

SOC 3290 Deviance
Overheads Lecture 8: The Chicago School:

* The “Chicago school” produced 2 major perspectives on deviance:

- (1) Social disorganization (1920's & 30's);
- (2) Differential association (1930's & 40's)

(1) The Social Disorganization Perspective:

* General idea: deviance = result of rapid social change/disorganization

The Dynamics of Disorganization: Thomas and Znaniecki:

* Thomas and Znaniecki: social disorganization = “a decrease in influence of existing rules on individual members of group”

* The Polish Peasant: research on immigrants found high rates of deviance due to rapid social change/ increase in normlessness

The Ecology of Disorganization: Park and Burgess:

* Introduced ecological model:

- interdependence of organisms
- symbiosis
- life of one affects all
- microcosm/macrocosm organic metaphor for society

* Fourfold process of disorganization/reorganization:

- invasion of symbiotic order by competing group
- conflict for dominance (deviance increases)

- accommodation of weaker to stronger
- assimilation of new order of symbiosis

* Geographic analysis: concentric zones in urban areas:

- central business district (dynamic force/engine of change)
- transition zone (most disorganized/deviant)
- working class neighborhoods
- old city neighborhoods
- commuter zone (least disorganized/deviant)

* Research: Shaw & MacKay: delinquency highest in transition zone

Identifying Disorganizational Deviance:

* The Chicago School combined two research traditions:

- (1) A focus on objective measurement of external factors and conditions (e.g. statistical maps)
- (2) An emphasis on the subjective side of social life (e.g. meaning)

* This combination:

- is a strength of their approach (broad and deep)
- dissolved division over appropriate methodology
- produced productive research

Social Control of Disorganizational Deviance:

* Despite distancing themselves from advocating specific strategies of social control, one emerged nonetheless

* New focus on treating society not individuals (causes, not symptoms)

* Chicago Area Project: an attempt to restore normative stability to disorganized communities by:

- (1) coordinating community resources of fragmented/competing groups
- (2) sponsoring youth/activity programs

* Assessment:

- CAP itself never systematically evaluated
- Similar projects succeeded in organizing close community ties and activities, but failed to reduce delinquency
- Impact of socially structured inequality?
- Still a welcome first step away from earlier individualistic crime control models

Assessment of the Social Disorganization Perspective:

* Positive points:

- avoids individualistic biases/limitations of earlier views
- enables us to see deviants as people like ourselves

* Weaknesses:

(1) Problems in operationalization

- failure to justify indicators (e.g. high % of working women)
- indicators often confuse cause/effect in same thing

(2) Race, class and gender biases confusing different types of organization as disorganization (e.g. black, female headed families)

- (3) Failure to address crimes by well-organized, “respectable” individuals (e.g. white collar crime).
- (4) Failure to consider causal influences of structured differences in power and social class (alternative explanations).

(2) The Differential Association Perspective:

* The learning perspective argues that deviance a form of learned behavior in interaction with others

Edwin Sutherland and Differential Association:

* Two core assumptions:

- (1) Deviance occurs when people define situation as appropriate for violating norms/laws;

- (2) Such definitions are acquired through one’s past history of experience, particularly one’s associations with others

* Sutherland asserts that learning deviance involves learning to:

- (1) Define certain situations as appropriate occasions for deviance;

- (2) Master the techniques of successful deviant activity;

- (3) Acquire motives, drives, attitudes and rationalizations justifying violations of norms/laws

* All of these are learned in communicative interaction with others in intimate personal groups

* Critical point: when one acquires an excess of definitions favorable to deviance over definitions unfavorable to deviance (i.e. deviance

becomes probable)

* Probability further depends on frequency, duration, priority and intensity of such associations

The Legacy of Differential Association:

* Normalizing our understanding of deviance

* Deviance as learned is a widely accepted idea

* Tests of theory:

(1) James Short (1957): linked exposure to delinquents & delinquent behavior;

(2) Reiss and Rhodes (1964): close friendships & delinquency

* Criticisms of theory:

- too vague to be adequately tested;
- difficulty operationalizing concepts
- inapplicable to self-initiated deviance
- ignores psychological/physiological/economic factors
- overly deterministic/ignores choice
- no need for face to face contact

Modifying the Image of Differential Association:

* Sutherland's theory has been modified/extended in several ways:

(1) Daniel Glaser's theory of differential identification (e.g. focus on media vs. firsthand contact in deviant learning);

- (2) Sykes & Matza: focus on learned rationalizations (“techniques of neutralization”) avoids overly deterministic imagery
- (3) Jack Douglas: strategies of emotional self-deception/self-seduction
- (4) Burgess & Akers: Differential reinforcement of behavior

Social Control of Learned Deviance:

* Deviance may be controlled by either *preventative learning* or *corrective learning*

* Preventative learning (e.g. reducing TV violence)

* Corrective Learning:

- (1) Providing positive/anti-deviant role models (e.g. Big Brothers).
- (2) Surrounding deviant with others defining deviance in an unfavorable way (e.g. AA).
- (3) Behavior modification strategies (manipulating rewards and punishments). Two types:
 - (i) Token economies (reward and punishment “points system” for privileges in institutions)
 - (ii) Aversive conditioning (associating deviant stimuli with negative consequences such as shocks/sickness)

Assessment of the Learning Perspective:

* Positives:

- (1) Normalizes our image of deviance (humanistic appeal)
- (2) Widespread acceptance (less so for Burgess and Akers)

* Negatives:

- (1) Tendency to be *overly deterministic* (“soft determinism” preferable where deviance partly chosen/partly determined);
- (2) Ignoring/underplaying the role of unconscious repressions in motivating deviant behavior;
- (3) Inattentive to gendered/multi-cultural models of learning;
- (4) No assessment of why certain behaviors seen as deviant/ little emphasis on conflicting social interests and power