PART IV

Anomie/Strain Theories of Crime

Anomie and strain theory are distinct but related theories of crime (see Agnew, 1997a; Agnew and Passas, 1997; Baumer, 2007; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Bernard, 1987; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Messner, 1988, for discussions of the relationship between these theories). Contemporary versions of these theories trace their origins to the work of Merton (1938) and to the revisions in Merton's theory made by Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960). Messner and Rosenfeld's (2013) institutional-anomie theory of crime now represents the leading version of anomie theory (see also Messner and Rosenfeld, 2006; Messner et al., 2008, 2019; Rosenfeld and Messner, 1995), while Agnew's (1992, 2005, 2006a, b, 2009) general strain theory represents the leading version of strain theory.

Anomie Theory

Anomie theory has focused on explaining why some societies, such as the United States, have higher crime rates than others. According to Merton's (1938) version of the theory, the United States places a relatively strong emphasis on the goal of monetary success, but a weak emphasis on the legitimate norms for achieving this goal, like education and hard work. As a consequence, the goal-seeking behavior of individuals is subject to less regulation. Individuals are more likely to pursue monetary success using whatever means are necessary—including crime. Societies that fail to adequately regulate goal-seeking behavior are said to be characterized by a state of "anomie" or normlessness.

Merton's arguments in this area were largely neglected until the 1980s. Most attention instead focused on his version of strain theory (see below). During the 1980s and 1990s, however, several scholars called attention to Merton's anomie theory and began to suggest refinements to it (Bernard, 1987; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Cullen, 1984; Messner, 1988; Passas, 1997; Rosenfeld, 1989). Messner and Rosenfeld (2006) drew heavily on the theory when they developed their institutional-anomie theory of crime (see Chapter 13 in this part). Like Merton, they attempt to explain why the United States has such a high crime rate (and, like Merton, their arguments are applicable to other societies). And they begin their explanation by drawing on Merton's argument that the higher crime rate in the United States stems from a cultural system that encourages everyone to strive for monetary success but places little emphasis on the legitimate norms for achieving such success. This emphasis on the unrestrained pursuit of monetary success is what they refer to as the "American Dream."

Messner and Rosenfeld, however, go on to argue that the American Dream is only part of the explanation for the higher crime rate in the United States. In particular, they argue that the cultural emphasis on money is paralleled by an institutional structure that is dominated by the economy. The other major institutions in the United States—the family, school, and political system—are all subservient to economic institutions. Noneconomic goals and roles are devalued. For example, little value is placed on the role of education for its own sake or on the role of homemaker. Noneconomic institutions must accommodate themselves to the demands of the economy (e.g., parents struggle to arrange childcare so they can work). And economic norms have come to penetrate these other institutions (e.g., the school system, like the economic system, is based on the individualized competition for rewards). As a result, institutions such as the family, school, and political system are less able to effectively socialize or train individuals and to effectively sanction deviant behavior. For example, it is more difficult for parents to effectively socialize and supervise their children when parents must devote the bulk of their time and energy to work.

There have been several efforts to test institutional-anomie theory (for overviews, see Baumer, 2009; Kubrin et al., 2009; Messner and Rosenfeld, 2006, 2013; Messner et al., 2019; Pratt and Cullen, 2005; for selected studies, see Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Bjerregaard and Cochran, 2008; Chamlin and Cochran, 1995; Hughes et al., 2015; Jensen and Akers, 2003; Maume and Lee, 2003; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997; Piquero and Piquero, 1998; Savolainen, 2000). The central prediction of the theory is that high crime rates stem from the dominance of the economy over other institutions, such as the family, school, and political system. If this is true, crime rates should be higher in those countries or areas where economic institutions are relatively strong and lower in those areas where noneconomic institutions are relatively strong. Researchers have measured the strength of noneconomic institutions in terms of such factors as the ratio of marriages to divorces, levels of religious participation (church membership), levels of political participation (voter turnout), and the strength of social welfare programs (e.g., family support, social security, unemployment insurance programs). Most studies suggest that crime rates are lower in societies and areas that are not dominated by the economy; that is, crime rates are lower in societies and areas with stronger families, schools, religious institutions, and political systems. Further, most studies suggest that the effect of economic stressors on crime is lower in societies and areas where noneconomic institutions are stronger. In particular, economic stressors such as poverty and high rates of income inequality have a lower effect on crime rates in areas where welfare spending is higher and noneconomic institutions such as the family and religion are stronger.

Institutional-anomie theory also predicts that crime is higher in societies or areas that place a stronger emphasis on the unrestrained pursuit of money (i.e., the "American Dream"). So, for example, crime should be higher in areas where more people agree that "there are no right or wrong ways to make money, only hard or easy ways." Studies here have produced mixed results, which may reflect differences in the way the American Dream is measured (e.g., Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Hirtenlehner et al., 2013). Studies also suggest that people in the United States do *not* place a relatively strong emphasis on the unrestrained pursuit of money (Cao, 2004; Chamlin and Cochran, 2007; Hughes et al., 2015; Jensen, 2002; see also Jensen and Akers, 2003. Recent data, however, indicate that many countries have similar or higher rates of serious crime than the United States; Chamlin and Cochran, 2007)). Finally, there have been some efforts to apply institutional-anomie theory at the individual level, and here data suggest that individuals who adopt aspects of the "American Dream" and have weak commitments to noneconomic institutions are more likely to engage in crime (see Messner et al., 2019).

In sum, institutional-anomie theory has some support, particularly that part of the theory that states that crime is most likely in those societies and areas where economic institutions are relatively strong and noneconomic institutions such as the family and polity are relatively weak.

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Strain Theory

Classic Strain Theory

Strain theory has focused on explaining why some individuals and groups *within* a society are more likely to engage in crime than others. According to the theory, individuals are pressured into crime. Most commonly, it has been argued that they are pressured into crime when they are prevented from achieving cultural goals like monetary success or middle-class status through legitimate channels. This is the central argument of the "classic" strain theories of Merton (1938), Cohen (1955), and Cloward and Ohlin (1960); (see Chapters 11 and 12 in this part). These theorists argue that everyone in the United States is encouraged to pursue the goals of monetary success or middle-class status. Lower-class individuals, however, are often prevented from achieving such goals through legitimate channels. Their parents do not equip them with the skills and values necessary to do well in school, they attend inferior schools and grow up in troubled neighborhoods, they cannot afford college, and they may face discrimination in the job market. Our society, then, encourages everyone to pursue certain goals but then prevents large segments of the population from achieving these goals through legitimate channels. Individuals experiencing such goal blockage are under a great deal of strain or pressure, and they *may* respond by engaging in crime.

They may attempt to achieve their goals through illegitimate channels, such as theft, drug selling, and prostitution. They may reject the goals of monetary success and middle-class status and substitute new goals that they can achieve. Their hostility toward the society that frustrates them, among other things, may lead them to emphasize goals that are conducive to crime (e.g., being a good fighter). Or they may simply reject cultural goals and norms, retreating into drug use. Strain theorists are careful to emphasize that only some strained individuals turn to crime, and they have tried to specify the factors that determine whether strain leads to crime (see Agnew, 1997a, 2000; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Cullen, 1984). Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) argue that strained individuals are unlikely to engage in crime unless they first form or join a delinquent subculture whose values are conducive to crime. These theorists describe the conditions under which strained individuals are likely to form delinquent subcultures, and their accounts represent the dominant explanations for the origin of delinquent subcultures.

The classic strain theories dominated research on the causes of crime during the 1950s and 1960s, and had a major impact on public policy (see Burton and Cullen, 1992; Clinard, 1964; Cole, 1975; Empey et al., 1999). Strain theory, in particular, was one of the inspirations for the "War on Poverty" that was launched during the 1960s. The War on Poverty was designed to increase opportunities for low-income and minority individuals to achieve success through legitimate channels. Many of the programs associated with the War on Poverty have since been dismantled, but some—like Project Head Start and Job Corps—remain.

Classic strain theory came under heavy attack during the late 1960s and 1970s, and it no longer dominates criminology as it once did (see Agnew, 2000; Agnew and Passas, 1997; Akers and Sellers, 2008; Bernard, 1984; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Cole, 1975; Rosenfeld, 1989). Among other things, a number of empirical studies failed to provide support for the theory (see Agnew, 2000; Akers and Sellers, 2008; Hirschi, 1969; Jensen, 1995; Kornhauser, 1978). Classic strain theory was most commonly tested by examining the disjunction between aspirations (the goals one ideally would like to achieve) and expectations (the goals one realistically expects to achieve). If the theory is true, we would expect people with high aspirations and low expectations to be most delinquent (i.e., people who say they ideally want a lot but expect very little). The research, however, does not support this prediction. Crime is highest among those with both low aspirations and low expectations (a finding most commonly explained in terms of social control theory—see Part V). Further, a series of self-report studies during the 1960s and 1970s revealed that delinquency was not concentrated among lower-class individuals. Middle-class delinquency was quite common, perhaps as common as lower-class delinquency (see Akers et al., 2016; Tittle and Meier, 1990). This was taken as further evidence against classic strain theory (since the pressure for delinquency should be greatest in the lower classes).

Several researchers, however, have recently challenged the evidence against classic strain theory. Among other things, they argue that there are better ways to measure strain than by the disjunction between aspirations and expectations. Aspirations or ideal goals have something of the utopian in them and so are not taken seriously. The failure to achieve such goals, then, is not an important source of strain (see Agnew, 1992, 2000; Agnew et al., 2008; Agnew and Passas, 1997; Bernard, 1984; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Burton et al., 1994; Burton and Dunaway, 1994; Cullen, 1984; 1988; Hoffmann and Ireland, 1995; Kubrin et al., 2009; Menard, 1995; Messner, 1988; Passas and Agnew, 1997, for other criticisms). A few recent studies have attempted to provide better tests of classic strain theory (Agnew et al., 1996; Baron, 2004; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Burton et al., 1994; Burton and Dunaway, 1994; Cernkovich et al., 2000; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997; Kubrin et al., 2009; Menard, 1995, 1997). These studies tend to provide more support for the theory. Agnew et al. (1996), for example, attempt to directly measure strain by asking individuals how satisfied they are with their financial situation. This measure is related to crime, with the more dissatisfied being more criminal. Additional tests are needed before we can reach any definitive conclusions about classic strain theory, but the theory has experienced a minor revival (see Adler and Laufer, 1995; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Passas and Agnew, 1997).

In addition, classic strain theory has increasingly been used to explain group differences in crime rates, particularly differences between communities and societies. Many studies find that the strongest predictor of community differences in crime rates in the United States is economic deprivation (Agnew, 2005; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Land et al., 1990; Pratt and Cullen, 2005). That is, poorer communities have much higher crime rates than wealthier communities. The effect of economic deprivation on crime can be explained in terms of several theories. Social disorganization theorists, for example, argue that such deprivation leads to a breakdown in social control (see Part II). But economic deprivation can also be taken as a measure of the strain experienced by community members (see Agnew, 1999; Pratt and Cullen, 2005).

While economic deprivation is strongly related to community differences in crime rates in the United States, it is unrelated or weakly related to societal differences in crime rates. One reason for this may be that societies differ in the emphasis they place on economic success. So deprivation, in and of itself, may not lead to crime. Following Merton, deprivation may only lead to crime in those societies where most people strongly desire economic success. It has been difficult to directly test this idea (although see Chamlin and Sanders, 2013). However, this idea has been indirectly tested by examining the effect of economic inequality on societal crime rates. Certain societies are characterized by high levels of economic inequality, with some people being very rich and others very poor. The existence of such "poverty in the midst of plenty" may lead poor people to increase their desire for economic success—since they see that others around them have achieved such success. Most studies support this argument, with economic inequality being perhaps the strongest predictor of societal differences in crime rates (Agnew, 2006b; LaFree, 1999; Messner, 2003; Neapolitan, 1997; Pratt and Godsey, 2003; Santos et al., 2018). The effect of economic inequality on crime rates is especially strong when such inequality is due to discrimination against racial/ethnic or religious groups—perhaps because inequality is more likely to be seen as unjust in such circumstances (Messner, 1989, 2003; see also Blau and Blau, 1982). (Note: Messner and Rosenfeld's institutional-anomie theory has been criticized for neglecting the effects of economic deprivation and inequality on crime rates [Baumer, 2009; Bernburg, 2002]. Messner and Rosenfeld [2006] acknowledge this criticism and state that they intend to better incorporate such effects into their theory [see also Pratt and Godsey, 2003].)

Classic strain theory, then, has some support—although several problems with the theory have been identified, including its limited ability to explain middle-class crime.

Revisions in Classic Strain Theory

The criticisms against classic strain theory spurred several efforts to revise the theory (see Adler and Laufer, 1995; Agnew, 2000; Bernard, 1990; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Clinard, 1964; Cohen, 1965; Elliott et al., 1979; Greenberg, 1977; Merton, 1968; Passas and Agnew, 1997; Simon and Gagnon, 1976). Certain of the revisions attempt to apply the theory to the explanation of middle-class crime and delinquency. One major revision, for example, argues that strain is a function of *relative deprivation*. That is, one's level of strain or frustration is not dependent on the absolute amount of money one has, but is dependent on how much money one has *relative* to those in one's "reference group" (see Burton et al., 1994; Burton and Dunaway, 1994; Cohen, 1965, 1997; Passas, 1997). Wealthy individuals, as a consequence, may experience strain if they compare themselves to even wealthier people around them. Limited data provide some support for this argument (Bernburg et al., 2009; Burton et al., 1994; Burton and Dunaway, 1994; although see Baron, 2004).

Another revision argues that adolescents pursue a variety of goals in addition to middle-class status and monetary success. Such goals include popularity with peers and potential romantic partners, athletic success, positive relations with parents and others, and good grades. The achievement of these goals is said to be a function of several factors in addition to social class—factors like intelligence, personality characteristics, and physical appearance and ability. As a result, middle-class adolescents may also experience strain quite frequently. This version of strain theory has not been well tested, although preliminary tests have not been encouraging (see Agnew, 2000, for an overview).

General Strain Theory

Most of the revisions in classic strain theory continue to argue that the major source of strain or frustration is the failure to achieve positively valued goals. They simply argue that goal achievement should be measured relative to others or they broaden the number of goals under consideration. Agnew's (1992, 2006a, b, 2009, 2012) general strain theory, however, points to additional sources of strain.

According to Agnew (1992: 50), strain results from negative relationships with others: "relationships in which others are not treating the individual as he or she would like to be treated." There are three major types of negative relations: relations where others (1) prevent or threaten to prevent the achievement of positively valued goals (e.g., monetary success, thrills/excitement), (2) remove or threaten to remove positively valued stimuli (e.g., the loss of a romantic partner, the death of a parent), or (3) present or threaten to present negatively valued stimuli (e.g., insults, physical assault). Such negative relationships increase the likelihood that individuals will experience a range of negative emotions, such as anger and frustration. These emotions create pressure for corrective action, with crime being one possible response. Crime may be a method for alleviating strain (e.g., running away from home, assaulting those who insult you), seeking revenge, or managing the negative emotions that the individual experiences (e.g., through illicit drug use). Like previous theorists, Agnew argues that only some strained individuals turn to crime, and he discusses those factors that influence whether one reacts to strains with crime.

Agnew, then, significantly broadens the focus of strain theory. Studies provide some support for Agnew's general strain theory (see the overviews in Agnew, 2006a, b, 2012, 2015a; Brezina, 2017; for selected studies, see Agnew et al., 2002; Aseltine et al., 2000; Baron, 2004; De Coster and Kort-Butler, 2006; De Coster and Zito, 2010; Hay and Evans, 2006; Hoffmann and Cerbone, 1999; Kaufman, 2009; Mazerolle, 1998; Moon et al., 2009; Paternoster and Mazerolle, 1994; Rebellon et al., 2012; Slocum, 2010; Wang and Holtfreter, 2012). In one such study (Agnew and White, 1992), delinquency was found to be higher among individuals experiencing a variety of negative life events (e.g., assault, theft, parental divorce, parental unemployment) and various relational problems with teachers, parents, friends, and others (e.g., teachers talk down to and embarrass them, parents get angry over little things, classmates do not like them). In some of the other studies just cited, delinquency has been linked to strains such as race/ethnic and gender discrimination; bullying, including cyber-bullying; homelessness; and economic problems of various types, such as trouble paying bills.

Researchers have also examined those factors said to influence whether individuals react to strains with crime. General strain theory predicts that strained individuals are more likely to engage in criminal coping if they have poor coping skills, receive little support from others, are low in social control, associate with delinquent peers, hold beliefs favorable to crime, etc. Researchers usually focus on one or a few of these characteristics. For example, they examine whether strained individuals who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to engage in crime than those who do not. The data here are mixed, with some studies supporting general strain theory and some not (Agnew, 2013, 2015a). But Agnew (2013) recently argued that a criminal response is likely only when individuals possess *several* factors that increase the propensity for criminal coping (e.g., they have poor coping skills, are low in control, *and* associate with delinquent peers). And recent data provide support for this argument, suggesting that criminal coping is much more likely among such individuals (Thaxton and Agnew, 2018; also see Mazerolle and Maahs, 2000).

Agnew and others continue to refine general strain theory. Papers have used general strain theory to explain the relationship between age and crime (Agnew, 1997b), gender and crime (Broidy and Agnew, 1997; Jang, 2007; Kaufman, 2009), sexual orientation and crime (Button and Worthen, 2017), offending over the life course (Agnew, 1997b; Slocum, 2010; Slocum et al., 2005), community characteristics and crime (Agnew, 1999), and race/ethnicity and crime (De Coster and Thompson, 2017; Isom Scott and Grosholz, 2019: Kaufman, 2005, Kaufman et al., 2008; Perez et al., 2008). General strain theory has also been used to explain crime in countries outside the United States, including non-Western countries (Agnew, 2015b). In addition, Agnew (2001) has tried to predict which strains will be most strongly related to crime. Hundreds of specific strains fall under the three broad categories of strains listed by general strain theory, but data suggest that only some of these specific strains are related to crime. Drawing on research in several areas, Agnew argues that strains are most likely to result in crime when they are (1) seen as unjust, (2) seen as high in magnitude, (3) associated with low social control (see Part V in this text), and (4) create some pressure or incentive for criminal coping. Several strains that meet these conditions are listed. Agnew (2002) has argued that vicarious and anticipated strains, as well as experienced strains, may sometimes lead to crime. Finally, Agnew (2006b) has better described the reasons why strains increase the likelihood of crime. While strains affect crime primarily by increasing negative emotions such as anger, they may also reduce social control (see Part V), foster the social learning of crime (see Part III), and contribute to personality traits conducive to crime (see Part XII).

In sum, strain and anomie theory have experienced a major revival and are now among the most influential theories of crime. The readings

11. Social Structure and Anomie

Robert K. Merton

It has been said that the following article by Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," is the most widely read article in sociology (Cole, 1975). Merton opens his 1938 article by challenging certain biologically based theories of crime that were popular at the time. Such theories view crime as the result of "biological drives" that are not adequately restrained by society. Merton instead argues that the motivation for crime frequently derives from society. His theory is in two parts.

The first part of the article presents what may be termed his "anomie" theory, which seeks to explain why some societies have higher rates of crime than others. This theory focuses on the relative emphasis placed on cultural goals and the institutionalized norms for achieving these goals. Societies that place a high relative emphasis on goals (like monetary success) and a low relative emphasis on the norms or rules for goal achievement have higher crime rates. Such societies are characterized by a state of anomie or normlessness, where the goal-seeking behavior of individuals is subject to little regulation. As a consequence, individuals employ the most expedient means—including crime—to achieve their goals. The United States is said to be such a society in which the goal of monetary success is stressed for everyone, but in which there is little emphasis on the norms regulating the achievement of this goal.

The second part of the article describes what may be termed Merton's "strain" theory. He argues that some individuals and groups within a society are subject to special pressure for crime. While everyone is urged to strive for monetary success, lower-class individuals are frequently prevented from achieving such success through legitimate channels. As a result, they are under considerable strain or pressure. They may adapt to their strain in any one of the five ways listed by Merton. Certain of these adaptations involve crime, and Merton briefly discusses why some types of individuals are more likely to respond to strain with crime than others.

Merton's theory, particularly his strain theory, has been the subject of extensive commentary and research (for summaries, see Agnew, 1997, 2000; Akers et al., 2016; Baumer, 2007; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Kornhauser, 1978; Kubrin et al., 2009). The evidence for his strain theory is mixed, although certain recent tests of this theory are promising (see Agnew, 2000; Agnew et al., 1996, 2008; Agnew and Passas, 1997; Baron, 2004; Cernkovich et al., 2000; Chamlin and Sanders, 2013; Pratt and Cullen, 2005). The evidence for his anomie theory is also mixed, although certain data suggest that crime is more common among those who place much emphasis on monetary success and little on the norms for achieving such success (see Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Messner and Rosenfeld, 2012). Further, Merton's anomie theory is the direct inspiration for Rosenfeld and Messner's institutional-anomie theory, described in Chapter 13.

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There persists a notable tendency in sociological theory to attribute the malfunctioning of social structure primarily to those of man's imperious biological drives which are not adequately restrained by social control. In this view, the social order is solely a device for "impulse management" and the "social processing" of tensions. These impulses which break through social control, be it noted, are held to be biologically derived. Nonconformity is assumed to be rooted in original nature. Conformity is by implication the result of an utilitarian calculus or unreasoned conditioning. This point of view, whatever its other deficiencies, clearly begs one question. It provides no basis for determining the nonbiological conditions which induce deviations from prescribed patterns of conduct. In this paper, it will be suggested that certain phases of social structure generate the circumstances in which infringement of social codes constitutes a "normal" response.

The conceptual scheme to be outlined is designed to provide a coherent, systematic approach to the study of sociocultural sources of deviate behavior. Our primary aim lies in discovering how some social structures *exert a definite pressure* upon certain persons in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct. The many ramifications of the scheme cannot all be discussed; the problems mentioned outnumber those explicitly treated.

Among the elements of social and cultural structure, two are important for our purposes. These are analytically separable although they merge imperceptibly in concrete situations. The first consists of culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests. It comprises a frame of aspirational reference. These goals are more or less integrated and involve varying degrees of prestige and sentiment. They constitute a basic, but not the exclusive, component of what Linton aptly has called "designs for group living." Some of these cultural aspirations are related to the original drives of man, but they are not determined by them. The second phase of the social structure defines, regulates, and controls the acceptable modes of achieving these goals. Every social group invariably couples its scale of desired ends with moral or institutional regulation of permissible and required procedures for attaining these ends. These regulatory norms and moral imperatives do not necessarily coincide with technical or efficiency norms. Many procedures which from the standpoint of *particular individuals* would be most efficient in securing desired values, e.g., illicit oil-stock schemes, theft, fraud, are ruled out of the institutional area of permitted conduct. The choice of expedients is limited by the institutional norms.

To say that these two elements, culture goals and institutional norms, operate jointly is not to say that the ranges of alternative behaviors and aims bear some constant relation to one another. The emphasis upon certain goals may vary independently of the degree of emphasis upon institutional means. There may develop a disproportionate, at times, a virtually exclusive, stress upon the value of specific goals, involving relatively slight concern with the institutionally appropriate modes of attaining these goals. The limiting case in this direction is reached when the range of alternative procedures is limited only by technical rather than institutional considerations. Any and all devices which promise attainment of the all important goal would be permitted in this hypothetical polar case. This constitutes one type of cultural malintegration. A second polar type is found in groups where activities originally conceived as instrumental are transmuted into ends in themselves. The original purposes are forgotten and ritualistic adherence to institutionally prescribed conduct becomes virtually obsessive. Stability is largely ensured while change is flouted. The range of alternative behaviors is severely limited. There develops a tradition-bound, sacred society characterized by neophobia. The occupational psychosis of the bureaucrat may be cited as a case in point. Finally, there are the intermediate types of groups where a balance between culture goals and institutional means is maintained. These are the significantly integrated and relatively stable, though changing, groups.

An effective equilibrium between the two phases of the social structure is maintained as long as satisfactions accrue to individuals who conform to both constraints, viz., satisfactions from the achievement of the goals and satisfactions emerging directly from the institutionally canalized modes of striving to attain these ends. Success, in such equilibrated cases, is twofold. Success is reckoned in terms of the product and in terms of the process, in terms of the outcome and in terms of activities. Continuing satisfactions must derive from sheer *participation* in a competitive order as well as from eclipsing one's competitors if the order itself is to be sustained. The occasional sacrifices involved in institutionalized conduct must be compensated by socialized rewards. The distribution of statuses and roles through competition must be so organized that positive incentives for conformity to roles and adherence to status obligations are provided *for every position* within the distributive order.

Aberrant conduct, therefore, may be viewed as a symptom of dissociation between culturally defined aspirations and socially structured means.

Of the types of groups which result from the independent variation of the two phases of the social structure, we shall be primarily concerned with the first, namely, that involving a disproportionate accent on goals. This statement must be recast in a proper perspective. In no group is there an absence of regulatory codes governing conduct, yet groups do vary in the degree to which these folkways, mores, and institutional controls are effectively integrated with the more diffuse goals which are part of the culture matrix. Emotional convictions may cluster about the complex of socially acclaimed ends, meanwhile shifting their support from the culturally defined implementation of these ends. As we shall see, certain aspects of the social structure may generate countermores and antisocial behavior precisely because of differential emphases on goals and regulations. In the extreme case, the latter may be so vitiated by the goal-emphasis that the range of behavior is limited only by considerations of technical expediency. The sole significant question then becomes, which available means is most efficient in netting the socially approved value. The technically most feasible procedure, whether legitimate or not, is preferred to the institutionally prescribed conduct. As this process continues, the integration of the society becomes tenuous and anomie ensues.

Thus, in competitive athletics, when the aim of victory is shorn of its institutional trappings and success in contests becomes construed as "winning the game" rather than "winning through circumscribed modes of activity," a premium is implicitly set upon the use of illegitimate but technically efficient means. The star of the opposing football team is surreptitiously slugged; the wrestler furtively incapacitates his opponent through ingenious but illicit techniques; university alumni covertly subsidize "students" whose talents are largely confined to the athletic field. The emphasis on the goal has so attenuated the satisfactions deriving from sheer participation in the competitive activity that these satisfactions are virtually confined to a successful outcome. Through the same process, tension generated by the desire to win in a poker game is relieved by successfully dealing oneself four aces, or, when the cult of success has become completely dominant, by sagaciously shuffling the cards in a game of solitaire. The faint twinge of uneasiness in the last instance and the surreptitious nature of public delicts indicate clearly that the institutional rules of the game *are known* to those who evade them, but that the emotional supports of these rules are largely vitiated by cultural exaggeration of the success-goal. They are microcosmic images of the social macrocosm.

Of course, this process is not restricted to the realm of sport. The process whereby exaltation of the end generates a *literal demoralization*, i.e., a deinstitutionalization, of the means is one which characterizes many groups in which the two phases of the social structure are not highly integrated. The extreme emphasis upon the accumulation of wealth as a symbol of success in our own society militates against the completely effective control of institutionally regulated modes of acquiring a fortune. Fraud, corruption, vice, crime, in short, the entire catalogue of proscribed behavior, becomes increasingly common when the emphasis on the *culturally induced* success-goal becomes divorced from a coordinated institutional emphasis. This observation is of crucial theoretical importance in examining the doctrine that antisocial behavior most frequently derives from biological drives breaking through the restraints imposed by society. The difference is one between a strictly utilitarian interpretation which conceives man's ends as random and an analysis which finds these ends deriving from the basic values of the culture.

Our analysis can scarcely stop at this juncture. We must turn to other aspects of the social genesis of the varying rates and types of deviate behavior characteristic of different societies. Thus far, we have sketched three ideal types of social orders constituted by distinctive patterns of relations between culture ends and means. Turning from these types of *culture patterning*, we find five logically possible, alternative modes of adjustment or adaptation *by individuals* within the culture-bearing society or group. These are schematically presented in Table11.1, where (+) signifies "acceptance," (−) signifies "elimination" and (±) signifies "rejection and substitution of new goals and standards."

Our discussion of the relation between these alternative responses and other phases of the social structure must be prefaced by the observation that persons may shift from one alternative to another as they engage in different social activities. These categories refer to role adjustments in specific situations, not to personality *in toto*. To treat the development of this process in various spheres of conduct would introduce a complexity unmanageable within the confines of this paper. For this reason, we shall be concerned primarily with economic activity in the broad sense, "the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services" in our competitive society, wherein wealth has taken on a highly symbolic cast. Our task is to search out some of the factors which exert pressure upon individuals to engage in certain of these logically possible alternative responses. This choice, as we shall see, is far from random.

Table 11.1
Typology of Adaptations

	Culture Goals	Institutionalized Means
I. Conformity	+	+
II. Innovation	+	−
III. Ritualism	−	+
IV. Retreatism	−	−
V. Rebellion	±	±

In every society, Adaptation I (conformity to both culture goals and means) is the most common and widely diffused. Were this not so, the stability and continuity of the society could not be maintained. The mesh of expectancies which constitutes every social order is sustained by the modal behavior of its members falling within the first category. Conventional role behavior oriented toward the basic values of the group is the rule rather than the exception. It is this fact alone which permits us to speak of a human aggregate as comprising a group or society.

Conversely, Adaptation IV (rejection of goals and means) is the least common. Persons who "adjust" (or maladjust) in this fashion are, strictly speaking, in the society but not *of it*. Sociologically, these constitute the true "aliens." Not sharing the common frame of orientation, they can be included within the societal population merely in a fictional sense. In this category are *some* of the activities of psychotics, psychoneurotics, chronic autists, pariahs, outcasts, vagrants, vagabonds, tramps, chronic drunkards and drug addicts. These have relinquished, in certain spheres of activity, the culturally defined goals, involving complete aim-inhibition in the polar case, and their adjustments are not in accord with institutional norms. This is not to say that in some cases the source of their behavioral adjustments is not in part the very social structure which they have in effect repudiated nor that their very existence within a social area does not constitute a problem for the socialized population.

This mode of "adjustment" occurs, as far as structural sources are concerned, when both the culture goals and institutionalized procedures have been assimilated thoroughly by the individual and imbued with affect and high positive value, but where those institutionalized procedures which promise a measure of successful attainment of the goals are not available to the individual. In such instances, there results a twofold mental conflict insofar as the moral obligation for adopting institutional means conflicts with the pressure to resort to illegitimate means (which may attain the goal) and inasmuch as the individual is shut off from means which are both legitimate and effective. The competitive order is maintained, but the frustrated and handicapped individual who cannot cope with this order drops out. Defeatism, quietism, and resignation are manifested in escape mechanisms which ultimately lead the individual to "escape" from the requirements of the society. It is an expedient which arises from continued failure to attain the goal by legitimate measures and from an inability to adopt the illegitimate route because of internalized prohibitions and institutionalized compulsives, *during which process the supreme value of the success-goal has as yet not been renounced.* The conflict is resolved by eliminating both precipitating elements, the goals and means. The escape is complete, the conflict is eliminated and the individual is socialized.

Be it noted that where frustration derives from the inaccessibility of effective institutional means for attaining economic or any other type of highly valued "success," that Adaptations II, III and V (innovation, ritualism and rebellion) are also possible. The result will be determined by the particular personality, and thus, the *particular* cultural background, involved. Inadequate socialization will result in the innovation response whereby the conflict and frustration are eliminated by relinquishing the institutional means and retaining the success-aspiration; an extreme will lead to ritualism wherein the goal is dropped as beyond one's reach but conformity to the mores persists; and rebellion occurs when emancipation from the reigning standards, due to frustration or to marginalist perspectives, leads to the attempt to introduce a "new social order."

Our major concern is with the illegitimacy adjustment. This involves the use of conventionally proscribed but frequently effective means of attaining at least the simulacrum of culturally defined success—wealth, power, and the like. As we have seen, this adjustment occurs when the individual has assimilated the cultural emphasis on success without equally internalizing the morally prescribed norms governing means for its attainment. The question arises, Which phases of our social structure predispose toward this mode of adjustment? We may examine a concrete instance, effectively analyzed by Lohman, which provides a clue to the answer. Lohman has shown that specialized areas of vice in the near north side of Chicago constitute a "normal" response to a situation where the cultural emphasis upon pecuniary success has been absorbed, but where there is little access to conventional and legitimate means for attaining such success. The conventional occupational opportunities of persons in this area are almost completely limited to manual labor. Given our cultural stigmatization of manual labor, and its correlate, the prestige of white collar work, it is clear that the result is a strain toward innovational practices. The limitation of opportunity to unskilled labor and the resultant low income can not compete *in terms of conventional standards of achievement* with the high income from organized vice.

For our purposes, this situation involves two important features. First, such antisocial behavior is in a sense "called forth" by certain conventional values of the culture and by the class structure involving differential access to the approved opportunities for legitimate, prestige-bearing pursuit of the culture goals. The lack of high integration between the means-and-end elements of the cultural pattern and the particular class structure combine to favor a heightened frequency of antisocial conduct in such groups. The second consideration is of equal significance. Recourse to the first of the alternative responses, legitimate effort, is limited by the fact that actual advance toward desired success-symbols through conventional channels is, despite our persisting open-class ideology, relatively rare and difficult for those handicapped by little formal education and few economic resources. The dominant pressure of group standards of success is, therefore, on the gradual attenuation of legitimate, but by and large ineffective, strivings and the increasing use of illegitimate, but more or less effective, expedients of vice and crime. The cultural demands made on persons in this situation are incompatible. On the one hand, they are asked to orient their conduct toward the prospect of accumulating wealth and on the other, they are largely denied effective opportunities to do so institutionally. The consequences of such structural inconsistency are psychopathological personality, and/or antisocial conduct, and/or revolutionary activities. The equilibrium between culturally designated means and ends becomes highly unstable with the progressive emphasis on attaining the prestige-laden ends by any means whatsoever. Within this context, Capone represents the triumph of amoral intelligence over morally prescribed "failure," when the channels of vertical mobility are closed or narrowed *in a society which places a high premium on economic affluence and social ascent for all its members.*

This last qualification is of primary importance. It suggests that other phases of the social structure besides the extreme emphasis on pecuniary success, must be considered if we are to understand the social sources of antisocial behavior. A high frequency of deviate behavior is not generated simply by "lack of opportunity" or by this exaggerated pecuniary emphasis. A comparatively rigidified class structure, a feudalistic or caste order, may limit such opportunities far beyond the point which obtains in our society today. It is only when a system of cultural values extols, virtually above all else, certain *common* symbols of success *for a considerable part of the same population*, that antisocial behavior ensues on a considerable scale. In other words, our egalitarian ideology denies by implication the existence of noncompeting groups and individuals in the pursuit of pecuniary success. The same body of success-symbols is held to be desirable for all. These goals are held to *transcend class lines*, not to be bounded by them, yet the actual social organization is such that there exist class differentials in the accessibility of these *common* success-symbols. Frustration and thwarted aspiration lead to the search for avenues of escape from a culturally induced intolerable situation; or unrelieved ambition may eventuate in illicit attempts to acquire the dominant values. The American stress on pecuniary success and ambitiousness for all thus invites exaggerated anxieties, hostilities, neuroses and antisocial behavior.

This theoretical analysis may go far toward explaining the varying correlations between crime and poverty. Poverty is not an isolated variable. It is one in a complex of interdependent social and cultural variables. When viewed in such a context, it represents quite different states of affairs. Poverty as such, and consequent limitation of opportunity, are not sufficient to induce a conspicuously high rate of criminal behavior. Even the often mentioned "poverty in the midst of plenty" will not necessarily lead to this result. Only insofar as poverty and associated disadvantages in competition for the culture values approved for all members of the society is linked with the assimilation of a cultural emphasis on monetary accumulation as a symbol of success is antisocial conduct a "normal" outcome. Thus, poverty is less highly correlated with crime in southeastern Europe than in the United States. The possibilities of vertical mobility in these European areas would seem to be fewer than in this country, so that neither poverty per se nor its association with limited opportunity is sufficient to account for the varying correlations. It is only when the full configuration is considered, poverty, limited opportunity and a commonly shared system of success symbols, that we can explain the higher association between poverty and crime in our society than in others where rigidified class structure is coupled with *differential class symbols of achievement*.

In societies such as our own, then, the pressure of prestige-bearing success tends to eliminate the effective social constraint over means employed to this end. "The-end-justifies-the-means" doctrine becomes a guiding tenet for action when the cultural structure unduly exalts the end and the social organization unduly limits possible recourse to approved means. Otherwise put, this notion and associated behavior reflect a lack of cultural coordination. In international relations, the effects of this lack of integration are notoriously apparent. An emphasis upon national power is not readily coordinated with an inept organization of legitimate, i.e., internationally defined and accepted, means for attaining this goal. The result is a tendency toward the abrogation of international law, treaties become scraps of paper, "undeclared warfare" serves as a technical evasion, the bombing of civilian populations is rationalized just as the same societal situation induces the same sway of illegitimacy among individuals.

The social order we have described necessarily produces this "strain toward dissolution." The pressure of such an order is upon outdoing one's competitors. The choice of means within the ambit of institutional control will persist as long as the sentiments supporting a competitive system, i.e., deriving from the possibility of outranking competitors and hence enjoying the favorable response of others, are distributed throughout the entire system of activities and are not confined merely to the final result. A stable social structure demands a balanced distribution of affect among its various segments. When there occurs a shift of emphasis from the satisfactions deriving from competition itself to almost exclusive concern with successful competition, the resultant stress leads to the breakdown of the regulatory structure. With the resulting attenuation of the institutional imperatives, there occurs an approximation of the situation erroneously held by utilitarians to be typical of society generally wherein calculations of advantage and fear of punishment are the sole regulating agencies. In such situations, as Hobbes observed, force and fraud come to constitute the sole virtues in view of their relative efficiency in attaining goals—which were for him, of course, not culturally derived.

It should be apparent that the foregoing discussion is not pitched on a moralistic plane. Whatever the sentiments of the writer or reader concerning the ethical desirability of coordinating the means-and-goals phases of the social structure, one must agree that lack of such coordination leads to anomie. Insofar as one of the most general functions of social organization is to provide a basis for calculability and regularity of behavior, it is increasingly limited in effectiveness as these elements of the structure become dissociated. At the extreme, predictability virtually disappears and what may be properly termed cultural chaos or anomie intervenes.

This statement, being brief, is also incomplete. It has not included an exhaustive treatment of the various structural elements which predispose toward one rather than another of the alternative responses open to individuals; it has neglected, but not denied the relevance of, the factors determining the specific incidence of these responses; it has not enumerated the various concrete responses which are constituted by combinations of specific values of the analytical variables; it has omitted, or included only by implication, any consideration of the social functions performed by illicit responses; it has not tested the full explanatory power of the analytical scheme by examining a large number of group variations in the frequency of deviate and conformist behavior; it has not adequately dealt with rebellious conduct which seeks to refashion the social framework radically; it has not examined the relevance of cultural conflict for an analysis of culture-goal and institutional-means malintegration. It is suggested that these and related problems may be profitably analyzed by this scheme.