

## Chapter 4

# Sociological Explanations of Juvenile Delinquency

Social Strain and Cultural Transmission Theories



## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Reading this chapter will help you achieve the following objectives:

1. Define and explain the sociological perspective in explaining human behavior in general and juvenile delinquency in particular as compared to the biological and psychogenic approaches.
2. Define and explain specific sociological concepts and theories of deviant and delinquent conduct and the major categories of Social Strain or Anomie Theory and Cultural Transmission Theory.
3. Apply these sociological theories of human behavior to explaining juvenile delinquency.
4. Understand the impact of the media on social strain and transmission of cultural values.
5. Summarize contributions and limitations of the sociological theories of deviance and delinquency discussed in this chapter.

## INTRODUCTION

Sociology is a comparatively young academic discipline, yet its influence upon modern criminology and contributions to theoretical explanations of deviant behavior have been more extensive and enduring than the preceding theories of biological determinism and psychological maladjustment. Despite some meaningful contributions to our understanding, the biological and psychological explanations neglect the most prominent aspect of deviance; that is, like any other human activity, deviant behavior is inherently *social* in nature. For an individual to be deviant or delinquent, he or she must be involved with other people.

In this chapter, we look at two categories of sociological theories of delinquency: social strain and cultural transmission. Note how these theories, unlike the biological and psychogenic theories discussed in Chapter 3, look beyond the individual in seeking causal explanations and place juveniles and their behavior in a larger sociological context for understanding.

## SOCIAL STRAIN THEORIES

The theoretical explanations of deviance and delinquency that are grouped together in this category share an underlying assumption that nonconforming behavior arises out of social circumstances in which individuals or groups experience normative confusion or disruption. Confronted with a new, traumatic, or frustrating social situation (social strain), some people respond in a deviant and perhaps criminal manner.

### Durkheim's Concept of Anomie

Emile Durkheim, in his landmark study of suicide ([1897] 1951), developed the concept of **anomie** to characterize *the condition of a society or group with a high degree of confusion and contradiction in its basic social norms*. Durkheim traced the unusually high

suicide rates during periods of serious economic depression, severe political crises and upheavals, rapid societal change, and other unstable social conditions, to the absence or reduced efficacy of normative regulation during such times. Under such conditions, Durkheim hypothesized, the usual rules that restrain us from committing socially unacceptable acts can become weakened or suspended for some members of society. In this state of anomie, it is difficult for some individuals to know what is expected of them. In extreme cases, such persons may be “free” to take their own lives. Durkheim contended that unusually high suicide rates could be predicted from a careful study of prevailing social conditions.

### **Merton’s Theory of Anomie**

Suicide is just one form of deviant behavior. In 1938, Robert K. Merton modified and expanded Durkheim’s concept of anomie into a general theory of anomie that helps explain many different kinds of deviant behavior (Merton, 1957). Very few sociological theories are broad enough in basic concepts and assumptions to encompass a wide spectrum of deviant behaviors with any degree of specificity. A general theory is like an umbrella. Just as many different individuals may find shelter under a shared umbrella, so Merton’s general theory of anomie offers an organized framework of logical explanations that can be applied to several kinds of deviant behavior, including juvenile delinquency.

Merton perceived anomie as a state of dissatisfaction arising from a sense of discrepancy between the aspirations of an individual and the means that the person has available to realize these ambitions. In his essay on anomie, Merton observed that Americans are exposed to powerful socialization processes that stress the success ethic. Consequently, nearly everyone internalizes the culturally approved goal of “getting ahead,” that is, making money, accumulating material possessions, and achieving high social status based on money and occupation. At the same time, American society gives a clear message regarding culturally approved means to achieve these lofty objectives. We are encouraged to strive for them as society says we should—attend school; work hard; save money; lead lives of virtue, thrift, patience, and deferred gratification—and ultimately we hope to realize our dreams of material success and enhanced social status. However, Merton maintained that some people, particularly among the disadvantaged lower classes, unhappily realize that they will not be able to achieve those idealized goals through the legitimate means that society endorses. They may lack the academic background and financial means to attend college, and the only jobs available to them may be unskilled, low-paying “dead-end jobs” that lead to neither promotion nor financial security. Yet, the desire to fulfill the internalized objectives persists. This juxtaposition of idealized, socially approved goals, and the reality of reduced life chances and opportunities for achievement in the socially approved ways, places many individuals in a state of helpless and hopeless frustration or *anomie*. Denied legitimate opportunities, the rules of the game may have diminished importance. What really matters to such anomic individuals is not how one “plays the game” but whether one “wins.” Under such circumstances, some persons will turn to illegitimate means to attain the culturally approved goals. However, Merton contended, not everyone who experiences anomic frustration over

	Individual Adaptations	Culturally Approved Goals	Institutionalized Means of Achievement
I.	Conformity	(+)	(+)
II.	Innovation	(+)	(-)
III.	Ritualism	(-)	(+)
IV.	Retreatism	(-)	(-)
V.	Rebellion	(-, +)	(-, +)

**FIGURE 4.1 Merton’s Typology of Modes of Individual Adaptive Behavior**

Note: (+) signifies “acceptance” by the individual.

(-) signifies “rejection” by the individual.

(-, +) signifies “rejection of existing goals and means and the substitution of new goals and means” by the individual.

Can you think of examples other than those given in the text that fit Merton’s adaptation strategies? Why is it important to understand that Merton was referring to adaptations and not personality types?

Source: Merton, R. K. Social structure and anomie. *American Sociological Review* 3 (1938):676.

blocked goals will resort to criminal behavior. Other avenues of adaptation are also open. Merton’s Typology of Modes of Adaptive Behavior is an innovative contribution and is the heart of his general theory of deviance.

In his Typology of Modes of Adaptive Behavior, Merton identified five possible behavioral patterns for individuals as they respond to culturally approved goals and institutionalized means for achieving those idealized objectives in American society (Figure 4.1). Merton stressed that these are role adaptations and not personality types. People may readily shift from one of these roles to another.

The first adaptation is *Conformity*, which encompasses the behaviors of most members of our society. This adaptation accepts the culturally approved success goals and has available the institutionalized work ethic for achievement. Thus, this adaptation conforms to societal expectations.

The other four possible adaptations represent deviant responses to the disparity between cultural goals and institutionalized means in the context of anomic strain. Adaptation II is *Innovation* and characterizes situations where people who subscribe to the typical cultural goals of monetary and material success realize that they lack the socially approved and legitimate means to achieve those goals. They become dissatisfied, frustrated, and anomic and resort to innovative, norm-violating behavior, such as stealing, dealing drugs, or other deviant means to achieve the coveted cultural goals. If this frustration develops into hopelessness, it may lead to violence (Drummond, et al., 2011). This adaptation to blocked goals is often a criminal or delinquent response (Bernard, 1990).

Behavioral Adaptation III is *Ritualism* and involves rigid adherence to culturally approved methods for getting ahead and making progress. However, like caged squirrels on a treadmill, their overconformity is not going to “pay off.” In time, perhaps these persons realize that the attained level of achievement will not equal the level of



What influence might these young men have as role models for lower class urban youths?

aspiration or effort. They experience feelings of despair and anomie, and modify or abandon the idealized cultural goals, but persist at a ritualized, unfulfilling line of work.

Adaptation IV is *Retreatism*. Here, in anomic frustration, this adaptation abandons both cultural goals *and* the institutionalized means for attaining them. In a sense, these people give up in the struggle to reach the seemingly unreachable goals via unrewarding methods and retreat from a social system and culture that impose such unreasonable “ends” and “means.” This adaptation is reflected by runaways, transients, drug users, and alcoholics who turn their backs and seek escape from the struggle for material success and other socially approved values. Suicide represents the ultimate form of retreatism.

The fifth behavioral adaptation is *Rebellion*. In this case, angry over the anomic situation experienced, this adaptation rejects both the culturally approved goals and the institutionalized means of achievement. In their place, they substituted new goals and new means of achievement. This call for a new social order is a typical response of the social reformer or revolutionary and can be applied to violent gangs, Satanists, Neo-Nazis, and other hate groups.

### **Cohen’s “Delinquent Boys”**

Albert Cohen (1955) elaborated upon Merton’s anomie explanation of deviant behavior with his more specific theory that a large amount of delinquent behavior

results from blocked goals and “status frustration.” According to Cohen, lower-class boys want to achieve success and higher social status, just like middle- and upper-class boys. Yet, due to their unpromising social circumstances, they find that they are blocked from achieving status (especially in school). Essentially, Cohen reported, lower-class boys who aspire to increased social status in a dominant, middle-class value system can respond in one of three ways:

1. The “college-boy” response
2. The “corner-boy” response
3. The “delinquent-boy” response

The “college-boy” response roughly corresponds to Merton’s Conformity mode of adaptation. In this case, lower-class youths accept the challenge of the middle-class value system and, through higher education and deferred gratification (foregoing small, immediate rewards for larger, long-term rewards), attempt to achieve social status by conforming to middle-class expectations. This response is chosen by comparatively few lower-class boys, according to Cohen, because their limited financial resources make chances for college graduation and occupational success extremely low.

Probably the most common response in Cohen’s scheme is the “corner-boy” response, which involves the youths’ withdrawal into a subculture of working-class boys who share a mutual set of values by which status can be gained within the group without having to conform and compete with middle-class society. This is analogous to Merton’s Retreatism mode of adaptation to anomic conditions. While this group is not specifically delinquent in its purpose, the boys who choose this response often become involved in delinquent activities (especially status offenses such as truancy, smoking, and alcohol consumption).

The final response in Cohen’s typology is the “delinquent boy.” Boys in this group—manifestly similar to the youths who make Merton’s Innovation and Rebellion adaptations—become frustrated with their inability to gain status through conventional means. Consequently, they develop what Cohen referred to as a delinquent subculture, whose values and behavior are antithetical to those espoused by the middle class. Paradoxically, in acting out their subcultural values, these boys find themselves in harmony with the expectations of their group but are perceived as nonconforming delinquents by the larger society.

The similarities between the theories of Merton and Cohen are striking. At least one major difference, however, is that Merton viewed criminal deviance as practical and utilitarian in nature, whereas Cohen (1955:25) saw delinquency as more “non-utilitarian, malicious, and negativistic.”

### **Cloward and Ohlin’s “Delinquency and Opportunity”**

Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) added to the social strain approach with their concept of “illegitimate opportunity.” Like Cohen, they accepted Merton’s view that lower-class juveniles generally internalize the standard success goals. They also agreed with Merton and Cohen that the blockage of these goals can lead to status frustration and place some youths in a position of untenable strain. This situation

can result in a sense of alienation and anomie in which those affected may turn to delinquent, illegitimate means to achieve an increment in status. It is at this point that Cloward and Ohlin moved their theoretical formulation beyond those suggested by both Merton and Cohen.

Cloward and Ohlin contended that while lower-class juveniles have differential opportunities for achieving success through *legitimate* means, they also have differential opportunities for achieving it through *illegitimate* means. They pointed out that there are some areas in which illegitimate opportunities for youth to acquire success and status are not readily available. In such surroundings, some juveniles may be totally frustrated with their locked-in lowly status and lack of opportunity to achieve the idealized success goals. Lacking even deviant or delinquent opportunities, their frustration is unrequited and their aspirations remain unfulfilled. In situations where there *are* illegitimate opportunities, Cloward and Ohlin saw response to anomic frustration as being group oriented. However, the type of delinquent response depends upon the *kind* of illegitimate opportunity available to the youths. Thus, in contrast to Cohen who saw blocked goals leading to a rather standard delinquent gang response, Cloward and Ohlin delineated three possible delinquent subcultural responses. In other words, while anomic status frustration over blocked goals could well be a common denominator in groups of lower-class boys scattered throughout a city, the particular form of collective, delinquent response any given group might make would depend on the kind of delinquent opportunity available to the group.

Cloward and Ohlin presented three types of juvenile gangs, each characterized by different kinds of delinquent activities:

1. The crime-oriented gang
2. The conflict-oriented gang
3. The retreatist-oriented gang

The first response of underclass youths to their collective sense of unjust deprivation and alienation involves such criminal activities as theft, fraud, and extortion. The criminal orientation of this group is elicited and orchestrated by adult criminal elements that operate in the neighborhood or district in which this group of disenfranchised and anomic youths reside. In the perceived absence of a legitimate opportunity structure, they become vulnerable to the influence of adult criminals whose activities and prosperity have high visibility in the area. The adult criminals are in a position to serve as viable role models and mentors for youths feeling the disappointment and frustration of blocked avenues to success. According to Cloward and Ohlin, the criminal alternative and the opportunity for enhanced social status lead these boys into instrumental delinquency, in which they serve as “apprentice criminals” under the direction and control of adult professionals.

The second anomic response is the formation of a conflict-oriented gang. Cloward and Ohlin suggested that youthful gangs that turn to fighting and violence as primary means of securing status live in areas where both conventional and criminal opportunities are either absent or very weak. In other words, the conflict-oriented activities of these street gangs develop under conditions of relative detachment from all institutionalized systems of opportunity and social control, either legitimate or

illegitimate. These are neighborhoods where opportunities for upward social mobility are essentially nonexistent, where conventional law enforcement agencies are weak, and where opportunities to participate with adult criminals in their illegal but successful operations are also absent. In such areas, frustrated and discontented youths often seek to establish their own status hierarchy in conflict with one another and with society.

Cloward and Ohlin termed the third kind of delinquent response as the retreatist-oriented gang. While this response is a *group* reaction to social strain engendered by blocked success opportunities, it is similar to Merton's fourth Mode of Individual Adaptation, disengagement and retreatism from larger society. Cloward and Ohlin depicted members of retreatist gangs as overwhelmed with feelings of failure, despair, and normlessness. These youths withdraw into the restricted world of their group and center their attention and activity upon the consumption of drugs in quest of physical or emotional "highs." In this way, they not only demonstrate their contempt for the normative standards of conforming society, but mask their sense of failure. As with the other two types of delinquent gang responses, the development of the retreatist group and its characteristic behavior depends upon the presence of certain opportunity structures in the members' environment. There must be easy access to sources of drugs and the lore of drug use in the area where the potential gang members live. The genesis of a drug subculture in lower-class neighborhoods is often aided by "rapid geographical mobility, inadequate social controls, and other manifestations of social disorganization" (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960:178).

One of the most innovative ideas put forward by Cloward and Ohlin centers on how youths are recruited or motivated to abandon the quest for material success and social status and adopt a retreatist orientation. Just as it requires some opportunity and aptitude to achieve societal goals in the culturally approved ways, youths also must have a measure of opportunity and certain physical or organizational abilities in order to acquire success through crime or delinquency. Therefore, Cloward and Ohlin suggest, youths failing in both legitimate and illegitimate approaches to material success and social status are *double failures*. These double failures are most likely to demonstrate their anomic frustration in a retreatist gang response.

### **Agnew's General Strain Theory**

Robert Agnew (1992, 1995) offers a more expansive application of social strain explanations of delinquent behavior. Agnew's General Strain Theory counters some persistent criticisms mentioned at the end of the next section regarding the apparent failure of traditional Social Strain Theory to account for the delinquency of females and middle- and upper-class youths have been countered by Robert Agnew's (1992, 1995, 2001) General Strain Theory of delinquency. Agnew views strain as more than just a disjunction between goals and means. He sees crime and delinquency as adaptations to stress. Agnew (1992, 2001) identified three major sources of stress that leads to social strain:

1. Discrepancy between means and goals or between expectations and actual outcomes. This type of stress is most closely related to Merton's conception of anomie.



2. Loss of something positive in one's life. For juveniles, this could be loss of a parent, loved one, or the breakup with a boyfriend or girlfriend.
3. Presence of negative circumstances or events. These could be environmental (e.g., slum living conditions) or more personal stress related (e.g., victim of sexual abuse or criminal victimization).

Agnew's General Strain Theory inspired a series of research studies supporting his thesis that juvenile males and females in all classes can experience delinquency-generating social strain (Agnew, et al., 2002; Brezina, 1996; Mazerolle, 1998; Menard, 1995). In addition, these investigators addressed the issue of why some youngsters express their anomic frustration in acts of delinquency, while others—experiencing the same negative circumstances and prospects—do not turn to antisocial deviance. Agnew and his supporters contend that the kind of response that an anomic individual will make depends on what he or she brings to the situation: specifically, motivation, self-esteem, social support, level of anger, and fear of punishment. Box 4.1 shows how strain theories can help explain delinquency in China.

### **Contributions of Social Strain Theories**

Social strain theories view deviance and delinquency as a result of the social structure in which they occur. Juveniles who grow up in communities where access to culturally approved goals by conventional means is denied, and where a large degree of social disorganization is present, find themselves in situations where social norms governing behavior are not clearly defined. It follows, according to social strain theories, that these youngsters may discover that delinquent activities supply opportunities to achieve social identity and social status (Gibson, et al., 2011).

For many years, Social Strain Theory, with its fundamental postulates of anomie and social disorganization, dominated sociological explanations of deviant and delinquent behavior. It is an inherently sociological approach, and because official arrest statistics seem to support the idea that juvenile delinquency is primarily a lower-class phenomenon, strain theory offers a great deal of explanatory power. A number of researchers have rallied in support of social strain theories as basically correct in a broad sense, if not in all particulars (Bernard, 1990; Menard, 1995; Harding, 2009). At least one study indicates that General Strain Theory may have explanatory power for ethnic minorities, especially Hispanics, who due to the acculturation process are exposed to unique types of strain that may increase the likelihood of delinquency (Perez, et al., 2008). And another suggests that delinquency previously associated with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other biological and psychological maladies may actually be more a result of the strain experienced by those with the afflictions (Johnson and Kercher, 2007). General Strain Theory has been empirically tested and linked to a number of illicit behaviors from juvenile delinquency to adult gambling (Eitle and Taylor, 2011).

Strain theories of delinquency contribute to an understanding of the relationship between the status frustration experienced by lower-class youths and poor

## BOX 4.1

### GLOBAL FOCUS ON DELINQUENCY: Social Strain and Juvenile Delinquency in China

Social strain theories were developed by American criminologists to explain American crime and delinquency. To date, most research utilizing strain theory has been conducted in the United States or other Western capitalist societies. After all, at the center of Merton's Anomie theory is the internalization of capitalistic goals, such as success, money, and material acquisitions. Strain theories have been particularly useful in helping explain lower-class delinquency, since they are based on the assumption that lower-class youths internalize capitalistic goals, but then find their legitimate means for achieving those goals blocked by a variety of structural variables. More contemporary generalized strain theories have expanded the concept of strain beyond economic goals and the blockage of culturally approved methods for achieving them, to the more general interpersonal strain and frustration experienced by youths in their everyday lives including distress over appearance and the frustration they encounter in an adult-structured world (Agnew, 1992). These theories, too, were developed by Americans to explain American delinquency.

How would strain theories fare in explaining delinquency in a dramatically different, primarily socialistic culture, and emerging market economy such as that of China? Ruth Liu and Wei Lin (2007) asked just that in their study of over 2,000 Chinese middle-school students in the city of Fujian, in the southeastern part of China.

Liu and Lin contended that Chinese adolescents may be more susceptible to some forms of strains than others. There is tremendous emphasis on academic success in China. Chinese children who do not succeed in school are not only considered unlikely to be successful later in life, but also bring dishonor and disgrace upon their families. Sociological research has found some linkage, at least anecdotally, between suicides among Chinese youths and the overwhelming pressure on them to succeed in school (Lee, 2004). Also, there are noticeable differences in the opportunities provided to young Chinese males as compared with females. Success and performance demands on adult males are much higher than on adult females, so consequently boys are simultaneously pushed much harder to succeed as youths and are provided more

opportunities to do so than their female counterparts. This led Liu and Lin to study the differential effects of strain on Chinese boys and girls.

Liu and Lin's research findings supported the tenets of strain theories of delinquency and showed remarkable similarities with research conducted in the United States despite the overwhelming cultural differences. Chinese boys reported higher levels of strain and frustration than Chinese girls. Consistent with strain theories, Chinese boys were far more likely than girls to become involved in delinquency. The boys also expressed more deviant attitudes, more delinquent friends, and lower sense of self-control. Through the use of multiple regression analysis, Liu and Lin also found that specific types of strain were more related to delinquency than others. Specifically, strain associated with status achievement (the type of strain experienced more by boys than girls) had the strongest link to juvenile delinquency. Chinese girls experienced more interpersonal strain over physical well-being and relationships, a type of strain less related to delinquency. In these regards, the apparent support for strain theories of delinquency is similar among Chinese youths and American youths.

How have social and economic changes in contemporary China made adolescents' experiences there more similar to those of American youths than in the past? Based on your study of juvenile delinquency thus far, are these changes likely to lead to more or less juvenile delinquency in China? What should the Chinese, and for that matter, Americans do to help reduce the strain experienced by adolescents to help reduce involvement in delinquency?

#### Sources

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How has strain theory helped explain delinquency among Chinese youths?

performance in school. For example, Polk and Schafer (1972) indicated that poor school performance and the feelings of frustration due to blocked educational opportunities of economically disadvantaged youths have been linked to juvenile delinquency (this phenomenon and its relationship to delinquency is further explored in Chapter 9).

Although Merton made no direct application of his anomie theory to juvenile delinquency, it is regarded as one of the most influential and useful formulations in describing and explaining the process behind many forms of deviant and delinquent behavior. A number of other social scientists were quick to recognize the potential of Merton's general theory of deviance in explaining why at least some juveniles become delinquent (Farnsworth and Leiber, 1989).

Perhaps the greatest contribution of strain theories has been in their application to gang delinquency (discussed in detail in Chapter 11). Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin, and others applied the basic assumptions of anomie and strain theories to help explain the formation and activities of juvenile gangs. Irving Spertzel (1964), for example, studied lower-class gangs; and while his typology of gangs differed from the one constructed by Cloward and Ohlin, he documented that juvenile gangs indeed tend to specialize in certain types of delinquent activities.

While debate continues over whether lower-class youths internalize middle-class aspirations and goals as assumed by the proponents of strain theory, and while most juvenile delinquency does not involve juvenile gangs, strain theories emphasize the importance of socioeconomic status, neighborhood environment, and adaptation to social structure as important variables in understanding delinquency. These

contributions provide insight into some types of juvenile delinquency, especially those related to the activities of lower-class gangs.

### **Criticisms and Limitations of Social Strain Theories**

A number of weaknesses in the explanatory arguments of strain theories have been advanced. For example, the anomie theory of deviance, while useful in explaining some kinds of lower-class nonconformity, makes some questionable assumptions about the situation of lower-class people. It assumes, first, that people from the lower social classes develop about the same level of aspiration for themselves as do people from the more favored classes. Studies of lower-class subjects show that this is not necessarily the case and that lower-class people tend to develop a fairly realistic assessment of their lowered life chances and adjust their expectations accordingly (e.g., Han, 1969).

Another apparent assumption of anomie theory that may be faulty is the generalization that structural frustration causes delinquency (Agnew, 1984). Sanders (1981:31) challenged this assumption by asking, "Why is it that only a relatively few members of the lower socioeconomic strata commit delinquent acts frequently? Why are boys ten times more likely to engage in delinquent acts than girls in the same social position?"

Travis Hirschi (1969) pointed out that most delinquent boys eventually become law-abiding adults, which is a potential source of embarrassment to the strain theorists. Indeed, most delinquents do come to terms with society as they mature. They do *not* graduate into a life of adult crime. Typically, as they mature, they abandon juvenile crime and misbehavior. But their eventual reform cannot be explained by changes in the lower-class conditions that purportedly forced them into their initial deviance.

In *Delinquent Boys* (1955), Cohen's main focus was on the nonutilitarian behavior of lower-class juveniles. It was at this point that Sykes and Matza (1957) cast doubt upon Cohen's theory by contending that the delinquent gangs they studied stole in order to get money for entertainment, which demonstrated that they were impractical adolescents, rather than "nonutilitarian."

Cohen's point that lower-class youths make a delinquent response as a frustrated attack upon middle-class standards also has been targeted for criticism. Kitsuse and Dietrick (1959) argued that the initial motives of youths for joining gangs and participating in delinquent activities are many and varied, ranging from self-preservation in the neighborhood to the desire for friends.

Cloward and Ohlin's theory of Differential Opportunity also has been subjected to sharp criticism. The main complaint has been that the theory's emphasis on a set of delinquent subcultural reactions to perceived lack of economic opportunity ignores other major factors in delinquency causation. For example, Bordua (1962) charged that Cloward and Ohlin had a tendency to ignore the life histories of their delinquent subjects. The delinquents of Thrasher, Cohen, Miller, and other theorists were presented as having family, school, and other background experiences that affected their subsequent delinquent behavior. "On the other hand, Cloward and Ohlin's delinquents seem suddenly to appear on the scene sometime in adolescence,

to look at the world, and to discover: "There's no opportunity in my structure!" (Bordua, 1962:255).

Cohen (1966) pointed out that Cloward and Ohlin suggested a false dichotomy between "legitimate opportunities" and "illegitimate opportunities." He argued:

The same things are typically, and perhaps always, both. [For] example, identical firearms can be used to kill deer in season; or deer, policemen, and estranged spouses out of season. It is one of the most fundamental and pervasive dilemmas of social life that all legitimate power, whether over things or people, can be used to implement or to violate social norms. (Cohen, 1966:110)

Cloward and Ohlin's contention that youthful gangs specialized in criminality, fighting, or drug use also has been challenged. Numerous studies have shown delinquent gangs to be engaged in a wide variety of illegal activities (Kulik, et al., 1968; Short, et al., 1963).

Another common complaint regarding the Theory of Differential Opportunity centers on the rather rigid typological structure (a criticism also shared by Merton's Anomie Theory and most other behavioral typologies). Lemert (1967), Short, et al. (1963), and Bordua (1962) all contended that the assignment of groups to one or another category is too mechanistic; that is, much gang delinquency in working-class areas is more spontaneous and unstructured than Cloward and Ohlin would have us believe.

A persistent criticism of traditional Strain Theory is that while suggesting helpful explanations of underclass delinquency, it fails to offer any direct insights into delinquency in the middle and upper classes. This may be a moot point since most strain theorists never claimed etiological generality beyond the lower class.

Perhaps a more telling deficiency in Strain Theory is the shortage of viable applications to female delinquency of any class. Ruth Triplett and Roger Jarjoura (1997:287) point out that "although gender and social class are two of the best known correlates of crime and delinquency, criminologists have shown surprisingly little interest in exploring how these variables intersect in the etiology of deviant behavior." Their findings add significant details to the idea of blocked goals leading to individual strain and possibly illegal conduct—for females as well as males. More specifically, Triplett and Jarjoura (1997:287) "suggest that gender and class are both important factors shaping educational expectations and through them, the likelihood of delinquency involvement." John Hoffman and Susan Su (1997) found that stressful life events have similar impact on delinquency and drug use among both females and males. Agnew (1992, 1995) addressed some of these weaknesses with his General Strain Theory.

## **CULTURAL TRANSMISSION THEORIES**

Another line of theory building was established in 1938 with a focus on the contradictory and often competitive cultural content of different social groups. The underlying assumption was that the heterogeneity of the American population associated

with 20th-century industrialization and urbanization resulted in an inharmonious mixture of ethnic, religious, political, and social-class subcultures, each with its own distinctive beliefs, traditions, values, norms, and behavioral expectations. Moreover, it was assumed to be self-evident that the proximity of these diverse segments of the urban population would lead to unavoidable culture conflict as each group judged its own standards as correct and normal and those of other groups as deviant and delinquent.

### **Sellin's Theory of Culture Conflict**

Thorsten Sellin, a criminologist, laid important groundwork for this theoretical approach to explaining criminal and delinquent behavior, with the publication of *Culture Conflict and Crime* (1938). Sellin, in explaining fluctuating crime rates in different parts of urban society, noted that values, customs, and standards of conduct were not uniform throughout the population. On the contrary, many districts and neighborhoods of American large cities represent the ethnic culture of foreign countries more than the general culture of the United States. Additionally, the various social classes also occupy their own subcultural "islands" where their distinctive beliefs, norms, and behaviors prevail.

If these different groups were not in direct geographical and social contact with each other and with the larger society, their behavior would not be subject to comparison and evaluation so closely. However, because such diverse groups coexist in proximity to one another, chronic and abrasive culture conflict often ensues. Thus, Sellin concluded, culture conflict creates great potential for misunderstanding and antagonism, especially among the subordinate, lower-class groups regarding what is conforming behavior and what is deviant behavior. Even the definitions of crime and delinquency can become culturally relative and subject to interpretation within the cultural context of particular groups and neighborhoods in which assimilation into the dominant society is incomplete (Cole, 1993). You will note that many of Sellin's ideas fit well with the Radical/Conflict theories discussed in Chapter 6.

### **Burgess' Concentric Zone Theory**

Considerable evidence of the distinctive spatial patterns and concentrations of minority groups, social classes, and specialized land uses was amassed during the 1920s and 1930s by sociologists Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, R. D. McKenzie, and others in the forefront of human ecology, a newly emerging sociological subarea. For example, Burgess (1925), using Chicago as his model, demonstrated the variation in naturally formed urban areas, each occupied by a particular part of the population and reserved for a particular land use, such as commercial, lower-class housing, middle-class housing, and so forth. Burgess hypothesized that these population groupings and specialized land uses develop as a series of concentric zones spreading out from the dominant and dynamic city center (Zone I) and that this spatial pattern characterized the industrial city of his time.

Burgess pinpointed the area immediately surrounding the central business district (Zone II) as an urban environment especially conducive to a wide variety of individual

maladjustments and social problems, including crime and delinquency. This zone, also called the *Zone of Transition*, was so designated because it was the area most subject to rapid change. Population was ever-shifting as waves of new and impoverished immigrants settled first in the crowded tenements to begin their American experience. Many of the neighborhoods in Zone II reflected the cultural and ethnic identity of groups of inhabitants from Ireland, Poland, Italy, and other foreign countries.

Zone II was also called the Zone of Transition because it lay between the more prosperous and expanding commercial center of the city and the more established residential areas that lay beyond. Consequently, encroachments, invasions, and successions of new groups of people and new land uses, and other forms of social change, were most obvious and traumatic in Zone II. To people living in such an area, nothing seems to be permanent, as society is in a continual cycle of settlement and resettlement, of disorganization and reorganization.

A number of researchers investigated these urban dynamics of social disorganization, industrialization, population movements, and changes in neighborhoods to determine their influence on crime and delinquency. For example, W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1927) examined social disorganization in a Polish neighborhood of Chicago. They noted the failure of existing social rules and norms to control behavior, and they documented their observations that the home, neighborhood, church, and friendship groups lost some of their influence to control behavior in an environment of rapid social change. Research also indicates that social disorganization is strongly associated with delinquency in middle eastern countries as well (Roushous, 2002).

### **Shaw and McKay's "High Delinquency Areas"**

Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1969), influenced by the early ecological studies coming from the University of Chicago, charted the spatial distribution of crime and delinquency on maps of Chicago and other cities. They discovered that crime and delinquency had definite patterns of concentration in the urban community. They listed their findings as follows:

1. Juvenile delinquents are not distributed uniformly over the city of Chicago but tend to be concentrated in areas adjacent to the central business district and to heavy industrial areas.
2. There are wide variations in the rates of delinquents between areas in Chicago.
3. The rates of delinquents tend to vary inversely with distance from the center of the city. (Shaw and McKay, 1931:383–385)

The areas identified by Shaw and McKay with a high incidence of juvenile delinquency were called *High Delinquency Areas*. Their data pointed to the same central districts of the city identified by Burgess as the Zone of Transition whose substandard, slum housing was occupied by poor underclass residents, often immigrants and ethnic minorities, with problems of adjustment similar to those uncovered by Thomas and Znaniecki (1927).

Shaw and McKay concluded that delinquency rates reflected the kinds of neighborhoods in which children were raised. They contended that deteriorated, poverty-ridden areas of cities tend to produce social disorganization, which in turn

produces delinquency. In their view, high delinquency areas are characterized by local values and norms that are sometimes contrary to the values, norms, and best interests of the larger society. A local subculture develops that successfully transmits these antisocial values and norms to younger generations growing up in the area (Lundman, 2001:59–62).

### Miller's Focus on Lower-Class Culture

Walter Miller (1958) offered a different explanation of adolescent misbehavior as a product of its cultural context. Miller's theory disagreed with the reactive subculture theories of Cohen and of Cloward and Ohlin, which portrayed groups of lower-class delinquents responding in anomic frustration to their blocked access to idealized, middle-class, success goals. Rather, Miller proposed that lower-class culture contains an effective body of values, norms, and behavioral expectations in its own right. Moreover, children and youths from lower-class families and neighborhoods internalize their culture content just as thoroughly as young people from the middle class learn their culture. It follows, Miller argued, that much of what Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin, and others interpreted as a lower-class, delinquent reaction to the unfair imposition of middle-class values was actually a reasonable reflection of lower-class values.

Miller's theory cites successful lower-class socialization as the origin of aggressive and antisocial conduct. According to Miller, delinquency results not from a lack of commitment to middle-class cultural values, but from commitment to lower-class cultural values. Thus, lower-class conformity does not harmonize with the behavioral expectations of the dominant middle class.

Miller identified six "focal concerns" or "values" that have high priority for young males:

1. **Trouble.** Chronic anxiety over possible confrontation with law enforcement personnel and the consequences of illegal behavior. Staying out of "trouble" is a major, practical concern of many lower-class people.
2. **Toughness.** The exhibition of physical prowess; fearlessness; masculinity. Miller saw this kind of posturing as extremely important to lower-class boys who come from female-based households (dominant mothers and absent fathers) and who are trying to establish a male identity. Thus, they equate femininity with weakness.
3. **Smartness.** Display of verbal agility; quick-wittedness; ability to outsmart.
4. **Excitement.** Thrill-seeking; taking a chance; fighting over women.
5. **Fate.** A tendency to trust in luck; to assume that what will be, will be.
6. **Autonomy.** The need to feel independent and free from external authority.

Miller believed that such class-specific focal concerns or values develop because the social classes are segregated from each other spatially, economically, and socially. Hence, youths develop values and behaviors distinctive of their own class. The internalization of lower-class values combined with a need to demonstrate their "manhood" can, according to Miller, cause some young males to defy authority and participate in fighting and other activities that, in turn, could be interpreted by middle-class people as a predisposition to juvenile delinquency. Some efforts have been made to apply Miller's theory to violence in schools (see Box 4.2).



**BOX 4.2****CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE: Searching for Causal Explanations of School Shootings**

Over half a century ago, Walter Miller (1958) identified “trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy” as highly regarded, lower-class, cultural values. Miller suggested that the acting out of these “focal concerns” represents the achievement of manhood and respect to many lower-class males (Anderson, 1998). On the other hand, these attitudinal and behavioral traits may be interpreted as delinquent by police officers and other members of more favored classes.

In the wake of numerous violent attacks by young males in U.S. schools, Miller’s theoretical concepts may have a fresh and broader application. A common theme and clue has emerged in many of these shocking reports: A number of these angry young gunmen were obsessed with a reckless, fatalistic desire to publicly display toughness and autonomy and to get even for some real or imagined insult. In many cases, their violent bid for recognition and reputation was triggered by an accumulation of what they considered disrespectful and degrading taunts. Many of the reputed perpetrators apparently felt like outsiders. They were kids who were out of the mainstream—unhappy, searching for their place, and suffering ridicule (Witkin, et al., 1998:16, 17).

The 1999 carnage at Columbine High School offers a classic example as youths who were ridiculed for wearing black trench coats to school during both cold and hot weather developed an intense hatred for the school’s athletes that resulted in deadly violence that left more than 22 wounded and 12 dead. A suicide note purportedly left by one of the shooters indicated that the massacre was “on the shoulders” of those who allowed the bullying and humiliation to take place (Johnson and Copeland, 1999: 1A).

There is growing evidence that the phenomenon of high-school violence is occurring in other parts of the world. In Israel, educators reported that they were alarmed by students who settled disputes by fists or drawing knives as opposed to verbally. In one case, a ninth-

grade boy who would not share his ice cream was taunted and teased by another student. The bullied boy enticed four of his friends to join him in revenge. Armed with knives, brass knuckles, and a baseball bat, the five youths found the bully in a nearby park where they stabbed, beat, and kicked him, and then returned to their homes and went to bed as if nothing had happened (AP Dallas, 1999).

Several of the theoretical explanations of youthful crime presented in Chapter 3 through Chapter 7 of this book, including Walter Miller’s focus on cultural values, offer helpful insights concerning these current reports of high school violence.

Perhaps the most exciting implication of this new application of Miller’s concepts is the expansion of so-called lower-class values to encompass some hostile, antisocial posturing and behavior of middle-class youth. Such an application garners a larger measure of generality for Miller’s causal explanation as copy-cat student attacks continue to threaten U.S. schools.

A more detailed discussion of current school violence, together with suggestions for prevention and control, can be found in Chapter 9, *Schools and Delinquency*.

Based solely on the reading of this chapter, what theories could you apply to help explain school shootings?

**Sources**

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How might strain and cultural transmission theories shed light on these youths' everyday experiences and help explain why they might become involved in delinquency?

### **Cultural Efficacy Theory**

Robert Sampson and his colleagues (1999, 2003) expanded upon earlier social ecology and cultural transmission theories and insisted that more than poverty, social disorganization and lower-class values lead to the development of high crime and delinquency areas. They contended that areas of cities develop **collective efficacy**, *a group's shared belief in its ability to successfully complete tasks and its extent of social cohesion and trust*. This collective efficacy leads to informal social control (refer to control theories in Chapter 5), and increases the likelihood that people will band together, intervene, and stop others' criminal and delinquent activities as well as build informal support networks. Where social efficacy and social cohesion are low or lacking, crime and delinquency flourish. Cultural efficacy is less likely to develop where poverty and social disorganization thrive, hence, the connection between those variables and high rates of crime and delinquency. This theory has been supported by research findings from longitudinal data collected in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Simons, et al., 2005; Harding, 2009).

### **Contributions of Cultural Transmission Theories**

Cultural transmission theories offer significant contributions in data, concepts, and fresh insights that help explain juvenile delinquency. Each one is like a different lens on a microscope that reveals new and fascinating details regarding culture and sub-culture as they relate to delinquent behavior.

Sellin's Culture Conflict Theory recognized the pluralistic nature of society in the United States. Rather than viewing society as a homogeneous entity wherein unchallenged, universal norms prevail, Sellin emphasized the diversity of groups and subcultures within larger society. Many of these ethnic and social-class subcultures come into contact with one another in the urban environment—a contact sometimes made unpleasant and abrasive by conflicting codes of conduct. Crime and delinquency as a precipitate of culture conflict between dominant and subordinate social groups is detailed.

Burgess (1925) paid careful attention to ecological space relationships as human groups interact in a crowded, heterogeneous, urban environment. He pointed to the ethnic enclaves in Chicago and other large cities that generate and reinforce subcultures with territoriality, social identity, and solidarity. The more entrenched and resistant the subculture is to assimilation, the greater the likelihood of normative conflict, especially for younger generations in subordinate subcultures. This was the idea behind the concept of "the marginal man" suggested by Burgess' colleague, Robert Park (1928), who followed by Everett Stonequist (1937), traced the alienation and delinquency of many children of immigrants to their marginal social status and identity as they are caught between two conflicting cultural systems. These second-generation residents of the ethnic area were exposed to the norms, traditions, and language of the "old country" in their homes and neighborhood and, at the same time, experienced the socialization of their American school and peer group. Thus, they became "marginal"—without complete commitment or assimilation into either of the conflicting cultures.

Shaw and McKay (1969) incorporated an ecological dimension from Burgess into their criminological scrutiny of Chicago. They identified distinctive spatial patterns of crime and delinquency that corresponded with specific ethnic and social-class areas, particularly in the inner city. Perhaps Shaw and McKay's greatest contribution was the discovery that High Delinquency Areas of Chicago retained that statistical reputation in spite of major changes in the ethnic composition of the population in the areas. Repeated collection, examination, and comparison of population and crime data for those troubled areas revealed that they were inhabited by successive waves of poor immigrants from various European countries. Over time, older immigrant groups improved their economic standing with better jobs, experienced a measure of assimilation, and moved further out from the central city into more stable and affluent residential areas. Their places in the old, least desirable neighborhoods were taken by the most recently arrived immigrant groups. As each ethnic group escaped from inner-city blight and poverty, it manifested lower rates of juvenile delinquency, while rates remained high in the old areas adjacent to centers of commerce and heavy industry, irrespective of the ethnicity or national origin of the new residents. From this, Shaw and McKay (1969) concluded that delinquency-producing factors are inherent in the socioeconomic conditions of the community, not in the racial or ethnic composition of the population.

Miller (1958) embarked in a different direction in making his contribution to Cultural Transmission Theory. His focus on lower-class culture identified a set of basic values that can activate lower-class, adolescent behavior that, in turn, may be perceived as overly aggressive and delinquent by middle-class people. Miller did not

justify lower-class gang delinquency; rather, his analysis adds to our understanding of *why* lower-class youngsters become delinquent. While such behavior may reflect a culturally relevant quest for manhood, it is still often dangerous and undesirable. David Brownfield's research (1990) found empirical support for Miller's contention that such esteemed attributes as toughness and autonomy are particularly strong predictors of delinquent behavior.

Cultural efficacy theory added to these theories by insisting that it was more than just poverty, social disorganization, and lower-class values that caused delinquency to be clustered in certain areas. It contends that social cohesion and cultural efficacy help prevent deviant behavior including crime and delinquency.

### **Criticisms and Limitations of Cultural Transmission Theories**

Social strain theories strongly suggest that social disorganization often characterizes individuals and groups living in high delinquency areas. This assumption has been seriously questioned. A number of studies have concluded that lower-class neighborhoods are not without social organization. Rather, their social organization is *different* from that found in middle-class areas.

Shaw and McKay implied that social disorganization was most prevalent in areas in which local institutions were unable to control the behavior of local residents. Certainly, many of the families, schools, churches, and formal law enforcement agencies often appear weak and impotent in high delinquency areas. The strength of local organizations is to a large extent a function of local participation, and participation in such organizations is most likely among people who have positive feelings about their neighborhoods (Bursik, 1984:403). On the other hand, in areas of oppressive poverty, status deprivation, and urban blight that withers hope, local residents may give up on traditional institutions and develop a form of social organization more realistic to their prospects and satisfying to their needs. William Foote Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (1993) and similar studies indicate that there is a high degree of social organization in slum neighborhoods. While the nature of that social organization is different from that found in larger, middle-class society, it is no less meaningful and viable to participants (Jacobs, 1961). Delinquency area studies also have been criticized by other researchers on the ground that official statistics of arrests and court appearances, used to measure the amount of delinquency for such areas, are biased because of more rigorous law enforcement, compared with more affluent, middle- and upper-class suburbs (see Chapter 2).

Another complaint regarding the logic of the High Delinquency Area thesis is that such urban areas may be *collectors* of deviants rather than the *generators* of deviant behavior. In other words, the socioeconomic conditions and social disorganization of the local community may not be the primary causal variables of crime and delinquency in the area. This argument holds that the real antecedent variable is the preexisting condition or propensity to illegal behavior in some persons prior to their movement into the high delinquency neighborhood. For example, the district of cheap bars and liquor stores commonly referred to as "skid row" does not produce alcoholics. Rather, many people who have a serious drinking problem gravitate to skid row because they can merge without difficulty into an area subculture and lifestyle similar to their own.

Similarly, “the red light district” does not produce prostitutes. Many prostitutes move there to find a supportive subculture and other people who share their values and behavioral expectations. The same reasoning can be applied to some of the criminal and delinquent elements that inhabit high delinquency areas. It is conceivable that they brought with them certain character flaws or social circumstances in their families that were conducive to juvenile delinquency as they settled in the area.

Walter Miller’s “Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency” (1958) has been limited by a lack of generality. More specifically, the “focal concerns” and “female-based households” described by Miller do not equally characterize the lower-class residents of black, Hispanic, Irish, and Italian enclaves in American cities.

Miller’s thesis and other theoretical explanations of lower-class delinquency share an inability to generalize to just *one* lower-class racial or ethnic group. Some Strain and Cultural Transmission theorists have portrayed an oversimplified, homogeneous picture of lower-class values and behavior that fails to adequately take into account the diversification of culture and dynamics of social-class mobility *within* certain groups. For example, since the 1960s, there has been a bifurcation of lower-class black America into an underclass that seems unlikely to escape and an upwardly mobile middle class (Lemann, 1986). Thus, two contrasting versions of black life have emerged.

On the one hand, poverty is even more deeply entrenched for many blacks and is characterized by extraordinarily high and rising rates of unemployment, school dropouts, welfare dependence, single mothers, crime, and delinquency. This *underclass* (a nomenclature also shared by portions of the white and Hispanic populations) has been defined by Michael Morris (1989:125) as “a segment of the poor who are not only economically deprived, but who manifest a distinctive set of values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, and behaviors. . . .”

Miller’s observations have been applauded for identifying some focal concerns of the underclass. On the other hand, they are hardly an adequate depiction of those members of the black lower class who are demonstrating higher achievement and lower delinquency rates; who are now moving out of the ghettos and into the middle class. “The clearest line between the two groups is family structure. Black husband-wife families continue to close the gap with whites; their income is now 78 percent as high” (Lemann, 1986:33). In view of the more pronounced heterogeneity of the lower class, Miller’s (1958) formulation has lost some contemporary relevance for the lower class. Moreover, it can be argued that Miller’s so-called lower-class focal concerns are reflected in the values of juveniles in general regardless of race, ethnicity, or social class, especially adolescent males. Valuing staying out of trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy are hardly unique to the lower class.

## **THE MEDIA, SOCIAL STRAIN, AND TRANSMISSION OF CULTURAL VALUES**

As noted earlier in this chapter, Merton observed that Americans are exposed to powerful socialization processes that stress the success ethic, and success is quite often linked to the acquisition of material possessions. Perhaps nowhere is that more

true than in the media. Every day, Americans and people around the world are bombarded with a common media message: successful people are thin, beautiful, smell good, have sparkling white teeth, wear expensive clothes, drive expensive automobiles, and enjoy the finer (and more expensive) things in life. So, what if those things are not available to you? At least not through any legitimate culturally approved means? Thousands, if not millions, of youths experience that feeling every day. They are exposed to the finer things, especially in urban areas, where the obscenely rich are juxtaposed against those who live in abject poverty, and bombarded by the media with the message that they not only should *want* those things, but that they *need* those things.

An emerging theoretical perspective, cultural criminology, looks at the interplay of cultural processes, media practices, and the link between materialism and crime (Ferrell and Hayward, 2011). Drawing upon many of the tenets of strain and cultural transmission theories, cultural criminology theorizes that in a society that stresses the importance of materialism and consumption, those who cannot meet those expectations experience frustration. One response to that frustration might be social withdrawal, depression, heavy drinking, or taking drugs (retreatism). Another possible response is striking out against those who can fulfill their materialistic dreams through vandalism, petty theft, or perhaps even violence (rebellion).

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## Summary

This chapter introduces sociological explanations of juvenile delinquency, focusing on two prominent groups of theories: social strain and cultural transmission. Strain theories share the underlying assumption that nonconforming behavior arises out of social circumstances in which individuals or groups experience normative confusion or disruption. Based on Durkheim's concept of anomie, Robert Merton developed a theory of delinquency based on a typology of modes of individual adaptive behavior to social strain. Albert Cohen elaborated further developed strain theory with his theory of "delinquent boys," and Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin pointed out that delinquency is directly related to legitimate and illegitimate opportunities for youths to realize their goals in socially acceptable or unacceptable ways. Agnew's General Strain Theory of delinquency is a contemporary version of strain theories that responds to some of the criticisms and weaknesses of earlier strain theories.

Cultural transmission theories of delinquency focus on the contradictory and often competitive cultural content of different social groups. Thorsten Sellin's theory of culture conflict provides a basis for early cultural transmission theories as does Ernest Burgess' concentric zone theory of urban development. Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay charted the spatial distribution of crime and delinquency, identifying "high delinquency areas" from a social ecological perspective. Walter Miller's contribution to the cultural transmission came in the form of six lower class "focal concerns" that he believed helped explain the high rates of delinquency among lower-class youths.

The strain theories and cultural transmission theories of delinquency add important insight into possible causes of juvenile delinquency, especially among lower-class boys. As research began showing these theories inadequate to explain delinquency among middle- and upper-class youths and among females, other sociological theories

emerged to do so. Cultural criminology is one such effort that links crime and delinquency to materialism, consumption, and the media view of the “American Dream.”

Two other important schools of thought are explored in the next chapter that deals with social learning and social control theories of delinquency.

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### Outcomes Assessment: Questions and Topics for Study and Discussion

1. Explain the sociological perspective regarding human behavior and social phenomena. How does it differ from the biological determinism and psychogenic explanations presented in Chapter 3?
2. List the major assumption(s) underlying the social strain theories of delinquency etiology. Identify and discuss several prominent sociologists and their respective concepts and contributions to the social strain approach. What are some of the weaknesses and limitations of social strain explanations?
3. List the major assumption(s) underlying cultural transmission theories of delinquency etiology. Identify and discuss several prominent sociologists and their respective concepts and contributions to the cultural transmission approach. What are some of the weaknesses and limitations of cultural transmission theories?
4. Compare and contrast the problems of first- and second-generation immigrants in the United States. How do these problems help explain juvenile delinquency in these groups?
5. What are the similarities and differences between Merton’s Theory of Anomie, Cloward and Ohlin’s Theory of Differential Opportunity, and Miller’s concept of Lower-Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency?