

Viewing Guide ***Dog Town and Z Boys***

We want to think about the difference between documentary films and video ethnographies. The position we will take in this course is that ethnographies are “theorized” and that this becomes evident as the film presentation unfolds.

To say that a film is theorized means, at a minimum, that watching the film we can recognize sociological theories or areas of sociological theory and research that we can clearly identify as major themes in the film. Watching *Dog Town and Z Boys* I counted four or five of these areas of “sociological theory” that were in play. These might not be theories that you know about, but you might also think about whether there is information conveyed or statements presented or behaviors made manifest that you think are really sociological.

As you look at the film, identify and list what these are.

A related sociological dimension is that within any one of these theoretical areas, the film may give a variety of examples, tell how social processes work, and elaborate a particular theme by making it more complex and/or stating some cause/effect relationships. I can think of at least three of these in the film.

What theories are developed and elaborated in the film?

It may not be clear to you quite what I mean by this theoretical identification and elaboration and that is OK. Be mindful, though, that as we watch sociological films we will want to both learn to identify these implicit sociological theory themes and also use our knowledge of sociological theory to develop a critical perspective on the films.

1. **Does creativity justify or is it a product of deviance? How important was the deviance of the group to their inventing their skateboard technique?**
2. **How do social class differences play into the Dogtown story?**
3. **How did the physical location aspects of the Dogtown neighborhood shape or affect development of the Z-Boys group?**
4. **What role did group solidarity play in producing the impact of the Zephyr Skateboarding team?**
5. **How did the aesthetics of the Dogtown scene relate to the popularity of the Z-Boys and how were they popularized?**
6. **Who popularized Z-boys, why was he able to do it, and to what extent were the Z-Boys a product of his art and imagination, as opposed to simply being compelling on their own?**
7. **Is it fair to characterize Z-Boys as a delinquent gang? How are they similar to and different from other gangs, particularly those that have crime as a central activity?**

8. **Assess the pros and cons of pool riding. You can weigh its "productivity" for development of technique against property damage. I'm more interested in the fact that it was fun, and that the fun made the deviance justifiable.**
9. **Ethnographies are most effective when they tell a compelling story that makes a point. What's the a Story in Dogtown and what's the point?**
10. **The narrator tells us that the competitiveness and hunger for success among Z-Team members ultimately led to the demise of the movement. This implies an organizational evolution. What were the dynamics of that evolution?**