**Miller's Lower-Class Focal Concerns**

Walter Miller didn't see juvenile delinquency as being rooted in the rejection of the middle-class value system, as did other subculture theorists, but in the value system of the lower class. It is this value system that generates delinquent acts. This value system emerged as a response to living in the slums. Miller was an anthropologist who was familiar with enthnography. Having closely studied the lower class areas in Boston, in 1955, he came up with his own conclusions, and thus his Lower-Class Focal Concerns theory. He saw society as composed of different social groups. Each group had its own subculture. He used the concept of focal concerns, and not value, to further describe things that were important to the subculture. These "focal concerns" are important aspects in the subculture and require constant attention and care.

Miller identified six focal concerns to which the lower class give attention to. The concern over trouble is a major feature of the lower class. Getting into trouble and staying out of trouble are very important daily preoccupations. Trouble can either mean prestige or landing in jail. Toughness, another concern, further represents a commitment to law-violation and being a problem to others. Machismo and being daring is stressed. The third focal concern is that of smartness. It is the ability to gain something by outsmarting or conning another. Prestige is often the reward for those demonstrating such skills. Another focal concern is excitement. Living on the edge for thrills and doing dangerous things as well as taking risks is a crucial concern. Another focal concern is that of fate. It is a crucial concern to the lower class. many believe that their lives are subject to forces outside of their control. The last focal concern focuses upon automony. This signifies being independant, not relying on others and rejecting authority.

Miller further observed that an absence of a father in a young boy's life posed a problem for learning appropriate male behavior. This served as a device for gangs to accomodate the problem faced by young males who had no presence of a father figure. Miller's theory has however received mixed reviews. Many say that he disregarded the fact that many lower class people actually do conform to societal norms.

1. What are Miller’s six focal concerns of the lower class?
2. Do you agree/disagree with Miller’s theory? Explain.