairness constitutes *opportunistic cooperation*.

4.1 Ideological foundations of coercion: ego and alter norms of *obedience* and *legitimacy*. Surveillance/coercion is less costly if workers have a disposition to obey when they perceive the authority as legitimately constituted. **Absence of legitimate authority = despotism** = generally much less efficient because of high surveillance costs.

4.2 *Market Despotism* is one type of factory regime: a regime with minimal ideological mechanisms of engendering compliance. The course of capitalist development → undermines this form of labor extraction.

4.3 *Modifications of market despotism*. Since despotism is inefficient, generally minimal levels of due process/nonarbitrariness are established --> legitimacy to authority in exchange for normal obedience to commands. This, however, is usually insufficient because it still relies on

surveillance/threats for enforcement, and this is inefficient when (a) labor is highly skilled (and thus workers control application of skills), or (b) the labor process is highly interdependent and thus surveillance of individual performance is problematic → increasing problem in the course of capitalist development, particularly for nonworking class employees, but also for workers.

4.4 *Shift from domination to asymmetrical reciprocity*: hegemonic factor regimes based on consent --> to some extent the material interests of the employees are looked after by the employer. Normative foundation = “fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay”: workers follow norms of responsible honest labor in exchange for being treated fairly/justly by their employers. This generates *loyalty* on the worker to the firm.

4.5 **Consequences of hegemonic consent**: surveillance is shifted from primarily a **vertical** to a **horizontal** phenomenon: workers enforce the norms on each other -- both norms against rate busting *and* against slacking, not pulling your weight. *Mutual surveillance* replaces *hierarchical surveillance* as the central, daily mechanism of social control for producing compliance.

4.6 *Endogeneity of ideological practices*: These norms emerge and are sustained endogenously within the interactive practices of production; they are not primarily the result of socialization, propaganda, schools, churches. These may reinforce these norms -- as in Bowles & Gintis’s well known argument about schooling (working class schools → classroom practices stressing obedience to authority; middle class schools → classroom practices stressing responsibility, autonomy). But the norms themselves are grounded in the material realities of the labor process itself.

4.7 *The noncontractual basis of contract*: all of this connects to an old sociological theme: rational strategic action is normatively -- nonstrategically -- regulated.

## 5. Some additional issues

**5.1 Alternative interpretation of cooperation & mutual surveillance**: Keeping the wolves at Bay: workers monitor each other in order to keep management from coming down hard on them.

**5.2 ENDOGENEITY** of norms. There are two kinds of views one might have:

1) The norms/values are actually created within the labor process: actors did not (necessarily) hold these values prior to entering a given labor process and they acquire them through various mechanisms once they are engaged in the interactive practices of the labor process.

2) As a normal part of social life *in any society* (virtually) people learn/develop a range of moral principles. In a Piagetian/Kohlberg sense these might be thought of as inherent stages in moral development; or they might simply be culturally universal possible norms/values. Everyone learns the norms: “tit for tat”, caring, mutual/reciprocal obligations, keeping

promises, obedience to legitimate authority, looking out for ones own material interests, conditional altruism for people with whom you are in relations of mutual dependence, etc. These can be thought of as a **repertoire of moral principles of action** which most adults have available to them. What is endogenously produced, therefore, is the linkage between an element of this repertoire and the interactive situation: this is what is **learned** through trial and error, affirmations and sanctions, not the norm itself.

The second of these seems the more plausible way of thinking about the issue.

Some notes:

- a. there might be individuals in any culture who lack all of the elements of the repertoire. These might be thought of as “sociopaths”: people unable to learn the appropriate norms for a given situation.
- b. this repertoire might be rooted in psychological issues as Piaget/Kohlberg suggest: there is moral development towards increasing complexity and universalism. Habermas suggests that there is a cultural analogue to this individual level trajectory of moral development. One might therefore speak of the development of **normative competence**: the capacity of people to figure out the normative requirements of a given situation and select the appropriate moral precepts for that situation.
- c. Some cultures might lack some of these elements, conceivably; this is an empirical question. It is likely that different cultures have different mixes of specific norms in this “menu”. In some cultures the obedience/legitimacy norms may be much more firmly in place; in others the egoistic norms may be especially strong. Cultures may also differ in the thresholds of conditions within contexts needed to trigger the application of specific norms: in some cultures, for example, it may be easier to solve the information conditions for conditional altruism than in others (eg. cultures could differ in the degree of cynicism or the degree of suspiciousness about the motives of others). What all this means is that the learning process by which certain norms are selected in a given workplace/game may be different depending upon the broader cultural context.

### 5.3 Variability

This approach to norms-in-situations suggests that there are two crucial sources of variation in the actual norms deployed in a given situation:

- 1) variations in contexts → variations in selected norms by the conditions in the context
- 2) variations in cultural patterns → variations in the ease with which certain norms are selected within a given kind of context.

I would predict that most of the variation cross-nationally in the normative orders of workplaces revolve around the first of these. Japanese workers are loyal to their firms and display strong patterns of consent-fairness norms because their workplaces are organized so as to elicit these norms, not because Japanese culture fosters loyalty.

#### 5.4 Gender Norms

These arguments apply to other normative contexts. Consider the *Three Men and a Baby* movie: this is a story about how three macho-bachelor men contend with being thrust into a “game” in which they are forced to act on relatively unfamiliar norms. There is a transition period -- a learning period -- but they have the moral capacities to learn to be gentle, nurturing, etc. This perspective suggests that men and women both hold norms (and corresponding dispositions) for gentleness, nurturance, caring and the like, but that the roles which they are called to fulfill impose different demands on them with respect to these norms. The mix may be different, and -- even more importantly perhaps -- the corresponding dispositions (the cultural level of subjectivity) may be more or less developed. But the most important factor in shaping the actual normative behavior of men and women is the contexts in which they deploy their dispositions and select their norms. Of course, this is an empirical question: it could be the case that in some times and places gender norms/dispositions are radically polarized in the subjectivities of actors, not just the contexts.