

21A.218  
Anthropology  
Identity and Difference  
Class #3

## 1. Structural Explanations for/ theories of Deviance

Focus on social location or situation (position in social structure, not on individual)

Emphasize group responses

Retain notion of deviance as harmful, product of something wrong; here something is wrong with social structure rather than with individual

## 2. Examples of Structural theories:

### a. Culture conflict (Thorstein Sellin, 1938)

adhering to the norms of one culture, people automatically violate the norms of another culture; conditions under which conflict occurs; migration, frontiers, colonialism/imperialism

problems: assumes ignorance of other group norms, and legally enacted laws (i.e. formal norms)

### b. Culture conflict (Walter Miller, 1958)

Conflict can arise within a society, not only between societies and cultures; adhering to the norms of one social class can cause conflict with the norms of another social class. Argued that delinquent boys "focal concerns" (trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, autonomy) expressed efforts to adhere to the norms of their "lower" class. In predominantly female headed households, gang becomes a way of learning the male role. Through selective recruiting into the gangs, boys learn to subordinate own desires to what are experienced as powerful group interests. Therefore strong push toward conformity within the group; fears of exclusion.

Conclusion: if the lower classes are not the opposite of the middle class, it nonetheless has distinctive traditions with clear identity and integrity. Delinquency is not a reaction to or against middle class morality, merely a logical and expected outcome of adherence to lower class values.

Seriously criticized for its interpretation that "focal concerns" of the delinquent boys were in fact the values of the working classes; no reason to make the leap from delinquents to the members of that class generally;

Note difference Sellin and Miller/ focus on groups vs. classes

Cultural groups/ status groups

share style of life and internal bonds of solidarity  
beliefs, based on variety of phenomenon including  
religion, ethnicity, patterns of consumption

Classes

shaped by historical experience in a labor market,  
do not necessarily come to have sense of self as  
a group

Like Sellin, assumes independence of (class)cultures; clearly media transmit cultural norms

across (sub)cultural groups and classes.

Significance: attention to role of group norms on individual action and identity; made idea of

deviance problematic.

c. Cultural Transmission theories (Ecological approach, Chicago School, 1920-1940s)  
e.g. Shaw and Mckay

described the social life of the city as a "system" with parts contributing (functions) to the stability and equilibrium of the whole described the city also as a series of concentric zones of varying social characteristics: population density, residential v. commercial property, levels of income/education, percent of single parent households, amount of crime and delinquency; described areas as "disorganized," sometimes referred to as social disorganization theory

argued that deviance (delinquency and crime) was transmitted from one "residential" generation to the next by living within particular neighborhoods - which provided experience, role models, opportunities for deviant behavior

criticized by C. W. Mills and others for imposing biases of observers on unfamiliar social landscape; neighborhoods were not disorganized, merely organized differently, observations about "inheritance" of deviance within particular areas of city were never really challenged

d. Cultural Transmission: Differential Association (E. Sutherland, 1940)

Focused on the organized way in which deviance is transmitted; argued that deviance, like conformity, was conditioned and learned behavior; learning process was similar; learning takes place in group settings and includes both techniques, forms of behavior, and values, interpretations and attitudes toward behavior and technique

Deviance occurs because the environment and group interactions contain more information and experiences favoring violation of norms than information and experiences favoring conformity;

Differential association depends on the variation in the frequency, duration, priority (when in life course), and intensity of interactions

e. Anomie Theories: Emile Durkheim, French, (1858-1917)

Anomie refers to a state of normlessness in which social norms no longer regulate human behavior; points to the importance of social norms, standards, and structure for setting limits to behavior; suggests that when there are limitless goals (no norms, normlessness), deviance will increase.

Described increase in what he called anomic suicide during periods of rapid economic change (dramatic increases and decreases in economic conditions); not only when people are made poor who were not, but when expectations (rising economic conditions) are limitless, suicide increased.

f. Anomie Theories; Robert Merton (1910 - ) (1936)

Amended Durkheim and redefined anomie.

Anomie results not merely from breakdown in the regulation provided by social goals and norms, but because of a breakdown in the relationship between goals and means to achieve them; in other words, a lack of fit between goals and means; deviance arises from unequal access to the legitimate means for achieving socially accepted goals.

Created a typology to describe the variation in individual adaptation to possible anomie; conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion; only some of these forms of adaptation produce deviance.

g. Anomie Theories: Cloward and Ohlin (1960)

Pointed out that while deviance might arise from unequal or lack of access to legitimate means for achieving goals, all those who lacked access to legitimate means did not automatically have access to illegitimate means; those who did not have access to either legitimate or illegitimate means may be what Merton described as retreatist and reject goals altogether.