**SOC 3290 Deviance**

 **Overheads Lecture 9: The Anomie Perspective**

\* There are two versions of anomie theory having different emphases:

 (1) “Normlessness” underlying deviance;

 (2) Discrepancies between social goals & legitimate means

  **Durkheim and Normlessness:**

\* *Anomie*= a state of “normlessness”/ insufficient regulatory constraints

\* Similarities/differences with social disorganization theory:

 - similar: focus on normative chaos resulting from social change

 - different: focus on all society, not just an ecological zone

 - different: clearer focus on modernizing societies, not all periods

 - different: deviance not search for reorganization, but a release of

 greed/unlimited aspirations

 - different: don’t patch up normative order piecemeal, but overall

\* Durkheim on human nature: (contradictory):

 (1) No human nature without society: socially shaped in entirety

 (2) Human nature = an “inextinguishable thirst” to be socially

 regulated in face of limited resources

\* When social limits either *unclear*, or seen as *unfair*, trouble ensues

\* Problem of transition between traditional & modern societies = shifts in normative patterns

\* Durkheim on suicide:

 - demonstrated “private” acts can only be explained socially

 - focus on deviance-producing potential of anomie

\* Types of suicide:

(1) *Egoistic* suicide: too little social integration (e.g. the

unmarried);

(2) *Altruistic* suicide: too much social integration (e.g. hara-kiri;

 terrorist bombers/ martyrdom);

(3) *Fatalistic* suicide: too much social regulation (e.g. slaves;

 those made to feel worthless);

(4) *Anomic* suicide: too little social regulation (e.g. rapid economic

 change; expecting too much leading to relative frustration):

 - rapid change removes normative “shield” / releases

 “insatiable desires”

 - winners/losers don’t receive “just desserts” in former terms

 - difficulty adjusting/painful

 - aspirations spiral against unfulfillment of unobtainable goals

 - effort grows when least productive

 - one’s desire to live suffers

\* Anomie becoming a “chronic condition”

 - economic progress freed from social and moral constraints

 - religion, the state and occupational groups waning in influence

\* Mechanical solidarity (waning):

 - simple, relatively undifferentiated societies

 - similar individuals

 - similar social/economic activities

 - relative “visibility” to each other

 - norms repressive of individual uniqueness

 - norms favoring a collective “oneness” (e.g. the Amish)

\* Organic solidarity (growing, but too slowly):

 - complex, highly specialized modern societies

 - increases in volume and density of populations

 - personal replaced by anonymity

 - highly specialized division of labour

 - common religious beliefs losing power

 - new rules slow in emerging

 - lack of order/morality in interim: growth in suicide/deviance

 **Merton and the Goals-Means Gap:**

\* Robert Merton:

 - downplays normlessness in favor of normatively induced

 aspirations (e.g. success)

- emphasizes gap between aspirations & legitimately available

 means of achieving them (i.e. “anomie”)

 - the greater the gap, the more pressure toward crime

\* Modes of adaptation to anomie:

 (1) *Conformity* (accepting cultural goals &legitimate means);

 (2) *Innovation* (accepting goals/ rejecting legitimate means);

 (3) *Ritualism* ( rejecting/limiting cultural goals/ accepting

 legitimate means);

 (4) *Retreatism* (rejecting both cultural goals & legitimate

 means);

 (5) *Rebellion* (rejecting both & replacing with new ones).

\* Reformulations/Modifications:

 - Cloward and Ohlin: added concept of *differential illegitimate*

 *opportunity* affecting drift into different delinquent subcultures:

 (e.g. criminal/conflict/retreatist).

- Cohen: added concept of “*status frustration*” to mediate Merton’s “atomistic” account (e.g. delinquent subcultures of lower class boys unable to compete in middle-class terms).

 **Identifying Anomic Deviance:**

\* Post WWII faith in science + liberal welfare state = use of official statistics & quantitative measures of deviance/anomie.

\* Ignored/downplayed: Historical context/analysis

 Personal experience/qualitative approaches

\* Measures of anomie:

- Lander (“objective” measure: % nonwhite population/ %home owners)

- Srole: “subjective” quantitative measure of individuals’ perceptions

- Short: “subjective” quantitative measures of position discontent

\* Measures of deviance: official government statistics (biased). Much influenced by government research funding

 **(2) Social Control of Anomic Deviance:**

\* Two traditions (Durkheim + Merton):

\* Durkheim: reconstruct the normative/moral structure of society:

 - not a return to past (e.g. religion)

 - a new civic/secular moral order

\* Strategies: (1) New occupational organizations; (2) Education

\* Merton: eliminate strain between societal goals & differentially available means

\* Strategies: Either:

 (1) Re-socialize society to accept inequality: eradicate destructive

 myth of equal opportunity (not favored); or

 (2) Reorganize society so that equal opportunity is available

\* Early 1960's: Merton’s latter approach attempted (“Mobilization for

 Youth”). Targeted federal attempt to:

 - increase employment ability

 - training

 - help youth achieve employment goals - provide jobs

 - overcome hiring discrimination

\* Results:

 - No major reduction in delinquency

 - Funds used by poor to oppose blocks to equal opportunity

 - Officials felt “biting hand that feeds them”

 - Programs cut/ FBI investigations began of community organizers

 - Power structure reasserted itself

 - Too radical/not radical enough (depending on social position)

  **The Anomie Perspective Today:**

\* Enormous influence of anomie perspective (1950's-1970)

\* Current research on anomie & deviance:

 - mental illness - drug use and addiction

 - suicide - delinquency

  **Assessment of the Anomie Perspective:**

\* Major contribution: aspirations to deviate rooted in structural contradictions in society

\* Criticisms (Durkheim):

 -Links between normative deregulation and suicide

 vague/inconsistent

 -statistics less conclusive than once thought

\* Criticisms (Merton):

 - Atomistic

 - Differential illegitimate opportunity

 - Use of official statistics

 - Ignoring deviance of higher classes

 - Ignoring impact of labeling

 - Ignoring societies where social position fixed

\* General criticisms:

 (1) An overly exaggerated sense of the unity of social

 structure/goals (ignores diversity/subcultures/contracultures

 & gender)

 (2) Not extending structural analysis far enough (Marxists)

 (3) Postmodern critique: real inequalities less important than

 “virtual inequalities”