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# Durkheim's theory of anomie and crime: A clarification and elaboration

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## Abstract

In contemporary criminology, the proposal of a relationship between anomie and crime typically is traced to the work of Émile Durkheim. Yet, despite the prominence of anomie theory in this field, Durkheim's theory of anomie and crime has not been carefully explicated and elaborated. Durkheim did not provide an extensive discussion of how anomie affects crime rates, and he certainly did not present anomie as the only cause of crime. Nonetheless, a careful examination of his rather elusive concept of anomie, together with a few small inferences, yields a relatively coherent theory of crime that differs from the popular interpretations of his work. The analysis begins with an inquiry into five different conceptions of anomie that can be abstracted from Durkheim's writings. This is followed by an examination of what he implied regarding anomie as a cause of property crime, violent crime, and "juvenile crime." The final section explores the effects of anomie on criminal law—that is, on decisions to define and treat various actions as criminal. Unlike most contemporary anomie theories, Durkheim's theory, as elaborated in this article, integrates a theory of crime causation with an account of criminal law.

## Keywords

Anomie, crime, criminal law, Durkheim

With the publication of Robert Merton's "Social Structure and Anomie" in 1938, discourse on the relationship between anomie and crime began its move to the front stage of criminology.<sup>1</sup> Of course, Merton was not the first theorist to suggest a relationship between these two phenomena; he simply reconfigured and extended a line of reasoning that had existed for several decades. More than 40 years earlier, Émile Durkheim, in a fragmented and often implicit manner, proposed a connection between anomie and crime. Yet, even though anomie became one of the core concepts of twentieth-century criminology, a thorough examination of Durkheim's theory of anomie and crime is not available in the literature of criminology and still warrants attention. Many criminologists and sociologists have presented analyses that touch on this matter, but they do not

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provide a comprehensive review of the different forms of anomie described by Durkheim and the various ways in which the distinctive forms affect crime rates and criminal law.<sup>2</sup>

This article provides a close examination of Durkheim's largely implicit theory of anomie and crime. It begins with an exploration of his wavering and somewhat elusive treatment of anomie, an essential but often neglected first step to understanding and developing his theory. It then provides an examination of what Durkheim suggested about the effects of anomie on property crime, violent crime, and "juvenile crime." The final section explores the noticeable absence and potential role of anomie in Durkheim's theory of criminal law. Here, it is suggested that the commonly hypothesized positive relationship between anomie and official crime rates needs to be revised.<sup>3</sup>

## Durkheim's anomie<sup>4</sup>

Anomie is a fluid concept with a long history. Marco Orrù (1987) traced its development from the idea of anomia in ancient Greek philosophy to that of anomie in contemporary American sociology. He concluded that "the diversity of meanings taken by anomie has often been greater than their similarity" (Orrù, 1987, p. 154). Focusing on the recent history of anomie, Philippe Besnard (1986, p. 51) also noted the diverse meanings of this term and added, "Often it has been used without any precise meaning, performing a decorative rather than cognitive function." Fortunately, most of this history goes beyond the scope of this article;<sup>5</sup> we need to be concerned only with the meaning of anomie in Durkheim's sociology. Unfortunately, this meaning is not entirely clear.

### Five meanings of anomie

Although the literature of criminology devotes considerable space to the examination of anomie, the overall fluidity of this concept in Durkheim's works is often ignored by criminologists. Accordingly, before we can effectively examine his theory of anomie and crime, we must review the various meanings of this concept in his writings. Across Durkheim's major works, five plausible meanings of anomie can be identified.

Durkheim alluded to anomie in several works, but his most explicit discussions of this concept were presented in *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893/1984) and *Suicide* (1897/1951). In the literature of criminology that examines anomie, the first of these works appears to be a source of confusion. Sometimes, *The Division of Labor* receives almost no attention at all (e.g., Agnew, 1997; Passas, 1995); sometimes, it is cited as if it presented a conception of anomie that is largely the same as the conception presented in *Suicide* (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2007); and sometimes, it is described as if it presented a conception of anomie that clearly differs from the conception presented in *Suicide* (e.g., Clinard, 1964; Thome, 2007).<sup>6</sup> As noted below, the third position appears to be the most accurate, although the imprecision of Durkheim's descriptions leaves some room for debate.

In *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim (1893/1984) discussed anomie in terms of an abnormal form of the division of labor. He maintained that the division of labor is, or at least will become, the primary source of social solidarity in modern societies. When it is well developed, the structure of society consists of a complex yet cohesive system of specialized and interdependent units. This represents the normal situation. The division

of labor, however, can emerge in an abnormal form, one that does not engender solidarity. Durkheim did not attempt to describe every possible abnormal form, but he did refer to three as being “the most general and the most serious”: the “anomic division of labor,” “the forced division of labor,” and what can be referred to as a “badly co-ordinated” division of labor (although Durkheim simply labeled it “another abnormal form”). Of course, it is the first of these abnormal forms that is of importance to the present inquiry.

An anomic division of labor exists where relationships between different organs of a society (or different occupational specializations) lack adequate regulation (Durkheim, 1893/1984).<sup>7</sup> This condition is attributed to an abrupt change in the social system, such as a rapid transition from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy. During such a change, many well-established relationships and rules become obsolete, but the development of new functional relationships and rules that sanction them cannot keep pace with the transformation that is occurring. Thus, there is a lack of adequate regulation, a state of anomie. Durkheim suggested that in the economic sphere of modern societies, this anomic situation has contributed to “industrial and commercial crises,” “bankruptcies,” and “hostility between labour and capital” (pp. 292–293). In the realm of the “moral and social sciences,” a comparable anomic situation is said to have caused the various specialties (e.g., jurists, psychologists, anthropologists, and economists) to overlook the fact that the phenomena they are studying “interlock with one another at every point” (pp. 303–304).

Four years later, in *Suicide*, Durkheim (1897/1951) presented another description of anomie. There he proposed a distinction between egoistic, anomic, altruistic, and fatalistic suicide—the first two being more common in modern societies and the last two more common in pre-modern societies. Interestingly, his discussion of anomic suicide appears to be centered on a conception of anomie that is not present in his earlier discussion of the anomic division of labor. In *Suicide*, anomie is described largely as the insufficient regulation of human desires rather than the insufficient regulation of interactions between different organs of society. In his description of the anomic division of labor, Durkheim never mentioned anything about the regulation of human desires.

This conceptual shift is illustrated in Durkheim’s (1897/1951) discussion of the relationship between “economic anomie” and suicide. On the one hand, he noted that an economic downturn can cast “certain individuals into a lower state” and thereby reduce their opportunities to satisfy their desires (p. 252). In this case, the desires of individuals are limited, but they are not limited enough given the opportunities they have lost. On the other hand, Durkheim argued that abrupt economic growth can disrupt the ability of society to place any limits on human desires, leaving many individuals with insatiable aspirations. He maintained that humans, unlike animals, can continually imagine better life conditions and, thus, have naturally unlimited desires (pp. 246–247). Normally, these desires are restrained by society “as a whole, or through the agency of one of its organs” (pp. 248–249). However, during periods of rapid economic growth, society is disrupted and human desires have more freedom from social restraints, causing many individuals to pursue “the infinite.” In short, during periods of anomie caused either by “economic disasters” or “fortunate crises,” many individuals find themselves unable to satisfy their desires through the means available to them and, ultimately, experience “a perpetual state of unhappiness” (pp. 243, 248).

In *Suicide*, Durkheim once again emphasized anomie as an important problem of modern economic life, but he also referred to another sphere of social life in which anomie is a problem—the family. He argued that anomie can affect one dimension of the family (“matrimonial society”) or the family as a whole (“domestic society”). “Matrimonial anomie” concerns instability in marital life; it exists when public opinion supporting the institution of marriage is weak and “matrimonial regulation,” primarily the “regulation of sexual relations,” is inadequate (pp. 270–276, 384–386). Durkheim (1897/1951, pp. 268–276, 384–385) concluded that this type of anomie is more of a problem for men than women—in that men benefit more from marriage than women, and weaker matrimonial regulation “can only better the wife’s situation.” On the other hand, “domestic anomie” concerns instability in overall family life (e.g., an inability to meet the needs of parents and children); it exists where “family spirit” is weak and can result from a “family catastrophe,” such as the death of a spouse (pp. 259, 266). As with his analysis of suicide due to economic anomie, Durkheim’s discussion of matrimonial and domestic anomie stressed the insufficient regulation of human desires.<sup>8</sup>

Although Durkheim’s most explicit and extensive discussions of anomie were in *The Division of Labor* and *Suicide*, he occasionally used the term elsewhere, or at least made implicit reference to the problem. On these occasions, it usually appears in the same or similar forms—as the insufficient regulation of interactions between different social units (see Durkheim, 1900/1957, pp. 9–10; 1902/1984, pp. xxxi–xxxii)<sup>9</sup> or the insufficient regulation of desires (see Durkheim, 1900/1957, pp. 10–11; 1902–1903/1973, pp. 38–46). These two meanings, of course, have something in common and may be viewed as two dimensions of a single concept. In other words, anomie, as is often suggested, may be viewed simply as a state of insufficient regulation. Even though Durkheim typically focused on specific kinds of “de-regulation,” this general conception of anomie is consistent with his use of this concept and will be treated as a third meaning of anomie.

Closely related to this third form of anomie is a fourth conception. At times in Durkheim’s work, the term anomie appears to represent excessive imprecision and weakening of the “collective or common consciousness” (*conscience collective*) of a society. The collective consciousness refers to “(t)he totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society . . .” (Durkheim, 1893/1984, pp. 38–39).<sup>10</sup> Thus, this form of anomie concerns a condition in which these beliefs and sentiments are vague, insufficiently felt, or generally lacking. This meaning of anomie entails the first three conceptions to the extent that the collective consciousness of a society is the basis of regulation, the foundation upon which regulations are constructed. Moreover, it arguably goes beyond the first three conceptions since the collective consciousness may include ideas and feelings that extend beyond matters of regulation.

But this is not all. Anomie has at least one additional meaning that can be found in Durkheim’s early work. In a footnote presented in his introduction to the first edition of *The Division of Labor*, a footnote that did not appear in the second edition, Durkheim (1893/1933, p. 431) stated, “. . . anomie is the contradiction of all morality.” Anomie, in this sense, appears to be synonymous with immoral beliefs, sentiments, and behaviors. However, it is critical to note that for Durkheim, not only does morality vary from one

society to another, it refers to “the totality of conditions of social solidarity” (1893/1933, p. xxiii). More specifically:

Everything which is a source of solidarity is moral, everything which forces man to take account of other men is moral, everything which forces him to regulate his conduct through something other than the striving of his ego is moral, and morality is as solid as these ties are numerous and strong. (Durkheim, 1893/1933, p. 398)

Given Durkheim’s conception of morality, this fifth meaning of anomie is difficult to reconcile with the remainder of his social theory. It would subsume the forced division of labor, a “badly co-ordinated” division of labor, and egoism,<sup>11</sup> since these conditions also contradict morality in that they reduce social solidarity. Yet, Durkheim generally treats these concepts as distinct from anomie. Viewing anomie as “the contradiction of all morality,” therefore, results in problematic inconsistencies in Durkheim’s paradigm. Fortunately, an extended analysis of this version of anomie seems unnecessary. It was excluded from the second edition of *The Division of Labor* and, accordingly, can be treated as the least significant of the five meanings.

To facilitate the following analysis, the five meanings of anomie have been given distinct labels: insufficient regulation of interactions between different social organs (or specializations) is labeled *anomie*<sub>1</sub>; insufficient regulation of desires is labeled *anomie*<sub>2</sub>; a general state of insufficient regulation is labeled *anomie*<sub>3</sub>; excessive imprecision and weakening of the collective consciousness is labeled *anomie*<sub>4</sub>; and “the contradiction of all morality” is labeled *anomie*<sub>5</sub>.<sup>12</sup> Below, reference to a specific kind of anomie (e.g., *anomie*<sub>1</sub>) is used where it appears to be particularly important; otherwise, reference is made simply to anomie.

### *Other interpretive challenges*

Durkheim’s use of the term “anomie” becomes more complicated upon examining the relationship between *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub>, the specific spheres of social life in which *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub> may be problematic, the relationship between anomie and egoism, the various effects of anomie, and the possibility of reducing anomie in one or all of its forms.

Reading across Durkheim’s discussions of the anomic division of labor (*anomie*<sub>1</sub>) and anomic suicide (*anomie*<sub>2</sub>), an indirect causal relationship between these two phenomena appears to be implied. He suggests that the former is a cause of economic crises (see Durkheim, 1893/1984, pp. 292, 303, 305) while the latter is an effect of such crises (see Durkheim, 1897/1951, pp. 241, 252–253). Thus, an anomic division of labor emerges as an indirect cause of anomic suicide; and more importantly, *anomie*<sub>1</sub> appears as an indirect cause of *anomie*<sub>2</sub>. Because these two forms of anomie are conceptually distinct, the implied relationship is plausible. In fact, if this is an accurate interpretation of Durkheim’s text, *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub> are perhaps even more distinct than they appear at first glance.<sup>13</sup>

Durkheim added an additional layer of complexity to his use of the term “anomie” by stressing that, in one form or another, it permeates different spheres of social life.

It is described as something that can affect the economy, science, and family life<sup>14</sup>; and in any single nation, it seemingly could affect these different spheres to different degrees. Moreover, it may affect some areas of a nation more than others. For instance, Durkheim (1897/1951, p. 358) suggested that *anomie*<sub>2</sub> tends to vary across urban and rural areas, with it being more intense in the industrial centers. His use of this term, thus, can be difficult to pin down since both the type of regulation and its domain can vary in critical ways.

Questions concerning the definitional limits of Durkheim's *anomie* also make it difficult to clearly separate this concept from his conception of egoism. Durkheim (1897/1951) noted that egoism is commonly found together with strong currents of *anomie*<sub>2</sub> in modern societies. The two phenomena "have a peculiar affinity for one another" and "are usually merely two different aspects of one social state..." (p. 288). Yet, as this quote suggests, Durkheim maintained that the two concepts are distinct. Whereas *anomie*<sub>2</sub> is associated with a lack of regulation (discipline), egoism is associated with a lack of integration (attachment to social groups). But upon closer examination, this distinction becomes hazy. Both seem to entail insufficient regulation of one kind or another. For Durkheim, egoism, much like *anomie*, involves a situation where "society is not sufficiently integrated at all points to keep all its members under its control" (p. 373), a situation where people are less likely to acknowledge "rules of conduct" that conflict with their "private interests" (p. 209, 288). In view of these similarities, it should not come as a surprise that at least one sociologist has argued that "...egoism and *anomie* are identical" (Johnson, 1965, pp. 882–886). However, given that this issue has not been resolved in a definitive way, and given that Durkheim treats egoism as a distinct concept, it will be treated as a separate concept in this article.

Durkheim's conception of *anomie* becomes even more complicated when one begins to examine its effects. He typically characterized it as a detrimental condition, as something that is dysfunctional. As noted above, *anomie*<sub>1</sub> impedes the development of solidarity, and currents of *anomie*<sub>2</sub> cause suicide; and as noted below, all forms of *anomie*, to a point, may elevate crime rates. However, Durkheim (1897/1951) also suggested that some measure of *anomie* is functional when a society needs to adapt to changing conditions. He implied that currents of *anomie* flow through all societies and, to some degree, are necessary for progressive social change (see Durkheim, 1897/1951, pp. 321, 364). If the rules governing the interactions of social units and limiting the desires of individuals are unalterable, how much opportunity do the people of a society have to change its structure?<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Durkheim implied that some degree of *anomie* is normal in progressive societies: "The entire morality of progress and perfection is... inseparable from a certain amount of *anomie*" (p. 364). If Durkheim's theory of *anomie* is interpreted in view of his "rules for the distinction of the normal from the pathological" (Durkheim, 1895/1982), it may be concluded that *anomie* is normal as long as it is intimately connected to the general conditions of social life and does not exceed the level that is functional for a given social type (also see Orrù, 1987, pp. 142–144).

Yet, there is reason to believe that this functional re-description of *anomie* takes us further away from Durkheim's general use of the term. He repeatedly emphasized the dysfunctional/abnormal nature of *anomie* and only briefly alluded to its functional/normal nature. In fact, it has been argued that Durkheim described *anomie* more as a state of "derangement" than a state of deregulation (Meštrović and Brown, 1985).

My focus on the property of inadequate regulation, admittedly, implies an acceptance of the popular English translations of Durkheim's work. I have relied on such translations, but I certainly do not see them as flawless. Meštrović and Brown (1985) have questioned these translations, arguing that Durkheim's anomie is more accurately interpreted as a form of "derangement" rather than deregulation. If this is true, his emphasis on the dysfunctional/abnormal nature of anomie may be even greater than it appears in the English translations of his work.

Before proceeding, one additional point must be emphasized: From Durkheim's viewpoint, high levels of anomie are not necessarily a permanent characteristic of modern societies. He did comment on at least one occasion that the industrial societies of the nineteenth century were suffering from a "chronic state" of anomie (particularly in the economic sphere),<sup>16</sup> but he also argued that this problem should decline with time, with the development of "professional groups," and perhaps with the development of systems of education that provide a degree of discipline that is no longer instilled by modern families.

Durkheim suggested that with substantial contact over a sufficiently long period of time, the specialized organs of modern societies will become increasingly adjusted to one another and regular relationships will emerge. Many of the "rights and duties" that evolve from these relationships will become obligatory and will be expressed in specific rules of conduct (Durkheim, 1893/1984, pp. 302–305). He maintained that these rules, generally, cannot be created by governments because they are too far removed from the activities and needs of each specialized social organ. According to Durkheim (1897/1951, pp. 379–380; 1900/1957, pp. 12–13, 29–31; 1902/1984, p. xxxv), professional groups would be in a much better position to identify the regulations (professional ethics) necessary to alleviate a substantial amount of anomie in modern societies.<sup>17</sup> These groups, he concluded, should be developed as "public institutions" on a national and potentially international level, and they should be composed of "all those working in the same industry, assembled together and organised in a single body" (1897/1951, pp. 378–379; 1900/1957, p. 39; 1902/1984, pp. xxxv–xxxvi, li, lix). They could become a foundation for political organization, but they should retain some autonomy from government (1897/1951, pp. 380, 390–391; 1900/1957, pp. 103–105; 1902/1984, pp. li, liii). In other words, they would be "secondary groups" that exist "between the state and individuals" (1897/1951, p. 384; 1902/1984, pp. liv–lv).

Professional groups are presented by Durkheim primarily as a means to facilitate the reduction of anomie in the economic sphere of social life.<sup>18</sup> They are not presented as a cure-all; it is not suggested that they would be able to alleviate anomie from all spheres of social life. For instance, they may have little influence on matrimonial anomie (Durkheim, 1897/1951, pp. 384–386). Accordingly, Durkheim's proposal for the improvement of modern societies was not limited to the development of professional groups. Given the historical changes that have occurred in family morality and the collective consciousness, he also suggested that modern schools need to do more to promote a "moral education" (see Durkheim, 1902–1903/1973, pp. 144–157). "That which is essential to the spirit of discipline, that is to say, respect for the rule, can scarcely develop in the (modern) family setting" (p. 146). Consequently, for Durkheim, it is important for schools to communicate this spirit to children. Such an education, presumably, would prepare children to embrace regulations in other spheres



of social life and ultimately promote a gradual decline in the force of various anomic currents.<sup>19</sup>

### Summary

Although Durkheim's conception of anomie is somewhat elusive, it is safe to conclude that he viewed it as a phenomenon that involves different kinds of deregulation, affects different spheres of collective life, often accompanies rapid social change, and has a variety of unfavorable effects on society. He also adopted an optimistic standpoint, believing that it can be alleviated in modern societies. Nonetheless, the fluidity of Durkheim's anomie makes it difficult to interpret his position on the causal relationship between anomie and crime. In the next section, his theory of this relationship, which is more implicit than explicit, is examined.

### Anomie as a cause of crime

The first step in identifying a cause of crime is to specify what one means by the term "crime." In *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim (1893/1984) presented his definition of crime and the rationale behind it. Acknowledging extensive historical and cross-cultural variation in criminal laws,<sup>20</sup> he held that the defining property of crime, its "essence," will not be found in the "intrinsic properties" of the acts prohibited by such laws (p. 32). Instead, he argued that the defining property exists in the relationship between an act and the collective consciousness of a society. For Durkheim, "an act is criminal when it offends the strong, well-defined states (sentiments) of the collective consciousness" (p. 39).<sup>21</sup> He argued that criminal laws represent these states, and they are reaffirmed through the imposition of punishment. Moreover, because the states of the collective consciousness are shaped by the unique history and structure of a society, they vary from one society to another. In this way, Durkheim's theory accounts for the observation that different societies have different collective consciousnesses, different criminal laws, and different overall conceptions of crime.

Although Durkheim's views on the "essence" of crime, and its relation to criminal law, are relatively clear, his views on the causes of crime are more difficult to identify. Durkheim's suggestions concerning the causes of crime are usually brief and are scattered throughout several publications. In these works, he viewed anomie as one cause of crime, but he did not provide an extended analysis that focused specifically on the anomie/crime relationship. He also suggested that several other variables may have a causal relationship with crime, including a forced division of labor, collectivism ("altruism"), "moral individualism," egoism, opportunity, gender, and age. His analyses of these variables, however, are beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

This section provides a review of what Durkheim explicitly stated and otherwise suggested about anomie as a cause of property crime, violent crime, and "juvenile crime." It focuses specifically on Durkheim's writings and excludes related but significantly different works, such as Merton's (1938) theory of social structure and anomie.

As noted earlier, reference to a specific kind of anomie (e.g., *anomie*<sub>1</sub>) is used where it appears to be particularly important; otherwise, reference is made simply to anomie. Most of the material in this section focuses on *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub>. *Anomie*<sub>5</sub>, even if

Durkheim would have retained it in his later work, is irrelevant. Durkheim (1893/1984) concluded that the sentiments violated by criminal acts are important sources of social solidarity. Thus, given that *anomie*<sub>5</sub> is the contradiction of morality, and morality (for Durkheim) refers to the conditions of social solidarity, crime is subsumed by *anomie*<sub>5</sub>; it is a major part of *anomie*<sub>5</sub>. In other words, *anomie*<sub>5</sub> cannot be a cause of crime because it is crime and all else that contradicts morality.

### *Anomie and property crime*

In a series of lectures, Durkheim (1900/1957) examined “the right of property” in some detail, but he had very little to say about the causes of property crime where the right of property exists and said nothing explicitly about the relationship between anomie and property crime. Indeed, in his many books, articles, reviews, and published lectures, Durkheim said little about the causal impact of anomie on property crime. One may elaborate his views at several points to infer a relationship, but I have found no explicit discussions of this relationship in his works, and I have found no secondary source that cites such a discussion by Durkheim. Below I have provided an overview of how his statements may be *minimally* elaborated to infer a relationship between anomie and property crime. The goal is to extend his arguments just enough to propose a causal connection without creating internal contradictions or fundamentally changing his perspective.<sup>22</sup>

Some of the empirical data embraced by Durkheim would have allowed him to propose a positive relationship between anomie and property crime. He held that anomie had increased with the onset of the industrial revolution, and some of the crime statistics he referred to suggested that property crime in France was rising during the nineteenth century (e.g., Durkheim, 1900/1957, p. 114).<sup>23</sup> Durkheim’s statements on anomie, especially *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub>, can be elaborated to help explain this relationship without resorting to the more recent anomie theories (e.g., Merton, 1938; Messner & Rosenfeld, 2007).

*Anomie*<sub>1</sub> may contribute to property crime by creating “industrial and commercial crises” and “bankruptcies.” Economic disturbances such as these can result in prolonged periods of unemployment and desperation that may prompt property crime as a means for meeting basic needs or as an expression of resentment.<sup>24</sup> However, this line of reasoning, upon closer examination, leads to a more interesting conclusion: *Anomie*<sub>1</sub> may contribute to property crime by causing *anomie*<sub>2</sub>. The economic crises caused by *anomie*<sub>1</sub> can lead to a situation where many people, throughout the social hierarchy, cannot satisfy their desires through the available means (i.e., *anomie*<sub>2</sub>), a consequence that may prompt deviance. While the connection between *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and property crime can be developed more extensively through the integration of additional intervening variables (e.g., idleness), the apparent indirect cause/effect relationship between *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub> arguably has a closer connection to Durkheim’s overall paradigm.

Regarding *anomie*<sub>2</sub>, it may contribute to property crime in several ways. As just suggested, under anomic conditions stemming from “economic disasters,” many people lack the means they once had to satisfy their desires (e.g., a good job), and this may cause them to resort to property crime to maintain their old standard of living. On the other hand, under anomic conditions involving “fortunate crises,”

human desires are freed and people pursue the “infinite.” With unlimited desires, people simply will not have the means available to satisfy them. Once they have exhausted the legitimate means that are available, they may resort to illegitimate means (e.g., property crime) as part of their struggle, even though they will inevitably fall short of their goals.<sup>25</sup> In this way, *anomie*<sub>2</sub> may explain a wide range of property offenses, from petty acts of shoplifting to elaborate corporate frauds and extensive environmental harms. Beyond this, Durkheim (1897/1951, p. 253) suggested that *anomie*<sub>2</sub> also tends to blur social class distinctions and prompts more “competition” across the classes. Such competition may cause even more property crime.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, the problem of “fortunate crises” makes it easy to extend Durkheim’s comments on *anomie*<sub>2</sub> beyond the “typical” property crimes of the lower and working classes to the property offenses of the middle and upper classes—that is, to white-collar property offenses. The plausibility of such an extension is even more apparent in view of his 1902 “Preface to the Second Edition” of *The Division of Labor*. There Durkheim (1902/1984) suggested that anomie is an important cause of harmful behaviors in the business world.<sup>27</sup> He noted that in the economic sphere of social life, “professional ethics only exist in a very rudimentary state” (pp. xxxi–xxxii). Moreover, referring to the “legal and moral anomie” of late nineteenth-century industrial economies, Durkheim commented:

Those actions most blameworthy are so often excused by success that the boundary between the permissible and the prohibited, between what is just and what is unjust, is no longer fixed in any way, but seems capable of being shifted by individuals in an almost arbitrary fashion. So vague a morality, one so inconsistent, cannot constitute any kind of discipline... It is to this state of anomie that... must be attributed the continually recurring conflicts and disorders of every kind of which the economic world affords so sorry a spectacle. (pp. xxxi–xxxii)

In *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, Durkheim (1900/1957, p. 12) extended this point and argued that a lack of morality in economic life can weaken morality in general:

If we live amorally for a good part of the day, how can we keep the springs of morality from going slack in us?... If we follow no rule except that of a clear self-interest, in the occupations that take up nearly the whole of our time, how should we acquire a taste for any disinterestedness, or selflessness or sacrifice?

This quote, it should be noted, appears to concern egoism as much as anomie.

### *Anomie and violent crime*

Although Durkheim said little about the causes of property crime, he did provide a few discussions on the causes of violent crime, especially passionate homicides (see DiCristina, 2004, 2006). He even offered one or two explicit propositions concerning the relationship between anomie and homicide. Nevertheless, for a thorough analysis of the importance of anomie as a cause of violent crime in Durkheim’s criminological discourse, it again seems useful to occasionally infer a cause without deviating from

his perspective. As with property crime, such an inference is made only where it requires a minimal elaboration of his statements.

To begin, it is possible to surmise that *anomie*<sub>1</sub>, as a source of economic disturbances, creates conditions that lead some people to become violent. An anomic division of labor, as noted earlier, can result in high rates of unemployment and desperation. More importantly, it can result in *anomie*<sub>2</sub>. This is worth emphasizing, for Durkheim's most extensive discussions of the relationship between anomie and violent crime centered on *anomie*<sub>2</sub>.

In *Suicide*, *anomie*<sub>2</sub> is said to foster "unhappiness" and "anger," emotions that can drive a person to commit not only suicide but also homicide. In Durkheim's (1897/1951, p. 357) words, "Anomie . . . begets a state of exasperation and irritated weariness which may turn against the person himself or another according to circumstances; in the first case, we have suicide, in the second, homicide." *Anomie*<sub>2</sub> can result in "(v)iolent recriminations against life in general" or "(v)iolent recriminations against one particular person" (p. 293).<sup>28</sup> Durkheim implied that *anomie*<sub>2</sub> may be particularly useful when explaining homicide rates "at special points, where industrial and commercial activity are very great" (p. 358). He held that during the late nineteenth century, *anomie*<sub>2</sub> was in an "acute state" in the "great centers and regions of intense civilization."

Durkheim (1897/1951, p. 253) also suggested that *anomie*<sub>2</sub> may prompt violence by increasing "competition" in the struggle to satisfy desires. In other words, not only does *anomie*<sub>2</sub> stimulate feelings of unhappiness and anger, it also elevates the level of competition and may drive some people to violence as a means to secure an advantage over their competitors. Durkheim did not elaborate on this, but it represents another point at which his theory of anomic suicide may intersect with his theory of an anomic division of labor. *Anomie*<sub>2</sub>, the inadequate regulation of desires, stimulates competition; *anomie*<sub>1</sub>, the inadequate regulation of interactions between social units, allows the competition to proceed with little or no control, perhaps allowing the "most blameworthy" actions to be excused (Durkheim, 1902/1984).

Just as *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub> can be integrated into a single theory of violence, so can *anomie*<sub>2</sub> and egoism. In his discussion of the "mixed types" of suicide (e.g., "ego-anomic," "anomic-altruistic," and "ego-altruistic"), Durkheim (1897/1951, pp. 284–294) hinted at the possibility of one or more mixed types of violence. In this framework, the possibility of ego-anomic violence is especially intriguing. For Durkheim, egoism and *anomie*<sub>2</sub> often accompany each other. "It is, indeed, almost inevitable that the egoist should have some tendency to non-regulation; for, since he is detached from society, it has not sufficient hold upon him to regulate him" (p. 288). Accordingly, when a current of egoism that emphasizes self-interest and further reduces regulation is added to a current of *anomie*<sub>2</sub> that results in intense emotions and more competition, it seems reasonable to predict higher rates of violent crime. However, even if egoism contributes to violence in this way, its significance should not be overemphasized, for Durkheim stated that egoism "precludes sanguinary crime" (p. 358).<sup>29</sup>

Durkheim (1897/1951, pp. 342, 348–349), it should be noted, drew a distinction between "premeditated murder" and "unpremeditated murder," and most of his discussion of homicide focused on the latter. He defined unpremeditated murder as "simple intentional homicide without aggravating circumstances such as premeditation or pre-arrangement" (p. 342). Such murders generally stem from intense emotions, and

Durkheim was concerned primarily with the source of these emotions. But it remains possible that anomie also is an important cause of cold, calculated acts of violence (e.g., premeditated murder). Messner, Thome, and Rosenfeld (2008, p. 172) drew essentially this conclusion when they proposed that egoism, especially when combined with anomie, can contribute to “(p)remeditated murder, instrumental killings, and other forms of intentional assault.”

One additional point regarding the relationship between anomie and violence should be acknowledged. Just as it is possible to extend the explanatory scope of Durkheim’s theory beyond “typical” property crimes to white-collar property offenses, his theory also can be extended beyond “typical” violent crimes to white-collar violence. As stated earlier, for Durkheim (1902/1984, pp. xxxi–xxxii) “legal and moral anomie” has created conditions under which culpable actions in the economic sphere of social life “are so often excused by success that the boundary between the permissible and the prohibited, between what is just and what is unjust, is no longer fixed in any way . . .” Assuming that these actions entail violent offenses as well as property offenses, it can be concluded that anomie contributes to many of the violent acts engaged in by businesses. The persistent failure of an industry to provide safe working conditions, the production and distribution of dangerous products, and excessive air and water pollution, to name a few, result in physical injuries and death and appear to be facilitated by inadequate regulation (see Reiman, 2007). In this sense, it is relatively easy to extend Durkheim’s comments on anomie to help explain some of the violent activities of the middle and upper classes.

### *Anomie and “juvenile crime”*

Durkheim did not present an extensive discussion of the connection between anomie and offenses by youth, but he did provide a few statements that can be used as a basis for proposing a positive relationship between these two variables. This section provides an overview of these statements and suggests how they may be minimally elaborated to infer such a relationship.

In *The Division of Labor*, as part of a discussion on the weakening of tradition associated with geographic mobility, Durkheim (1893/1984, pp. 233–238) implied a possible connection between anomie and rule violations by young people. Consider the following:

That moment of the fullness of youth is . . . the one when men are most impatient at any restraint placed upon them, and when they are most eager for change. The life flowing within them has not had time to coagulate, to assume definitively a determined form, and is too intense to submit to any discipline without resistance. This imperative will thus be all the more easily satisfied if it is *less restrained from outside*, and it can only be satisfied at the expense of tradition. (p. 236—emphasis added)

Under conditions of anomie (and perhaps egoism), the outside restraining force provided by society is in a weakened state. Consequently, the desire for change experienced by young people would have more opportunity to express itself and such an expression may take the form of not only progressive innovation (as noted by Durkheim) but also rule violations. This is one possible extension of Durkheim’s line of reasoning. Yet, in this discussion, Durkheim’s focus appears to be on young adults rather than adolescents.

Several years later, in a pair of book/article reviews, Durkheim again suggested a relationship between anomie and “juvenile crime,” and this time more attention was devoted to adolescents. In his review of Alfred Fouillée’s *La France au point de vue moral* (*France From a Moral Point of View*), Durkheim (1901a/1980, p. 407) appears to have agreed with Fouillée that the source of France’s high crime rate, including the increase in offenses by youth, “must be sought in a kind of confusion and disarray in the French moral conscience.” Even though he never used the term anomie, it is safe to assume that this “confusion and disarray” includes anomie in one form or another. Durkheim (1901b/1980, p. 446) seemingly made a similar point in his review of W. Rein’s *Jugendliches Verbrechen und seine Bekämpfung* (*Adolescent Criminality and its Abatement*), where he associates “juvenile crime” with the lack of “natural social milieu.” We thus have another possible link between anomie and rule violations by youth.

Finally, in his lectures published in *Moral Education*, Durkheim (1902–1903/1973) once more implied a connection between anomie and offenses by youth. Consistent with his discussion of anomic suicide (*anomie*<sub>2</sub>), he held that children, like adults, need discipline to limit their desires; discipline is a necessary condition for happiness (see pp. 43–44). However, he also noted that a low level of restraint is common among children (see pp. 129–138).

The child has no feeling that there are normal limits to his needs: when he is fond of something, he wants it to satiety. He neither restrains himself nor does he readily comply when someone else imposes limits on him. (pp. 132–133)

In other words, young people, to a certain age, appear to be caught up in a current of *anomie*<sub>2</sub> and, of course, their failure to “comply when someone else imposes limits” may take the form of rule violations. In this connection, Durkheim (1902–1903/1973, p. 133) also suggested that this apparent anomic state contributes to the “anger” that often characterizes a child’s temperament.

Beyond this, the lectures of *Moral Education* imply that due to the historical changes that have occurred in family morality and the collective consciousness, offenses by youth may be abnormally high for a time in modern societies. As mentioned earlier, Durkheim (1902–1903/1973, p. 146) concluded, “That which is essential to the spirit of discipline, that is to say, respect for the rule, can scarcely develop in the (modern) family setting.” Relatively high offense rates by youth, therefore, seem likely until other institutions supply the discipline that is no longer provided by the family. Durkheim suggested that modern schools, especially, need to do more to communicate the spirit of discipline to children (see Durkheim, 1902–1903/1973, pp. 144–157) and thus diminish the force of the anomic currents experienced by youth.

### **A concluding note**

Durkheim’s work provides a fragmented and incomplete theory of crime causation. His views on anomie, with a few small elaborations, offer only a partial explanation of property crime, violent crime, and “juvenile crime.” As noted at the beginning of this section, Durkheim implied and, at times, explicitly stated that several other factors also are causally related to crime. These factors include the extent to which a society suffers

from a forced division of labor; the degree to which the collective consciousness is dominated by collectivism or, conversely, moral individualism; the intensity of the egoistic current, especially in combination with anomie; the kinds of crime opportunities that are available to people in various social positions; and the characteristics of gender and age. In other words, despite the multiple ways in which anomie may contribute to crime, it is not the only cause of crime in Durkheim's criminological discourse. But again, space limitations preclude the examination of these other factors in this article.

### The effect of anomie on criminal law

Durkheim's overall theory of crime is more than a theory of crime causation. It is also tied to a relatively coherent theory of criminal law. Thus, we now are left with the issue of how Durkheim's analyses of criminal law, like his inquiries into crime causation, might be elaborated using one or more of his concepts of anomie without deviating from his overall paradigm. With a few small inferences, anomie, especially *anomie<sub>3</sub>* and *anomie<sub>4</sub>*, can take on a notable role in this area of Durkheim's work, yet it is a role that clashes with the traditional use of this concept in the field of criminology.

Durkheim's analyses of criminal law center on the variety, precision, and strength of the core sentiments of the collective consciousness. Under normal conditions, criminal law and the punishments it imposes represent and reinforce these sentiments (Durkheim, 1893/1984). Therefore, it is suggested that as the core sentiments of the collective consciousness increase in variety, precision, and strength, a wider array of actions will be officially defined and punished as crimes.<sup>30</sup> Conversely, when these sentiments decline in variety, precision, and strength, the number and scope of criminal laws, and the frequency of punishment, should decline. In other words, exceptionally high levels of *anomie<sub>4</sub>*—that is, a very limited, imprecise, and weak collective consciousness—should result in less crime and less punishment because fewer acts should be defined and treated as crimes.

Essentially the same conclusion can be reached through an analysis of *anomie<sub>3</sub>*, a general state of insufficient regulation. Like the other kinds of anomie, *anomie<sub>3</sub>* is not a dichotomous variable; rather it entails many possible values across an extensive scale. These values, theoretically, can range from the strict regulation of every thought and action of every member of society (i.e., the complete absence of *anomie<sub>3</sub>*) to a state of no regulation on any thought or action of any member of society (i.e., a pure state of *anomie<sub>3</sub>*). Of course, these two extremes seem impossible. Durkheim (1895/1982) rejected the first extreme in his discussion of crime as a normal social fact and the inevitability of human diversity, and the second extreme suggests the absence of society itself. However, a society that falls much closer to the second extreme than the first is possible. It thus may be asked, what effect would an exceptionally high level of *anomie<sub>3</sub>* have on the criminal laws and crime rates of a society?

The answer to this question mirrors the conclusion drawn in connection with *anomie<sub>4</sub>*: Exceptionally high levels of *anomie<sub>3</sub>* across an entire society seemingly would result in less crime because fewer acts will be defined and treated as crimes. Given that criminal laws are formal regulations, the deregulation entailed by high levels of *anomie<sub>3</sub>*, by definition, would reduce the number of these laws and, presumably, the intensity of their enforcement. Many acts that were labeled and punished as crimes prior to the onset of an exceptionally pronounced state of *anomie<sub>3</sub>* would no longer be labeled

and punished as such once that state is firmly established. Thus, high levels of *anomie*<sub>3</sub>, while reducing restraints on human behavior, may nonetheless result in lower official crime rates simply because the criminal law and its enforcement recede. Durkheim's (1902/1984, pp. xxxi–xxxii) description of the “legal and moral anomie” of late nineteenth-century industrial economies, which has been referred to twice already, offers a partial illustration of this issue as it pertains to the economic sphere of social life and the vague boundary “between what is just and what is unjust.”

This interpretation of Durkheim's theory of anomie often is overlooked by criminologists, but it is not new. Hilbert (1989, p. 244) has provided a clear summary of this issue:

Anomie is the dropping away of exterior and constraining moral regulation; within its terms, which is to say no terms, conformity and deviance are equally impossible precisely because there is nothing to conform to or rebel against, no standards, no social currents judging, and no one being judged.

As suggested by this description, in a pure state of *anomie*<sub>3</sub> (or *anomie*<sub>4</sub>), there would be no crime because there would be no regulations, no criminal laws; that is, there would be no strong and well-defined collective sentiments to violate or threaten.<sup>31</sup>

In short, Durkheim's general theory of crime causation is intimately connected to his theory of criminal law. Moreover, with a few small inferences, the concept of anomie, especially in the forms of *anomie*<sub>3</sub> and *anomie*<sub>4</sub>, can be given a noteworthy place in the latter theory. It may be particularly helpful when explaining the relative absence of criminal law and punishment in specific areas of social life (e.g., the white-collar business world) or during periods of rapid social change in some societies. Nonetheless, it must be emphasized that in Durkheim's discussions of criminal law, several other variables are far more prominent than anomie. These variables, once again, include collectivism and moral individualism, but they also include the level of societal development and the degree of governmental absolutism (see especially Durkheim, 1900/1969).

## Conclusion

In Durkheim's writings, anomie is an elusive concept that appears to take at least five forms. The purpose of this article has been to describe these forms and, more importantly, to explicate and elaborate the relationship between anomie and crime as it exists in Durkheim's criminological discourse without deviating from that discourse or his broader social theory. Although Durkheim said very little about the relationship between anomie and property crime, it is plausible that both *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub> contribute to such crime. Regarding violent crime, Durkheim makes an explicit connection between *anomie*<sub>2</sub> and homicide, and only a small inference is necessary to envision both *anomie*<sub>1</sub> and *anomie*<sub>2</sub> as causes of violent crime in general. For both categories of crime (property and violent), the explanatory range of anomie includes the “typical” offenses of the lower and working classes and the white-collar offenses of the middle and upper classes. Anomie even offers a partial explanation of harmful corporate activities that are not treated as crimes by the legal system and are not crimes in Durkheim's conceptual framework. Regarding Durkheim's comments on “juvenile crime,” this may be the one



type of deviance for which anomie is the central explanatory variable in his overall criminological perspective, although he never made this explicit.

Perhaps the most interesting conclusion concerns the relationship between anomie (specifically, *anomie<sub>3</sub>* and *anomie<sub>4</sub>*) and criminal law. The integration of Durkheim's concept of anomie into his theory of criminal law implies reductions in the scope and enforcement of criminal law where currents of anomie are exceptionally strong. Such currents can exist in particular spheres of modern social life (e.g., in various branches of the economy) or throughout an entire society during periods of rapid social change. And of course, a reduction in the scope and enforcement of criminal law implies a reduction in the crime rate.

Overall, it appears that much of the research that has attempted to test Durkheim's theory of anomie and crime should be reevaluated. Efforts to test this theory need to acknowledge the different forms of anomie and the different ways in which these forms may affect crime rates. On the surface, *anomie<sub>1</sub>* and *anomie<sub>2</sub>* should have a positive relationship with crime. But how does one revise this prediction when *anomie<sub>1</sub>* and *anomie<sub>2</sub>* appear to be parts of a broader current of *anomie<sub>3</sub>* or *anomie<sub>4</sub>*, two forms of anomie that may have a negative relationship with crime (at least in their more extreme forms)? The falsifiability of Durkheim's theory is debatable. However, it seems clear that the pursuit of a plausible empirical test must address the different forms of anomie and the different effects that these forms, theoretically, can have on the crime rate. A convincing test of Durkheim's theory is unlikely as long as these issues are neglected.

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### Notes

1. The influence of this article was not immediate and undoubtedly was promoted by its later versions (e.g., Merton, 1949). Edwin Sutherland, for instance, makes no reference to it in either the third edition (1939) or fourth edition (1947) of his *Principles of Criminology*. It was not until the fifth edition (1955), revised by Donald Cressey, that Merton's theory of social structure and anomie is cited.
2. The absence of such a review, and the resulting neglect of Durkheim's *overall* theory of anomie and crime, is due in part to Durkheim's fragmented and incomplete presentation of his theory. These presentation issues are easy to understand, since Durkheim, in his discussions of anomie, was usually focused on matters other than crime (e.g., social solidarity or suicide). However, the absence of the aforementioned comprehensive review also is due in part to the common

- tendency of criminologists to neglect the history of their field. Thus, we have another way to explain the observation that in criminology, “Merton and not Durkheim . . . tends to be seen as central to anomie theory . . .” (Smith, 2008, p. 335).
3. Due to space limitations, it is assumed that the reader has a basic understanding of Durkheim’s social theory. In addition, issues concerning its empirical status and political orientation are left beyond the scope of this article.
  4. In the English translations of Durkheim’s work, two different spellings of this concept have been used—“anomy” and “anomie.” The latter currently is preferred in the sociological literature and is used throughout this paper to maintain consistency and avoid possible confusion. Accordingly, in several quotes, the spelling of this term has been changed from ‘anomy’ to ‘anomie.’
  5. The diverse meanings of anomie are very apparent in the recent history of this concept. In the late nineteenth century, Durkheim borrowed the term from Jean Marie Guyau and, in the process, changed its meaning (see Orrù, 1983, 1987). Compared to Durkheim, Guyau was much less inclined to view anomie as a social problem. Then, Merton (1938) indirectly borrowed the concept from Durkheim and, once again, altered its meaning. Initially, Merton (1938) did not define ‘anomie’ and actually associated the term with the work of Elton Mayo, a sociologist who was familiar with Durkheim’s *Suicide* (see Besnard, 1986). Regarding Merton’s use of the concept, it has been suggested that he “vulgarized Durkheim’s understanding of anomie . . .” (see Meštrović, 1988, p. 837; also see Hilbert, 1989).
  6. Thome (2007) concluded that *The Division of Labor* describes a “developmental” form of anomie while *Suicide* describes a “structural” form. The conclusion Durkheim provided different conceptions of anomie has been drawn by other sociologists as well (e.g., Olsen, 1965).
  7. As Marvin Olsen (1965, p. 40) concludes: “. . . anomie, as Durkheim first conceived it . . . might be defined as a condition of inadequate procedural rules to regulate complementary relationships among the specialized and interdependent parts of a complex social system.”
  8. Durkheim (1897/1951, p. 274) also referred to “conjugal anomie” and “sexual anomie,” concepts that are closely related to, and perhaps synonymous with, “matrimonial anomie.” Also see Durkheim (1892/1965) where he discusses matrimonial society, conjugal society, and domestic society.
  9. In a comment on “the feeling of obligation” and the weakening of “traditional morality,” Durkheim (1906/1974b, pp. 68–69) referred to a missing or weak “code of duties,” which seems comparable to this first form of anomie.
  10. Durkheim’s perspective becomes more complicated in view of his contention that more than one collective consciousness can exist in a given society. In *The Division of Labor* the collective consciousness is initially said to be “. . . the same in the north and south, in large towns and in small, and in different professions” (Durkheim, 1893/1984, p. 39). But in this same work, he also acknowledged that “. . . we form a part of several groups and there exist in us several collective consciousnesses” (p. 67n). In other words, different collective consciousnesses can be found not only in different societies but also in different religions, families, political parties, workgroups, and perhaps other divisions in a society. To further complicate matters, his use of the term “society” and “group” can be a source of confusion. Durkheim often used these terms loosely and interchangeably. For example, in *Suicide* he refers to “the society of faith, of family and of politics,” and to these he adds the society of “the occupational group or corporation” (Durkheim, 1897/1951, p. 378). Several years later, in “The Determination of Moral Facts” he states, “there are different groups—the family, the corporation, the city, the nation and the international group” (Durkheim, 1906/1974a, p. 52). He also implied that a society is primarily a group with a shared collective consciousness, rather than simply “a system of organs and functions” (Durkheim, 1906/1974a, p. 59; 1911/1974, pp. 91, 93).
  11. The challenge of separating egoism from the other forms of anomie is described later in this article.

12. A similar labeling scheme has been used before to describe the different meanings of anomie in Merton's work. Piotr Sztompka (1998) concluded that in Merton's writings one can find at least four concepts of anomie, which Sztompka labeled "*anomie<sub>1</sub>*" through "*anomie<sub>4</sub>*." However, Merton's four concepts of anomie, as described by Sztompka, differ from Durkheim's five concepts of anomie described here. Merton (1964, pp. 225–226), interestingly, acknowledged that "it is a familiar fact in the use of language that the meaning of a word that has not been strictly defined in the first instance tends to become blurred with frequent use."
13. A close examination of the causes and effects of these two forms of anomie actually suggests a more complicated relationship. Durkheim (1893/1984, 1897/1951) implied that an increase in the "dynamic density" of a society, upon reaching a certain level, can create an economic situation in which needs cannot be satisfied through the fulfillment of traditional economic roles—that is, an anomic situation that presumably can contribute to a rise in suicides. He proceeds to suggest that one possible response to this situation is for the members of the society to create new specializations. This would promote greater economic productivity, but it is likely to result in an anomic division of labor, at least temporarily. In turn, this anomic division of labor may contribute to further economic problems and, ultimately, leave many people in a situation where they still cannot satisfy their desires through the available means. Hence, in Durkheim's writings, a complex reciprocal relationship appears to exist between *anomie<sub>1</sub>* and *anomie<sub>2</sub>*.
14. Meštrović and Brown (1985) and Meštrović (1987) suggest that, for Durkheim, currents of anomie flow through other spheres of social life as well, including politics and religion.
15. In Durkheim's (1897/1951, p. 364) words: "... among peoples where progress is and should be rapid, rules restraining individuals must be sufficiently pliable and malleable; if they preserved all the rigidity they possess in primitive societies, evolution thus impeded could not take place promptly enough." Durkheim (1895/1982, 1895/1983) makes a similar point in his discussions of "crime and social health."
16. Durkheim (1897/1951, p. 257) even suggested that under this persistent state of anomie, unlimited aspirations became something of a cultural value, "a mark of moral distinction." Messner and Rosenfeld (2007, pp. 61–62) conclude that this represents yet another meaning of anomie. They maintain that for Durkheim, anomie refers to both "the weakening of traditional moral regulation" and the presence of "the morality of modern capitalism."
17. The development of professional groups was a topic of discussion in many of Durkheim's writings (see Durkheim, 1892/1965, 1897/1951, 1900/1957, 1902/1984). One of his earliest discussions of such groups was in an 1892 lecture on the conjugal family. In this lecture, he noted that in modern societies, professional groups should develop gradually and should take over some of the functions served by families in more traditional societies (see Durkheim, 1892/1965, pp. 535–536). He also suggested that the development of these groups, together with "the termination of the rule of hereditary transmission," will help modern societies overcome the crises they are experiencing.
18. Durkheim (1897/1951, pp. 382–383; 1902/1984, pp. xxxix, lii–liii) also noted that professional groups would entail "a moral force capable of curbing individual egoism."
19. Durkheim's remedies for anomie may extend beyond this list. For instance, in addition to the establishment of modern professional groups and modern forms of moral education, Stephan R. Marks (1974) argued that Durkheim also suggested that this problem may be alleviated through the development of democratic political arrangements and "moments of collective ferment" that result in the "great ideals" of civilization. Regarding modern political arrangements, Durkheim (1900/1957, pp. 69–72) argued, "The fundamental duty of the State" is to call "the individual to a moral way of life," and in modern societies this involves supporting "the cult of the human person" (i.e., "moral individualism" or the "religion of humanity"). Marks

- went on to conclude that Durkheim, nonetheless, failed to solve the problem of anomie “on his own terms.” See McCloskey (1976) and Marks (1976) for a debate on Marks’s viewpoint.
20. In this connection, Durkheim (1893/1984, p. 32) states, “. . . if there are acts that have been universally regarded as criminal, these constitute a tiny minority.”
  21. Elsewhere, Durkheim (1893/1984, pp. 41–43) argued that where an act threatens a governmental organ that defends the collective consciousness, it may be treated as a crime even though it does not directly offend a strong state of the collective consciousness.
  22. The theories of Merton (1938) and Messner and Rosenfeld (2007) represent more than a minimal elaboration.
  23. However, Durkheim was not entirely consistent on this matter. For instance, in *Suicide* he concluded that “. . . property crimes have decreased since 1854. . . . But this decrease is in part fictitious” (Durkheim, 1897/1951, p. 338).
  24. Because Durkheim (1897/1951, p. 254) referred to poverty as “the best school for teaching self-restraint,” this inference is limited to instances of extreme poverty where the survival of a group is in jeopardy and to cases where a group experiences an abrupt transition to a state of poverty.
  25. This reasoning regarding the effects of *anomie*<sub>2</sub> is reflected in Merton’s (1938) theory, although Merton was more inclined to view modern open-class societies as a force that elevates desires rather than one that restrains desires (or at least potentially restrains desires).
  26. This latter argument concerning competition is addressed more thoroughly in the next section in connection with violent crime.
  27. The relationship between anomie and white-collar crime has been explored by contemporary scholars, but Durkheim’s occasional comments on this matter are often overlooked (e.g., Waring, Weisbud, & Chayet, 1995). Simon and Gagnon (1976) is one exception.
  28. Durkheim also suggested that among people who experience anomic conditions, those of “low morality,” and those who blame others for their hardships, are more likely to kill another person rather than or in addition to themselves (see Durkheim, 1897/1951, pp. 285, 357–359).
  29. The close connection between anomie and egoism is reflected in Taylor, Walton, and Young’s (1973, p. 85) description of the “skewed deviant.”
  30. Durkheim draws on this line of reasoning to help support his argument that crime is a normal social fact. As part of this argument, he asks us to consider what life would be like in a “community of saints”: “In it crime as such will be unknown, but faults that appear venial to the ordinary person will arouse the same scandal as does normal crime in ordinary consciences. If therefore that community has the power to judge and punish, it will term such acts criminal and deal with them as such” (Durkheim, 1895/1982, p. 100). This social condition is due to the greater strength of the collective consciousness in such a community.
  31. In one of his descriptions of anomie, Merton (1964, p. 226) *almost* came to this conclusion: “When a high degree of anomie has set in, the rules once governing conduct have lost their savor and their force. Above all else, they are deprived of legitimacy. . . . For there is no longer a widely shared sense within the social system, large or small, of what goes and what does not go, of what is justly allowed by way of behavior and of what is justly prohibited, of what may be legitimately expected of people in the course of social interaction.”

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