SOC 3290 Deviance
Overheads Lecture 11: Social Control Theory

* Social control theory:

  - assumes people will deviate
  - focuses on why people conform to society
  - argues deviance results from lack of control

Theoretical Images:

* Definitions of social control: (1) Deterrence
(2) Related to socialization

* Deterrence: formal social control of rationally calculated actions through punishment. Three components:

(1) Severity
(2) Certainty
(3) Swiftness

* Two types of deterrence:　　(1) General (i.e. the public)
(2) Specific (i.e. the offender)

* Increased questioning of deterrence led to broader focus on socialization / informal social sanctions rooted in social disorganization theory

  - normative chaos disrupts socialization
  - disrupted socialization weakens internal normative constraints

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* Walter Reckless (1973): containment theory: social disorganization mediated by social psychological factors:

      (1) Inner containment &
      (2) Outer containment.

* If outer containments are disrupted by disorganization, inner may still restrain the individual from deviating

* Ivan Nye (1958): focus on the family as agent of socialization. Basic animal instincts restrained by:

      (1) Internal control
      (2) Indirect control
      (3) Direct control
      (4) Need satisfaction

* Travis Hirschi (1969): Strong social bonds bearing conformist values inhibit criminal behavior. Four types:

      (1) Attachment
      (2) Commitment
      (3) Involvement
      (4) Belief

* John Braithewaite (1989): social control may be accomplished through "reintegrative shaming" / invoking remorse in the wrongdoer while showing them respect

* D. Matza (1964): Emphasizes neutralization of delinquent acts through process of rationalization

* Gottfredson & Hirshi (1990): General theory of crime focuses on low self control rooted in childhood with inconsistent punishment

* Sampson & Lamb (1993): Life course theory: trajectories & transitions

* All variants of social control theory suggests that some form of control prevents deviance, & lack of control releases it

Social Control Theory & Social Policy:

* Formal deterrence: increase the severity, certainty & swiftness of punishment

* Informal socialization: counseling, education & work projects

Assessment of Social Control Theory:

* Formal Deterrence:

   - inconsistent empirical support
   - specific deterrence often has opposite effect on recidivism
   - not all crimes rationally calculated
   - public unaware of penalties for specific crimes
   - "real world conditions" where punishments anything but swift, certain or severe
   - general deterrence shows inconsistent support/ varies by crime
   - adjusting swiftness/certainty of punishment may be unconstitutional/violate human rights

* Informal Socialization:

- vague concepts / overlap conceptually
- relative importance of inner/outer controls little studied
- empirical support for Hirschi's theory with adolescents/ not
  adults (where multiple attachments may be a problem)
- reintegrative shaming may not work in our culture/ with hardened
  criminals
-distinction between deviants/conformists an oversimplification
- social control practices may cause of deviance
- more research needed on relative effects of formal/informal social
  controls