



**Lecture 15:**  
Shaw-McKay: social disorganization  
Start: Merton & anomie



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**youth gangs**

- 2004 National Youth Gang Survey
  - 24,000 gangs (estimate), relatively stable
  - 760,000 gang members (false precision?)
  - Increasing migration, for family reasons or (sometimes) expansion
- Thornberry et al: gang members responsible for large proportion (2/3 in some studies) of serious violent juvenile offenses
- Blumstein: gangs/guns/crack and youth homicide trends

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**Social Disorganization Theory**



- Background
  - Race, ethnicity, and "Born Criminals"
  - Clifford Shaw & Henry McKay (1942) : a sharp rebuke to racist stereotypes
- Assumptions
  - Delinquency due to breakdown of community institutional controls
  - Normative consensus
  - Disorganization is caused by rapid social change (industrialization, urbanization, immigration)
  - Social disorganization leads to self-perpetuating criminal values and traditions

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## Social Disorganization

- Conceptual Tools
  - Social disorganization
  - Ethnic succession
  - Cultural transmission of delinquent traditions (e.g., west side caves)
- Methods
  - Maps! Descriptive statistics
  - Life histories
- Critique
  - Ecological stability
  - Ethnic groups do not intermingle
  - Measurement: "disorganization" = crime
  - Immigration?

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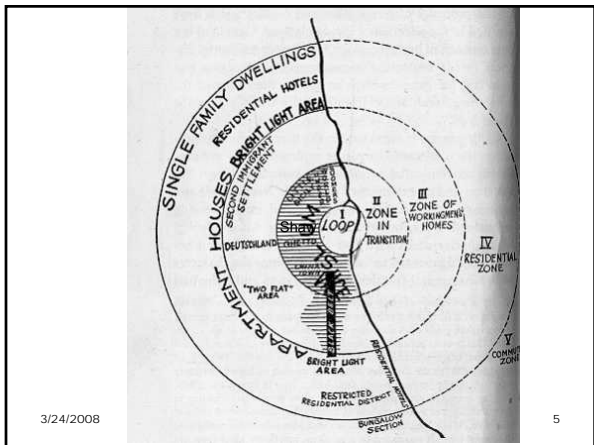
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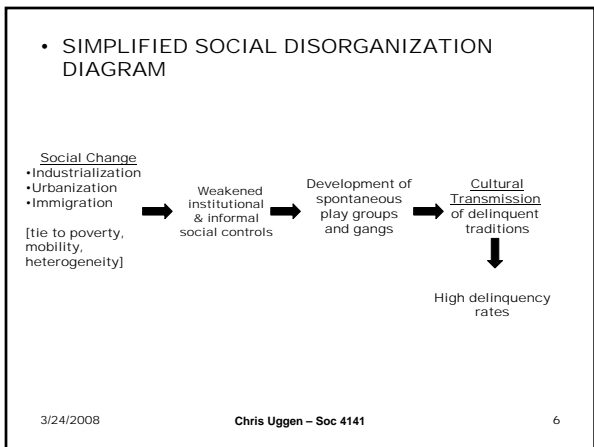
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## policy and extensions

- Policy Implications: Chicago Area Projects
  - Recreation, neighborhood health and sanitation, indigenous gang workers
  - No evaluation data
- Replications
  - Boston Midcity project (no effect)
  - "moving to opportunity" experiment today shows *some* promise in reducing violent crime
- Extensions: Robert Sampson and "Neighborhood Collective Efficacy"

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## Extensions: Robert Sampson

- "Collective Efficacy" of neighborhoods
  - Survey for neighborhood cohesion and informal social controls
  - Videotaping physical and social disorder
- Neighborhoods that can realize their own values have lower crime rates



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## Merton's *Social Structure & Anomie*

- Background: Durkheim and Anomie (1938)
  - Merton's "role model" and "self-fulfilling prophecy"
- Assumptions
  - The disadvantaged are motivated to commit crime
  - This motivation stems from a poor balance between social structure and cultural definitions of success
- Conceptual tools
  - Anomie (vs. Strain)
  - Common success goals but not opportunity (why?)
  - Reference groups and relative deprivation
  - Typology of balanced, ritualistic, anomic societies
  - Typology of individual adaptations to strain

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### individual adaptations

	Success Goals	Legitimized Means/Norms	Image?
Conformist	+	+	
Innovation	+	-	
Ritualism	-	+	
Retreatism	-	-	
Rebellion	+/-	+/-	

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### extension I: Cloward and Ohlin's Differential Opportunity Theory (1960)

- Variation in Illegitimate opportunity
- Typology of Delinquent "Gangs"
  - Criminal/Theft: Stable and integrated conventional and criminal system
  - Conflict: Instability, lack of integration
  - Retreatist: "Double failures" in any system

Limited legitimate economic opportunity → Frustration, deprivation, gang formation → 
 

- Stable integrated convention/criminal = theft gang
- Nonintegrated, no crime = conflict gang
- Double failure = retreatist "gang"

- Policy: Mobilization for Youth

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### Extension II: Cohen's Status Frustration Theory

- Reaction formation
- Middle class measuring rod
  - Ambition, individual responsibility, skills & achievement, postponing gratification, rationality & planning, manners & courtesy, control of violence, constructive recreation, respect for property
- "Malicious, negativistic, nonutilitarian delinquency"

Working class socialization → School failure → Loss of esteem, rejection → Reaction formation → Delinquency

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### other extensions

- Societal: "Crime and the American dream" (Messner and Rosenfeld 2001)
- Individual: General strain theory (Agnew 2001)
- Subcultural: Lower-class culture (Miller 1958)

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### critique

1. No social-psychological theory
  - which adaptation?
  - substance use?
2. Universality assumption
  - subcultures?
3. Empirical support weak
4. Overemphasizes economic goals
5. Class bias (street crime)
  - » Not radical enough
6. Reach high with low blows?
  - » money can't override honesty in dominant culture

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### Policy Implications of Anomie & Opportunity: Mobilization for Youth (NYC)

- "War on Poverty" and "Great Society" era
- NYC: reduce delinquency by
  - Improve education (teacher training, preschool)
  - Create work opportunity (vocational training, jobs center)
  - Organize lower-class communities (neighborhood councils)
  - Adolescent services (gang workers, hangouts)
  - Neighborhood service centers (counseling and aid to families)
- Results unimpressive
  - Bad press, Gang workers, Conflicting goals
  - Life course problem? [Uggen 2000]

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next

- finish anomie/begin conflict

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