

Lecture 11A: Social Disorganization, Anomie, and Strain Theories

Similarities of Theories

- Social disorganization and strain theories both propose that social order, stability, and integration are conducive to conformity, while disorder and malintegration are conducive to crime and deviance.

Assumptions

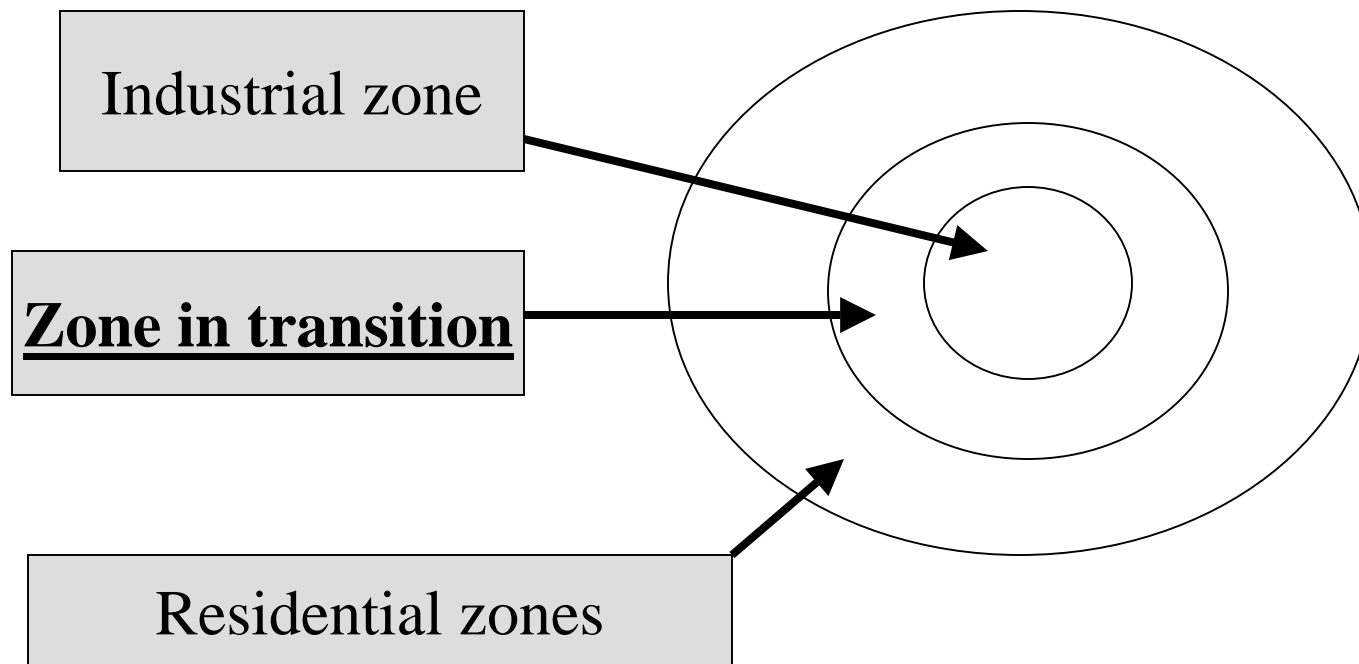
- Assumes importance of conformity to values and rules.
- Different social “units” (e.g., communities, neighborhoods, cities) are better able to generate conformity to rules that promote law-abiding behavior.

Part I: Social Disorganization and Urban Ecology

- University of Chicago (1920-30s).
- Spatially plotted residential location of deviant youth.
- Delinquency rates highest in lower-class inner city neighborhoods, and decreased toward the more affluent areas.

Earnest Burgess

- How does a city grow and develop?
 - Concentric Zones



The Concentric Zone Model:

1. Central Business District

2. Transitional Zone

***Recent Immigrant Groups*

—Deteriorated Housing

—Factories

—Abandoned Buildings

3. Working Class Zone

—Single Family Tenements

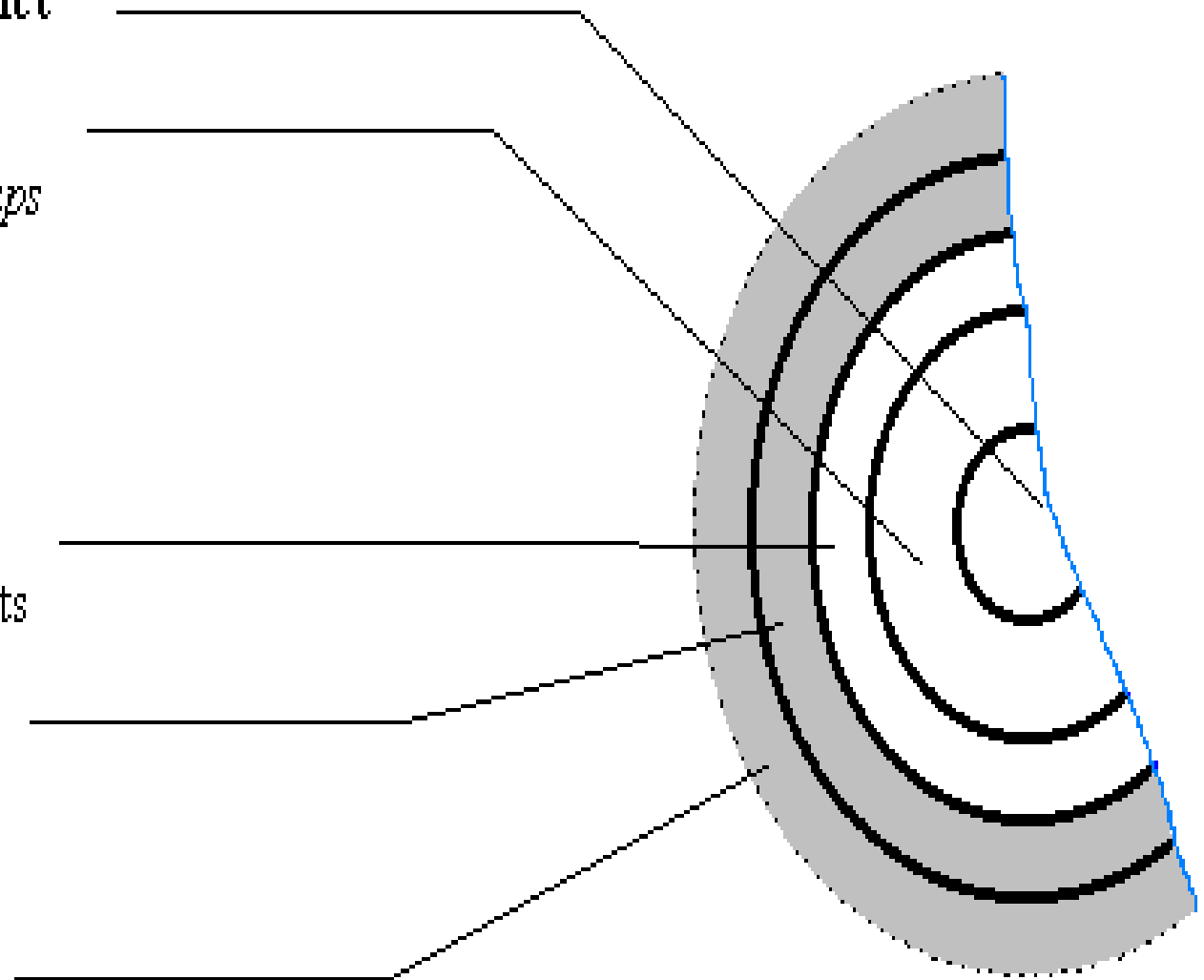
4. Residential Zone

—Single Family Homes

—Yards/Garages

5. Commuter Zone

—Suburbs



Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay

- Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas 1942.
 - Mapped addresses of delinquents (court records)
 - Zone in transition stable, with high delinquency rates
 - Implications of these findings:
 1. Stable, despite multiple waves of immigrants!!
 2. Only certain areas of the city. Was it about these areas that causes delinquency?

Social Disorganization

- What were the characteristics of the zone in transition that may cause high delinquency rates?
 - Population Heterogeneity
 - Population Turnover
 - Physical Decay
 - Poverty/Inequality
- **Why might these ecological characteristics lead to high crime rates?**

Explaining high crime in the zone of transition

1. Social Control

- Little community “cohesion,” therefore, weak community institutions and lack of control

2. Cultural Transmission of Values

- Once crime rooted in a neighborhood, delinquent values are passed through generations of delinquents

Community Careers?

- Social disorganization theorists believed that delinquent traditions emerged in some communities and are culturally transmitted from one generation to the next.
- Recent researchers found evidence of “community careers” in crime.



Chicago River acts as boundary to neighborhoods.

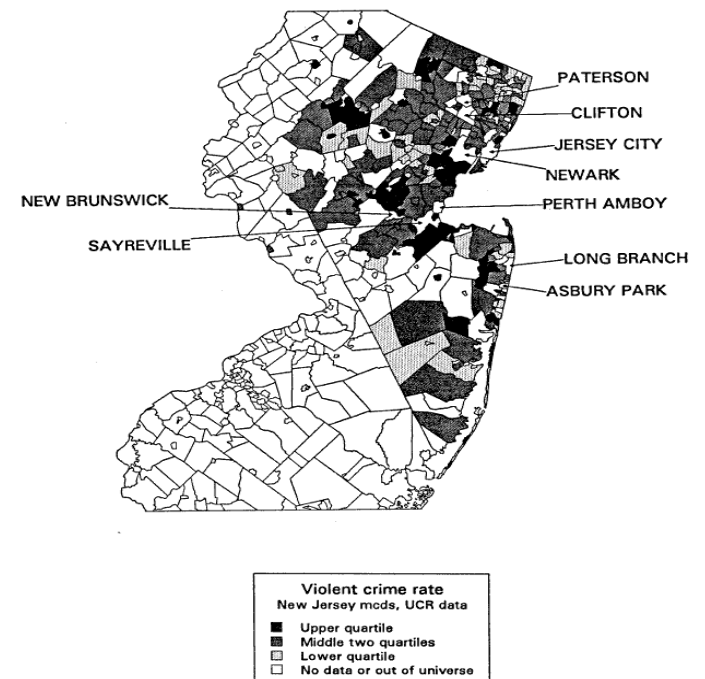
Measuring Disorganization

Census variables:

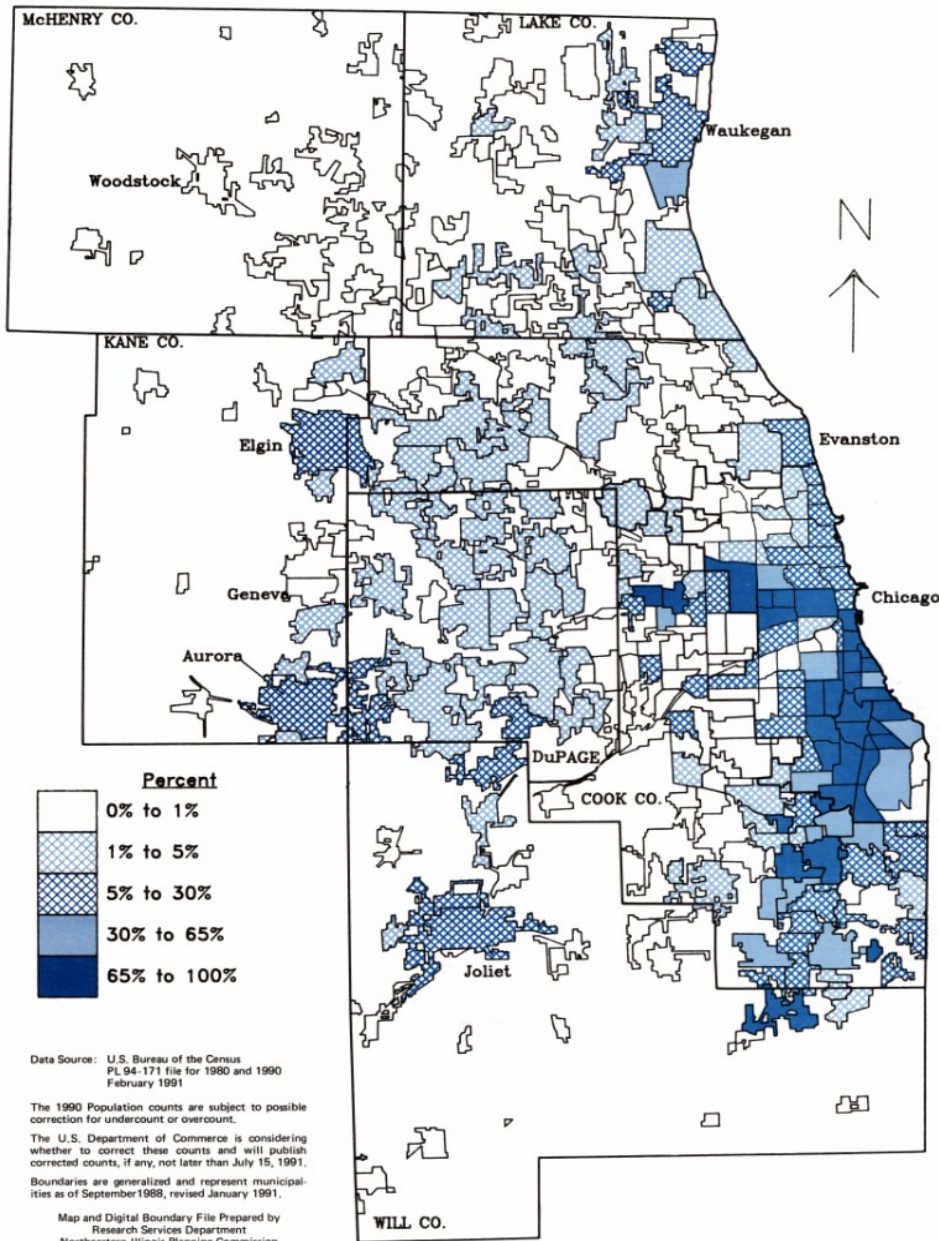
Age distribution, marital status, household income, ethnic heterogeneity, unemployment, residential mobility.

Living with Crime / 405

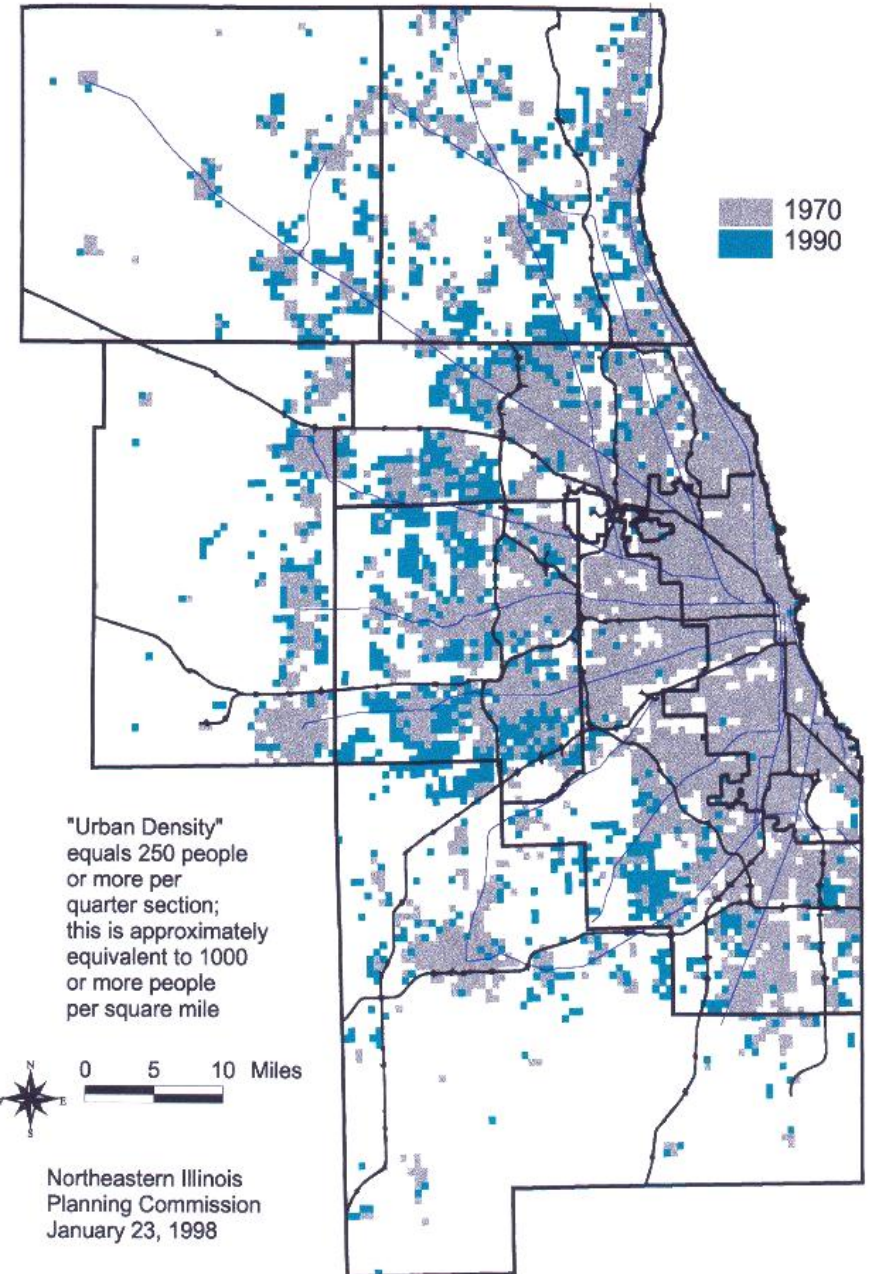
FIGURE 2: Violent Crime Rates in New Jersey Suburbs, 1980



BLACK POPULATION AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION by Suburban Municipality and Chicago Community Area



Urban Population Density





Social Disorganization 1960-1980

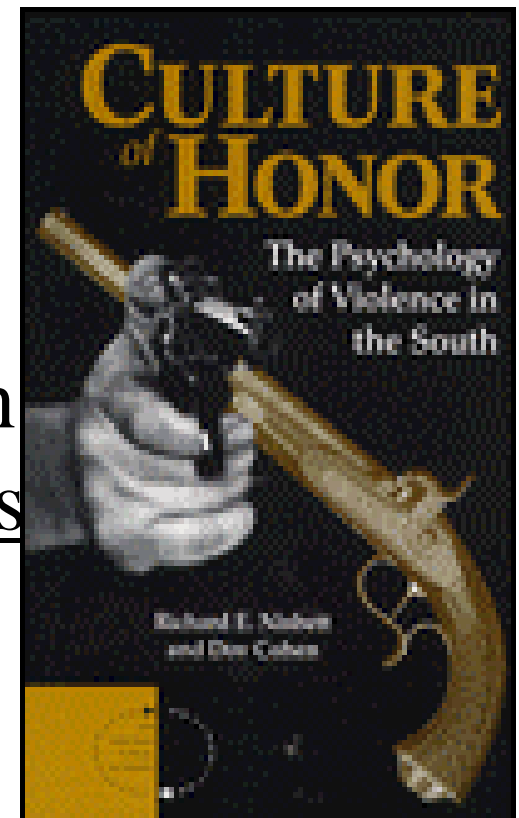
- Fell out of favor in sociology in 1950s
 - Individual theories gained popularity
- Criticisms of Social Disorganization
 - Are these neighborhoods really “disorganized?”
 - Cannot get neighborhood level measures
 - “Chicago Specific” (not all cities grow in rings)

Additional Criticisms

- How come only some juveniles and only a few adults from “disorganized areas” are involved in crime?
- How problematic is biased policing in these areas?
- Sutherland (assuming the importance of social learning) stressed that neighborhoods may not be so much disorganized, as ORGANIZED around different values and concerns.

Social Disorganization Could Reduce “Crime”?

- If the informal institutions in the society increase violence (e.g. culture of honor institutions), then social disorganization will decrease dispute-related violence.





Modern S.D. Theory

- Interest rekindled in the 1980s
 - continues today with “ecological studies”
 - reborn as a pure social control theory (left behind “transmission of values”)
- Addressing criticism
 - “Concentric rings” not necessary, it is simply a neighborhood level theory
 - Ecological characteristics do affect a neighborhoods level of informal control



Sampson and Groves (1989)

- British Crime Survey Data (BCS)
 - Ecological characteristics → social control
 - Population turnover
 - Poverty / inequality
 - Divorce rates
 - Single parents
 - Street supervision
 - Friendship networks
 - Participation in neighborhood organizations



Sampson (1997)

- Replicated results in Chicago
 - Areas with “concentrated disadvantage,” (poverty, race, age composition, family disruption) lack “collective efficacy”
 - Willingness to exercise control (tell kids to quiet down)
 - Willingness to trust or help each other
 - Lack of collective efficacy increases crime rates



Review of Social Disorganization

- Macro (Neighborhood) level theory
 - Explains why certain neighborhoods have high crime rates

Ecological Characteristics → Social Control → Crime Rates

- NOT an individual level theory
 - Avoid “Ecological Fallacy”



Policy Implications?

- Build neighborhood “collective efficacy”
 - How do you do this?
 - Chicago Area Project (CAP)
- Address ecological characteristics that ruin collective efficacy
 - Family disruption, concentrated poverty, residential mobility

Part II: Anomie Strain Theory

- Explanation for crime among lower-class and minority groups, as well as overall high crime rates in the United States.
- Robert Merton (1938) borrowed Durkheim's concept of anomie to explain crime.



Robert Merton

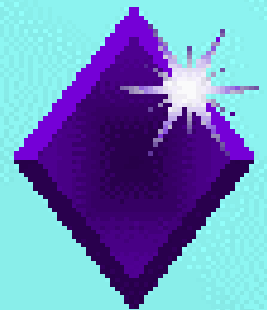
Anomie and Crime

- Anomie: state of “normlessness,” or lack of social regulation in modern society.
- Merton believed an integrated society maintains a balance between social structure (approved social means) and culture (approved goals).
- Anomie occurs when there is a disassociation between valued cultured ends and legitimate social means to achieve those goals.



Conflict: Means and Goals

- Cultural Goal in U.S.?
 - This goal is universal
 - (The American Dream)
- Institutionalized Means?
 - Due to the social structure in the U.S., the means are unequally distributed
 - Segment of society with no way to attain goal



Typology of Individual Modes of Adaptation

MODES OF ADAPTATION	CULTURAL GOALS	INSTITUTIONALIZED MEANS
1. Conformity	+	+
2. Innovation	+	-
3. Ritualism	-	+
4. Retreatism	-	-
5. Rebellion	+/-	+/-

Is Crime Concentrated in the Lower Class and Minority Groups?

- Strain theorists and social disorganization theories predict (and claim to have shown) that crime is more common among segments of society who are deprived of legitimate opportunities.
- Recall the debate about self-report studies and class. The same for smaller offenses, but different for more serious crimes? This theory provides an explanation for *disparity* of racial incarceration patterns.

Other Social Structural Correlates of Crime

- Merton's strain theory is really a theory of social organization (i.e., inequality), thus proper test is to look at social structural correlates of crime (rather than at individuals).
- A large proportion of criminological studies use census data to analyze official crime data both spatially and temporally.

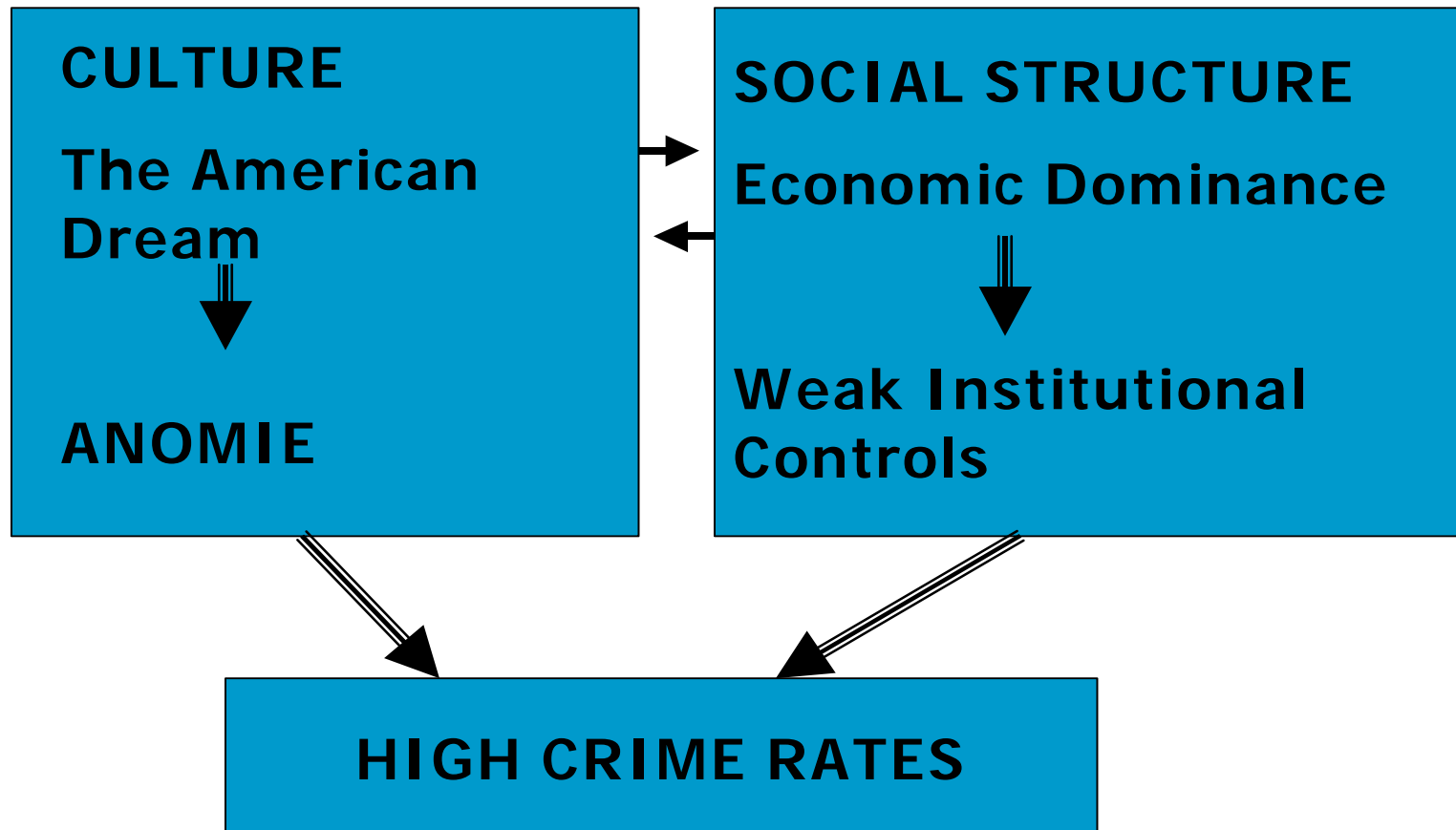
Multivariate Homicide Analysis for U.S.

- Population structure/density: (highly sig.)
- **Resource deprivation/inequality:(highly sig)**
- Percentage divorced: (highly sig.)
- Percentage aged 15-29: (not sig.)
- Unemployment: (sig. in cities for early years)
- Southern region: (moderately sig.)

Multivariate Homicide Analysis for 52 Countries

- Economic discrimination (highly sig.)
- *Income inequality (not sig.)*
- Percent urban (not sig.)
- Cultural heterogeneity (not sig.)
- Population (not sig.)
- Democracy index (not sig.)
- Percent males (not sig.)

Culture, Social Structure, and Crime Rates



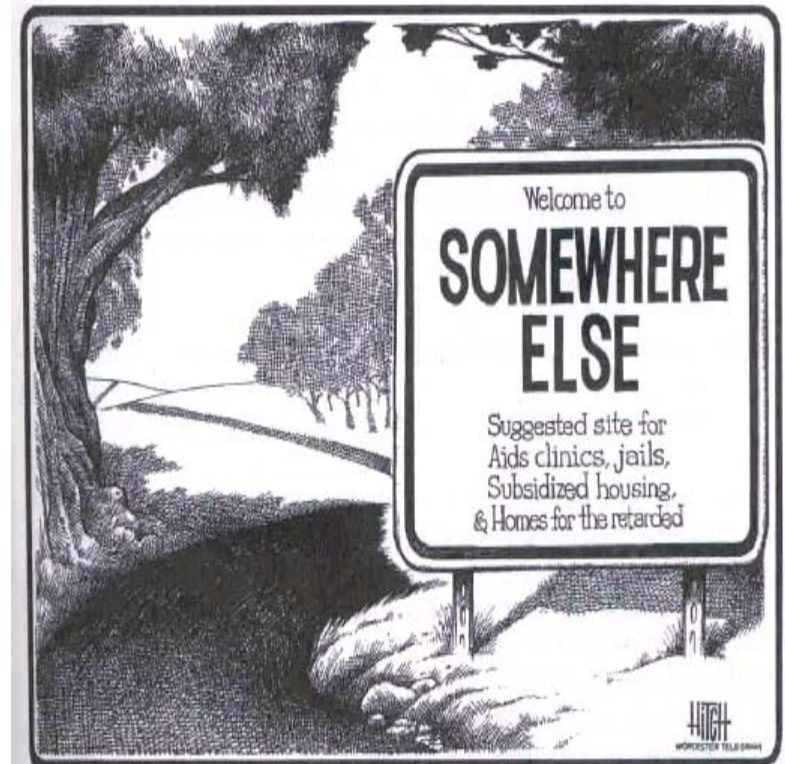
Strain/Organization Theory and Policy

- The Chicago Area Project
- Boston Mid-city Project
- Mobilization for Youth

Lecture 11B: Labeling Theory

Labeling Theory

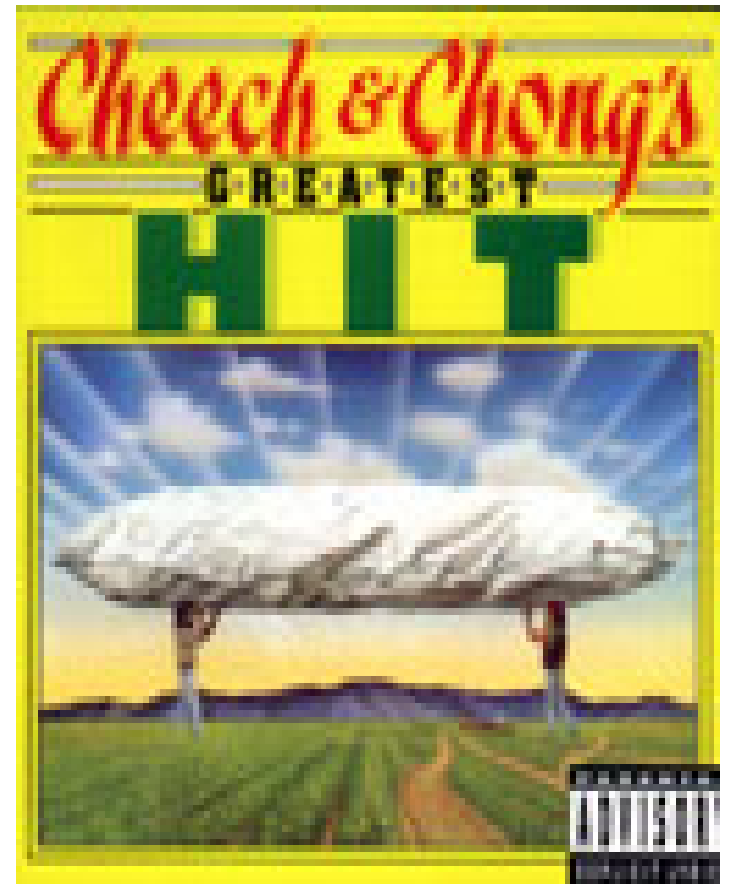
- Focuses on formal and informal application of stigmatizing and deviant “labels,” by society on some of its members.
- Theory treats such labels as both dependent variable (effect) and independent variable (cause).



The preconceptions of stigmatization: According to the labeling perspective, the societal reaction to deviance exacerbates problems of social isolation and exclusion.

Labeling as an Effect

- Used as a **dependent variable** when attempting to explain why particular behaviors are defined as wrong and why certain persons are selected for stigmatization and criminalization.
- Similar to **conflict theory**. Individuals with power create and enforce rules at the expense of the less powerful.



Labeling as a Cause of Crime

- Origins of deviance, or primary deviance, of less interest.
- Once an individual is sanctioned by state controllers for breaking a law, they become labeled and stigmatized.
- Labels lead to secondary deviance.

Assumptions of Labeling Theory: Symbolic Interaction

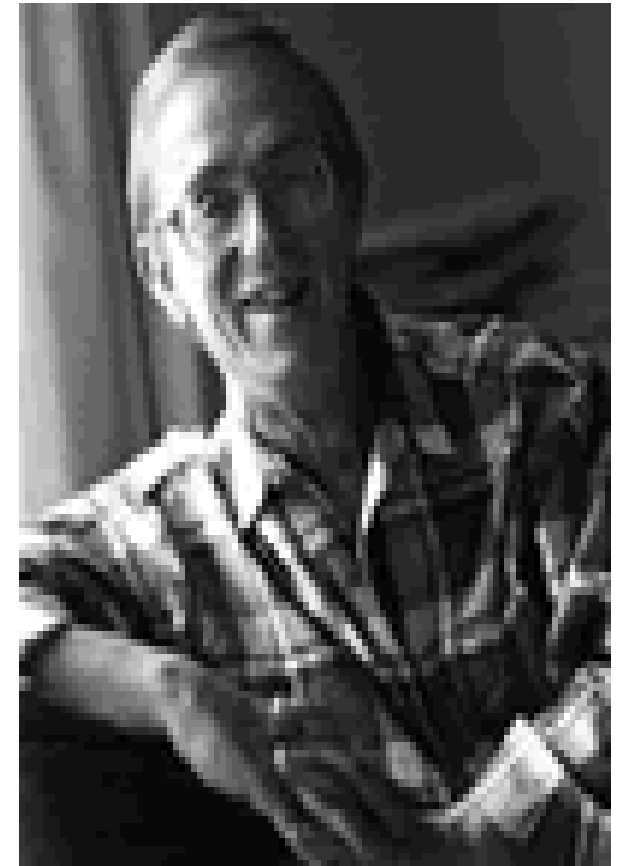
- An individual's identity, cognitive processes, and values, are assumed to exist only in the context of society acting, reacting, and changing in social interaction with others.
- Emphasis on **symbolic meaning** to actors in social interactions, rather than on concrete, behavioral, and objective aspects of such interactions.

Symbolic Interaction cont.

- Individuals' self-concepts are reflections of others' conceptions of them. "We become what we think others think we are."
- Labeling theory proposes that the labeling process involves symbolic interaction. Deviants come to believe they are deviants as a result of the symbolic meaning attached to labels such as "criminal," "dope fiend," and "delinquent."

Label as CAUSE of Crime and Delinquency

- Theory gained momentum in the 1960s when “questioning authority” was a common social movement.
- Assumes self-concept formed through symbolic interaction.
- Hypothesis: subsequent deviant behavior is directly and significantly affected by the labels created by *informal* and *formal* social controls



Becker

Labeling Process and Effects

- Often, but not always, legal and social sanctions have the unintended consequences of fostering further violations.
- Disgrace suffered by people who are labeled as delinquent or criminal more often encourages rather than discourages future deviant behavior.

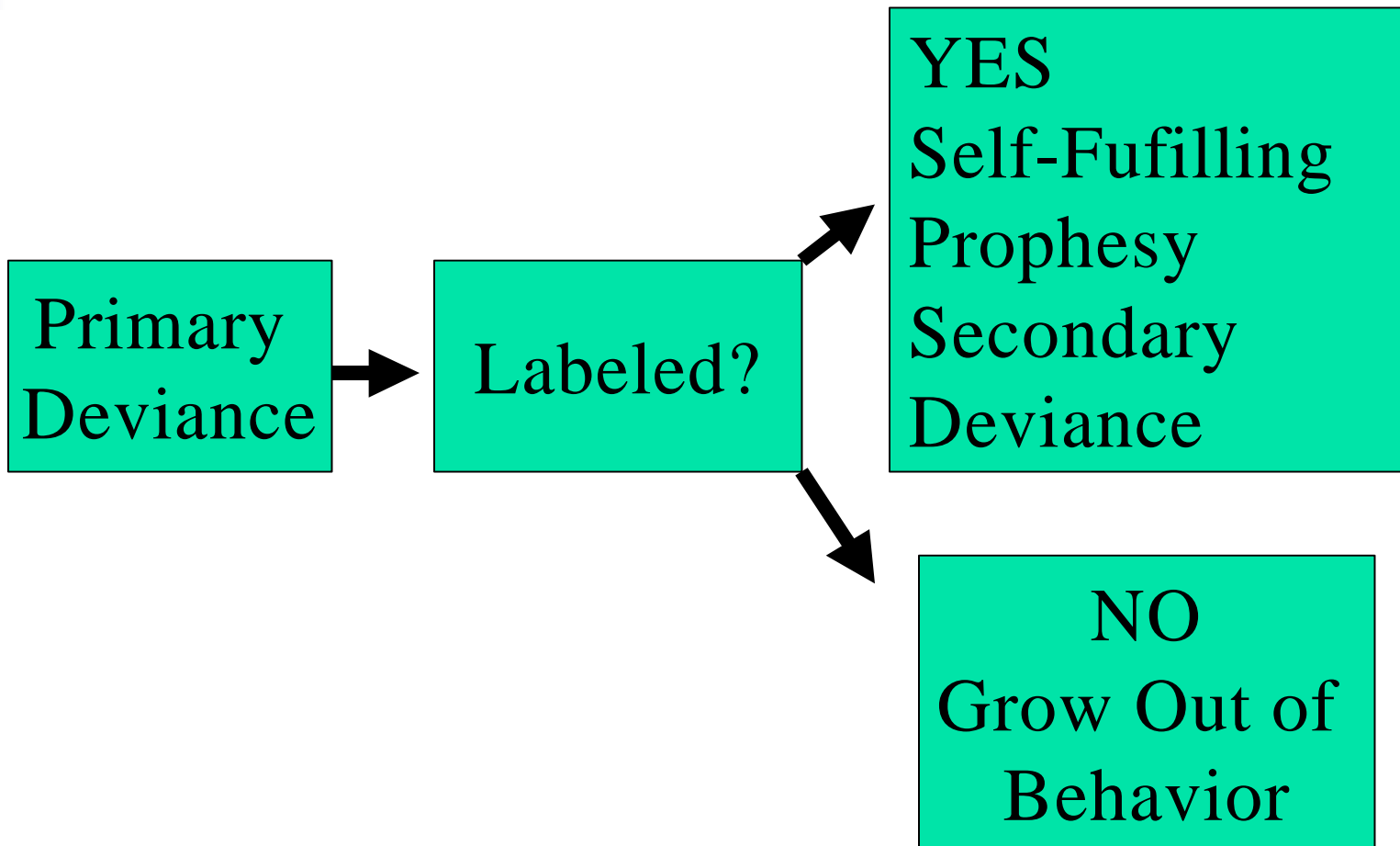


Primary vs. Secondary Deviance

- Primary (all of us engage in deviance, for a variety of reasons)
- Secondary: deviance that is the direct result of the labeling process
- This is also referred to as “deviance amplification”



The Labeling Process





Criticisms of Labeling Theory

- Labeling theory ignores the onset of delinquency (origin of primary deviance)
- Labeling may effect “self-concept,” but no evidence that “self-concept” causes crime
- Labeling typically occurs AFTER chronic delinquency

Traditional Criminological Theories

Deviant Behavior
(rational choices, biological traits,
social learning).



Social Control
Institutions emerge
to control deviant
behavior.

Labeling Theory

Social Control
Institutions define and
enforce rules related
to "deviant" behavior.



Deviant Behavior
Results from social
control itself.

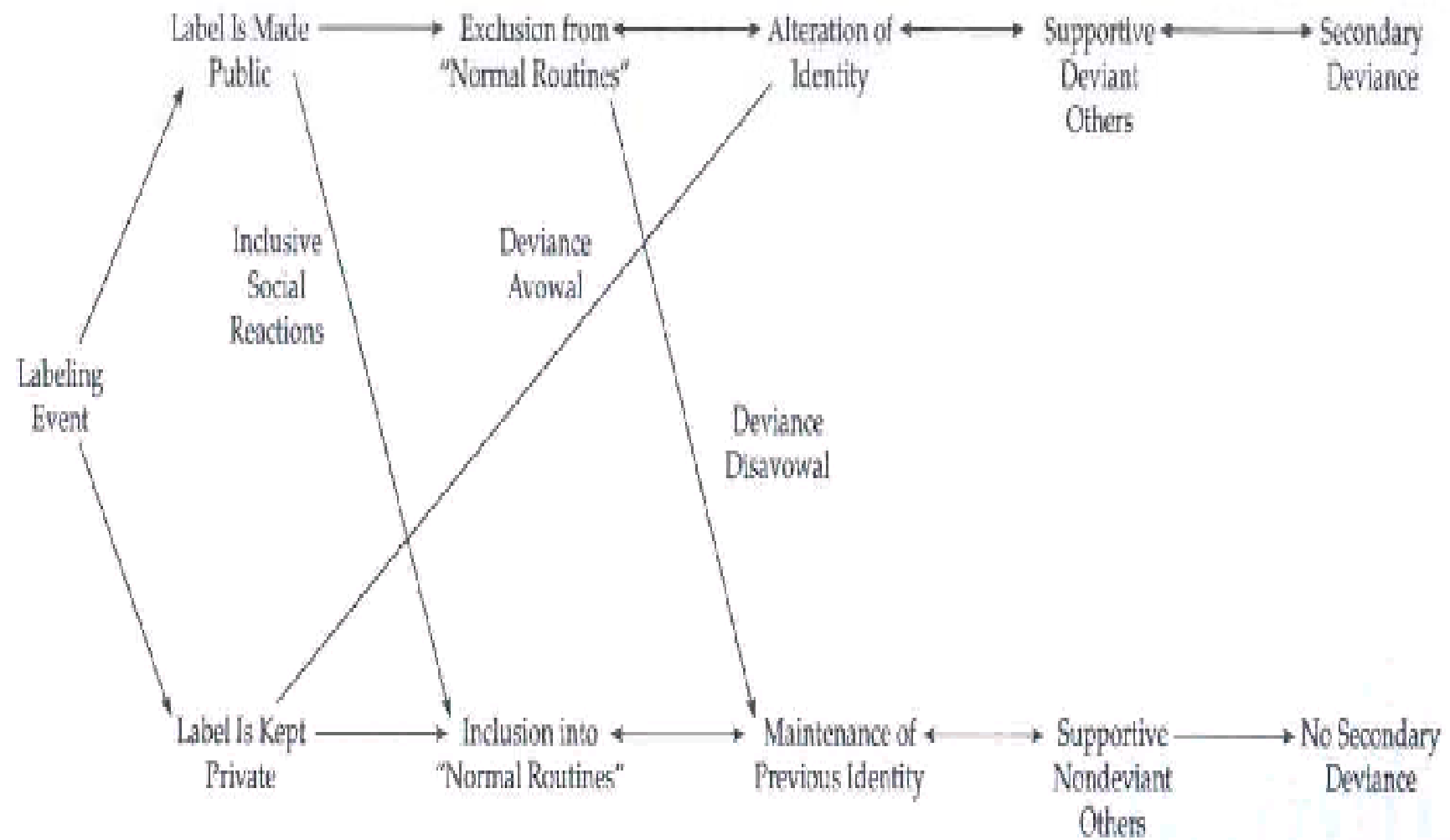
Empirical Evidence on Labeling Theory

- Empirical tests have generally found **weak** support for labeling theory.

Developments and Modification

- Recent labeling theorists dismiss the disconfirming empirical evidence because most studies were not valid tests.
- Some argue that when other factors are properly taken into account, labeling theory will be supported.

Figure 12.1 Processes Leading to Greater Probability of Secondary Deviance



Problems with Most Tests of Labeling Theory

- Most studies use simple tests that do not include all of the direct and intervening variables.
- Most studies look at recidivism of different groups of youth experiencing different legal sanctions, but ignore informal sanctions and temporal patterns.
- Many studies too simple, and biased towards being proven false.

Labeling Theory and Policy

- In the 1970s labeling theory was accepted.
- *Diversion programs* created to keep juveniles out of the criminal justice system for fear of labeling them.

Reintegrative Shaming and Restorative Justice

- Instead of formal courts, *informal* groups from the deviant's community resolve the case.
- Victim and offender are restored through mediation and discussions.
- Attempts to minimize shaming, and reintegrate deviant into the community (discussions, apologies, community service).

Lecture 11C: **Conflict Theory**

Part I: Conflict and Criminal Justice

Part II: Conflict and Crime

Part I: Conflict and Criminal Justice

- State criminal justice institutions have emerged.
- But two perspectives on how state laws are enacted and are enforced: *consensus* and *conflict*.

Consensus and Functional Theories of Law

- Formal laws which are created and enforced emerge from the informal rules in a society on which there is the greatest normative consensus.
- Social rules are persistent and slow to change, and through time, legal legislation expresses the underlying social rules, mores, and folkways.
- Example: Southern Honor and Self-Defense rules.

Conflict Theory of Law and Criminal Justice

- Mainly emerged in 1950s (George Simmel, George Vold).
- 1960s conflict criminologists argued that central goal is not to untangle causes of criminal behavior, but explain the processes that formally define or label criminal behavior.
- *Labeling Theory* and *Conflict Theory* the same on this issue.

Conflict Theory

- Formation of Law: The powerful create laws to protect their interests.
- Enforcement of Law: The powerful uphold the law in their interests.
- Law is a “weapon” of the powerful that can be used to control other weaker segments of society (minorities, lower-classes, gender, etc.)

Considering Conflict and Consensus

- *Mala in se*: Many crimes ALL can agree are wrong (but maybe not about how to punish murderers for example).
- *Mala prohibita*: Less consensus on “crimes” such as sexual behavior, drugs, alcohol, business activities because groups have different preferences and tolerances.

Empirical Validity of Consensus and Conflict Theories of Criminal Justice

Three Types of Studies

- 1.) How do interest groups shape laws through time?
- 2.) Evaluate if there is consensus in public opinions about how strongly acts are disapproved.
- 3.) Extra-legal variables: Evaluate if legal processes favors the powerful and discriminates against those with less power.

1.) Interest Groups: Example of Vagrancy Laws

- **England, 14th Century--depleted labor supply. First laws gave landed aristocracy control over the movement of their workers.**
- **As labor supplies increased, laws relaxed.**
- **By 16th Century: mercantilism and trade. New concern: Keep countryside safe for transport.**

2.) Consensus: Strength of Disapproval

- Citizens of ALL interests generally agree that crimes such as murder, rape, robbery are the most serious and heinous of crimes.
- Much less agreement on offenses involving public morality and order (e.g., drunkenness, prostitution).

3.) Legal and Extra-legal Variables: Is the Justice System Biased?

- Question: Are the less powerful more likely to experience legal sanctions—all else held equal?
- Comparisons of extra-legal variables (race, class, age, gender) vs. legal variables (offense, prior record, guilt or innocence).

Do biases correspond with Conflict Theory?

	Over-represented in System?	Power
African Americans and the legal system	yes	weak
Males	yes	strong
Black and Native American <u>youth</u>	no	weak

Do extra-legal variables have an effect controlling for legal variables and other factors?

- Is it a myth that the criminal justice system is racist and always favors the interests of the dominant majority?
- “Contextual discrimination” does occur: race-based decisions occur in some stages, and by some individuals in the criminal justice system.

African Americans and Discrimination

- Walker (1996) argues that today the criminal justice system falls in the middle of a continuum between pure discrimination and pure justice (at least since the post 1960s). Contextual discrimination.
- Evidence: Offense rates, police, courts, sentencing, and death penalty.

BOX 1.2 Discrimination-Disparity Continuum

**Systematic
Discrimination**

**Institutionalized
Discrimination**

**Contextual
Discrimination**

**Individual Acts
of Discrimination**

**Pure
Justice**

Definitions

Systematic discrimination—Discrimination at all stages of the criminal justice system, at all times, and all places.

Institutionalized discrimination—Racial and ethnic disparities in outcomes that are the result of the application of racially neutral factors such as prior criminal record, employment status, demeanor, etc.

Contextual discrimination—Discrimination found in particular contexts or circumstances (e.g., certain regions, particular crimes, special victim-offender relationships).

Individual acts of discrimination—Discrimination that results from the acts of particular individuals but is not characteristic of entire agencies or the criminal justice system as a whole.

Pure Justice—No racial or ethnic discrimination at all.

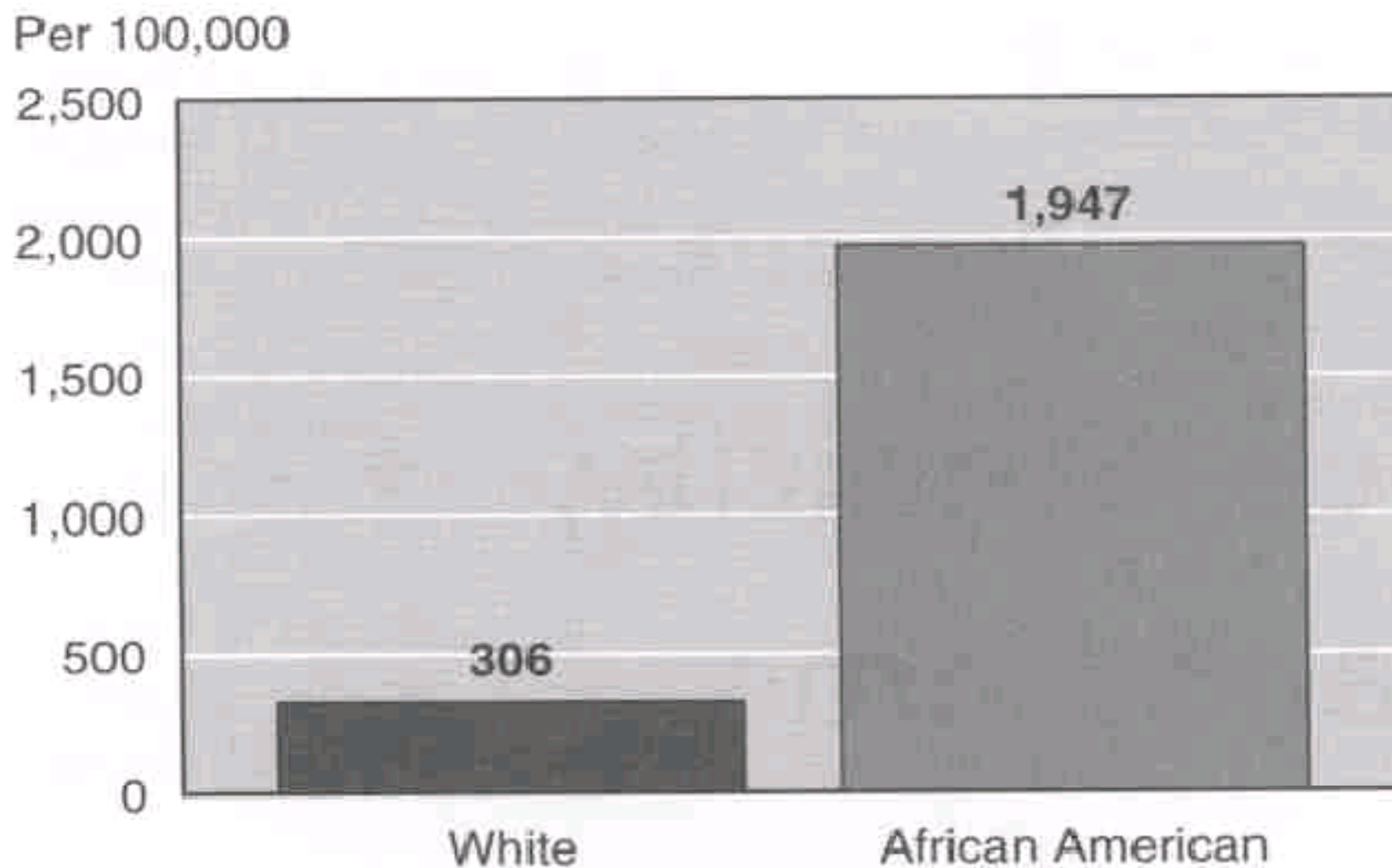


FIGURE 1.1 Incarceration Rates, 1993

Percentage
African
Americans
arrested divided
by percentage of
African
Americans in
population
(12%)

All Crime	2.5
Violent Crime	3.7
Property Crime	2.9
Robbery	5.1
Murder	4.6
Drug Abuse	3.3
Drunkenness	1.4
DUI	.8

$$12/12 = 1$$

Sociology Explanations for Disparity

Poverty and
Inequality

Leads to MORE
strain and
frustration among
African
Americans than
other groups?

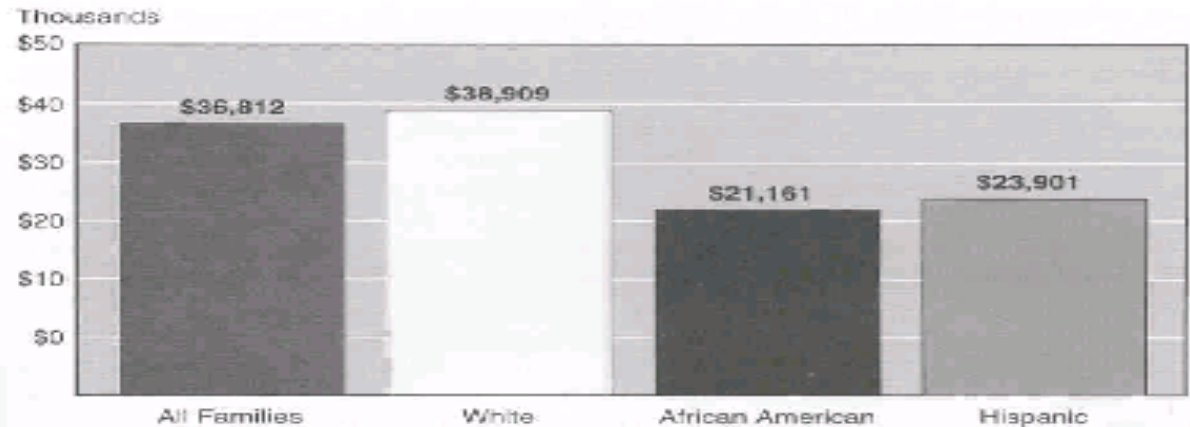
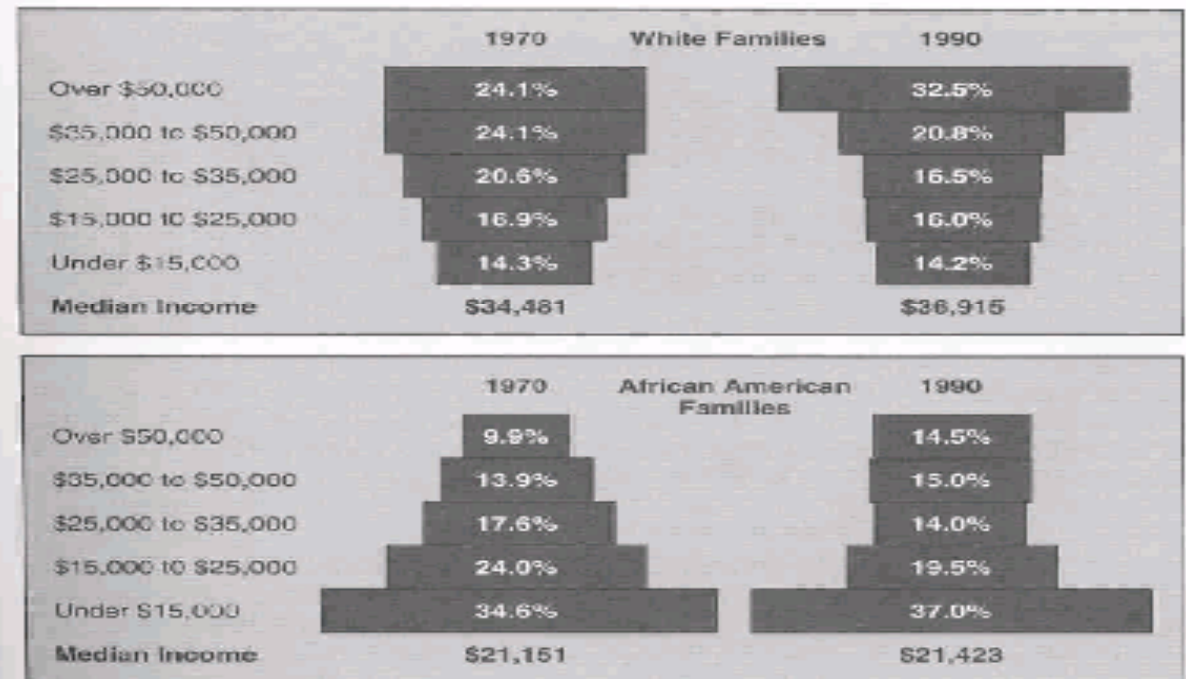


FIGURE 3.1 Median Family Income, 1992

Income Distributions (1990 Dollars)



Biased Policing and DISCRIMINATION

Table 4.2 Citizens Shot And Killed, Memphis

	1969–1974		1985–1989	
	White	African American	White	African American
Armed & assaultive	5	7	6	7
Unarmed & assaultive	2	6	1	5
Unarmed & not assaultive	1	13	0	0
	8	26	7	12
Total	34		19	

SOURCE: Adapted from Jerry R. Sparger and David J. Giacopassi, "Memphis Revisited: A Reexamination of Police Shootings after the Garner Decision," *Justice Quarterly* 9 (June 1992): 211–225.

Part II: Conflict Theory of Criminal Behavior

- Crime is ordinary, learned, and normal behavior of individuals caught up in *cultural* or *group conflict*.
- Crime is an expression conflict that occurs when people acting according to their norms and values violate the norms of other groups.

Examples of Conflict Causing Crime

- Individuals experiencing new cultures or groups
- LA riots: Rodney King, Korean businesses
- Civil Rights movement
- Abortion: Pro-life vs. Pro-choice
- Political conflict (terrorism)

Empirical Validity

- Scope: Conflict Theory may explain a small portion of crimes that result from direct conflict between groups (e.g., civil rights movement, terrorism).
- However, could there be more indirect effects of group conflict and discrimination?

Policy

- Conflict Theory often suggests that fundamental changes are required in societies (e.g, remove racism and class power hierarchies).
- These may be good goals, but can they be accomplished?