

Chippin' In: An Analysis of the Criminological Concepts within Cyberpunk 2077

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Abstract:

The cyberpunk genre dominates much of our popular culture, from how we think of cyber- and white-collar crime, to our understanding of how technology influences the criminal justice system. This article explores the common criminological themes prevalent within the recent video game Cyberpunk 2077 as an example of popular criminology. Specifically, it explores the game's story and environment by examining key characters' responses to structural inequalities through an anomie theory lens. Key characters and groups within the game exemplify Merton's (1938) different responses to rampant poverty and socioeconomic inequality. Thus, the game can be used to explore how cultural goals and institutionalized means contribute to criminal behavior in an anomic environment.

Application of Popular Criminology

- Using media to examine how society understands crime and criminals (Rafter, 2007)
- Video games provide more dynamic depictions of behavior than films or books
- Provide player with opportunities to interact with characters and the environment.
- Cyberpunk 2077 is a role-playing game where players are the character "V", a mercenary for hire in Night City.
- Night City is an extremely unequal society, with rampant poverty and violence.
- Merton's (1938) Anomie Theory ideal for understanding how characters behave in Night City.

This chart explains the different responses when someone agrees with their culture's goals and the means by which it is acceptable to achieve them.

	Culture Goals	Institutionalized Means
Conformity	+	+
Innovation	+	-
Ritualism	-	+
Retreatism	-	-
Rebellion	X	X



Ritualism - River Ward (NCPD) & Saul Bright (Aldecados)

- No longer push themselves to meet goals of respective cultures.
- "Burned out on the rat race. Willing to sellout or quit than continue.
- Face pressure from in-group members to adhere to cultural goals.



Lost Another Day to Pointless Drudgery

Conformity - The Corpo

- Dominates society through economic and social pressure
- Much of Night City's population works for the corporate interests
- Consequently, they obey the law and do not cause issues

Welcome to Night City - The City of Dreams



Innovation - The Merc Subculture

- Have the drive to succeed, but lack the means.
- Innovate by freelancing as mercenaries outside of corporate structure.
- Willing to commit crimes and enact "street justice".
- Some, such as the "Scavs" gang resort to barbarism to fulfill city's desire for implants and experiences

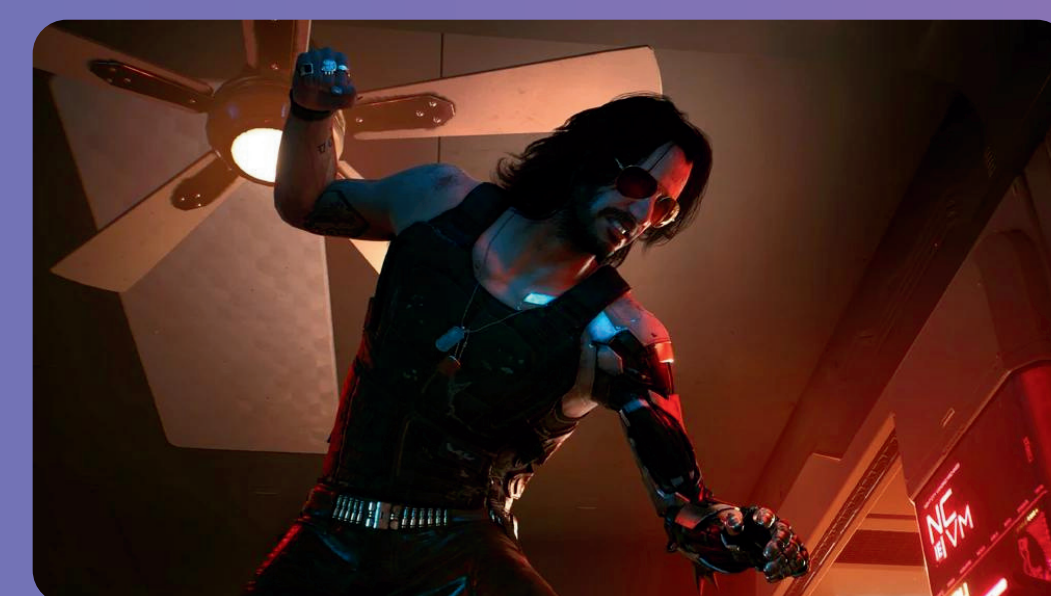
Roll the Bones - I'm Chippin' In



Retreatism - Brainsdance Addicts

- Brainsdances allow people to relive others' experiences.
- Some withdraw from society to live an imagined life through others.
- Do not pursue their own goals through own means.

There's War in Peace



Rebellion - Johnny Silverhand

- Refuses to abide by cultural goals of success within corporation
- Seeks to break the system and free people from corporate control.
- Willing to commit extreme acts of violence to overthrow society

Blaze Your Way Down the Rebel Path



Conclusion

- Societal socioeconomic structure affects how people react, filtered through their culture and the options available to them. Severely anomic or unequal societies can encourage non-conforming responses.
- Leading to crime and deviance.
- Further developments of Anomie and Strain theories also applicable.

References

This poster is based on the following paper:

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