DURKHEIM ON CRIME AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT: THE DURKHEIMIAN SCHOOL OF COMPARATIVE CRIMINOLOGY RECONSIDERED

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ABSTRACT

The assumption that crime is associated with urbanization and industrialization has had a strong influence on the development of criminology and especially comparative criminology. Indeed, the idea of a crime-development link guided much empirical study in comparative criminology beginning in the 1960s. The source of the assumption is often attributed to Emile Durkheim, although careful readers recall that Durkheim's original writings on crime and societal development stressed the functionality of crime and its universality as opposed to its socially dysfunctional causes and effects. Thus there is reason to question whether Durkheim was the original source. The purpose of this paper is to review what Durkheim had to say about the link between crime and societal development and then to look at the theoretical arguments of the Durkheim-inspired comparative criminologists to see if the latter's ideas were based upon Durkheim's original works. The analysis shows that the theoretical root of Durkheimian comparative criminology is traced to Modernization theory and to various reinterpretations of Durkheim's classic works. The implication of these findings is discussed as it relates to the formal education of professional sociologists in the new millennium.

The assumption that crime is associated with urbanization and industrialization has had a strong influence on the development of criminology. As Rogers (1989) points out, for most of the twentieth century the discipline has concentrated on the city, and especially on those urban residents who are young, male and poor. Inspired by the Chicago School, a theory that became very popular in criminology suggested that lower-class conditions lead to cultures of violence and thus to criminality (Cloward & Ohlin 1961; Wolfgang 1982; Cohen 1955; Miller 1958; Sykes & Matza 1957). This theory was closely related to and led to the development of a more general approach called the social disorganization perspective (Thomas & Znaniecki 1920; Shaw & McKay 1931, 1942, 1969; Shaw, Zorbaugh, McKay & Cottrell 1929; Sampson & Wilson 1995; Chilton, Teske & Arnold 1995; Jackson 1995; Baldassare 1995; Short & Jenness 1994; Lundman 1993; Park, Burgess & McKenzie 1928; Bursik & Grasmick 1993; Sampson & Groves 1989; Rose & McClain 1990; Anderson 1990; Warner & Pierce 1993; Bellair 1997; Wilson 1987; Bursik 1988; Gottfredson, McNeil & Gottfredson 1991; see also the brief but excellent review in Short 1997).

Comparative criminologists linked development to crime beginning in the 1960s, when attention was turned to the Third World (Kayira 1978; Kayode & Alemika 1984; Brillion 1974; Wasikhongo 1976; Mushanga 1974; Igbinovia 1984; Tanner 1970; Kercher 1979; Chang 1976; Clifford 1963, 1964, 1973, 1974; Ebbe 1985; Opolot 1976, 1979, 1980, 1981; Messner 1982; Clinard & Abbott 1973; Shelley 1981; Olurntimehim 1973; Krohn 1976, 1978; Webb 1972; Arthur 1989, 1991; Neumann & Berger 1988; Bennett 1991; Bennett, Shields & Daniels 1997; Rogers 1987, 1989). A considerable number of these scholars reasoned that as societies develop, crime increases. They believed that developing societies - as they rapidly industrialize, urbanize, and modernize - undergo the same social processes that occurred in Europe and America in the 1900s. Thus, as people in developing countries migrated to the newly developing cities, they broke the traditional personal, family and community ties of rural village life. Social controls, especially informal controls, weaken if not disappear, and deviant and criminal behavior increases (see especially Clinard & Abbott 1973; Shelley 1981). Because the experience of these people appeared quite close to what Durkheim had called "anomie" or normlessness, the theoretical approach of these comparative criminologists was called the "Durkheimian-Modernization" approach (Neumann & Berger 1988), and scholars promoting or testing the empirical accuracy of the approach were referred to informally as belonging to the Durkheimian School of comparative criminology.

A careful reader of Durkheim's classic works may express some initial concern about the Durkheimian School of compara-

tive criminologists; such readers may recall how Durkheim stressed the positive functions of crime: how crime was normal and how the societal reaction to crime promotes social solidarity. Moreover, crime is a moral issue, because by definition it is a violation of the sentiments of the collective conscience of the group. These ideas are compatible with what would later be called structural functionalism. Thus, at least with respect to the topic of crime, they may not recall Durkheim writing about how a societal breakdown or social disorganization leads to crime.

Additionally, Durkheim had distinct views about societal development–about the transition from a segmental to an organized type of society and how the nature of law changes –but what exactly did he say about crime rates? Would the rates increase or decrease as law and society changes? Hence there is, initially at least, room for a healthy skeptical view that comparative criminologists, in advocating a Durkheimian view, have left something out or overlooked something in Durkheim's classic writings.

The purpose of this paper is to explore what Durkheim had to say about crime and societal development in his original writings on the subject, and then to compare those views with the arguments constructed by the Durkheimian comparative criminologists. Are the arguments of the latter based on Durkheim's classic views on crime and societal development, or not? That is the key question to be answered.

DURKHEIM ON CRIME AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

This section reviews what Durkheim wrote about crime and societal development, as well as a careful consideration of the context in which it is written. We consider three well known works of Durkheim: *The Division of Labor in Society* (1960); *Rules of Sociological Method* (1958); and *Suicide* (1951a).

In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim argued that the division of labor, far from being responsible for the modern phenomena of crime and suicide, actually contributed to something far more significant: a firm basis for solidarity. Moreover, the division of labor is a moral phenomenon. To illustrate this, he searched for something that would provide evidence of the strong bonds and moral interconnections between people. Law, written or unwritten, became this indicator. Law governs connections between people, is identifiable, and provides evidence of the kind of connections existing in a given society. It is an observable expression of the moral bonds existing in a society at a given time. He thus set out to study legal and moral development systematically with a view to tracing the different factors affecting forms of bonds, and also the bases of unity and solidarity. Thus, issues of crime or law violation were tightly interwoven with a society's development at any point in its history, for this is essentially the same as its moral development. He decided that there were two fundamental bases for solidarity, likeness and interdependence (see generally the review in Hadden 1997).

Addressing the first kind of solidarity, which he called mechanical solidarity, Durkheim believed that societies with this type of solidarity have minimal internal differentiation, and likeness is therefore a basis of solidarity. In such a society, people are not divided very much as to function. They live remarkably similar lives, tend to know one another in fairly small communities, and share many ideas, beliefs, and experiences. The law which governs relations in such a society is what Durkheim called repressive or penal law.

Where this kind of law prevails, crime is any act that, regardless of degree, provokes against the perpetrator the characteristic reaction known as punishment (Durkheim 1960 70). Durkheim believed that crime was not the breaking of a rule *per se* but the breaking of the bond of social solidarity and the inflaming of the intense social sentiments that result in punishment of the offender. In addition, crime has an invariant quality in that it is ubiquitous, existing at all times and historical epochs. Speaking of the constancy of this collective will to punish, he writes:

> These variations of repressive law prove... that the constant characteristic could not be found among the intrinsic properties of acts imposed or prohibited by penal rules, since they present such diversity, but rather in the relations that they sustain with some condition external to them. (1960 71)

Durkheim believed that crime offends sentiments which are found among all normal individuals of any given society. These sentiments are strong and they are defined.

They must be of a certain average intensity. Not only are they written upon the consciousness of everyone, but they are deeply written. They are in no way halting, superficial caprices of the will, but emotions and dispositions strongly rooted within us. The sentiments, furthermore, must not be simply strongly held; they must also be precise and clear (Durkheim 1960 77-79).

Crime, then, in Durkheim's revised definition, is an act that offends the strong, well-defined states of the collective consciousness. The collective consciousness is the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society which forms a determinate system and which has its own life. Such strong and well-defined states are at the root of penal or repressive law (Durkheim 1960 79-80).

Such states of consciousness are fewer at the time Durkheim wrote *Division of Labor* (the late 19th century) than they had been in the past, and the number progressively decreases the more societies approximate to a modern type. This is because the average intensity and degree of determinateness of the collective states have themselves diminished (Durkheim 1960 152-153). Here Durkheim provides a hint, but falls short of stating explicitly, that rates of crime may well fall as societies develop.

In addition, he notes that a large number of criminological types have gradually disappeared over time (Durkheim 1960 154-156). For instance, at the time Durkheim wrote, the regulation of domestic life had almost entirely lost every trace of its penal or repressive character. Many crimes of traditional society, furthermore, were defunct. The most considerable loss from the penal code, however, is the one due to the total, or almost total, disappearance of religious crimes. Here, almost an entire category of sentiments has been dropped from the strong and well-defined state of the collective consciousness, and Durkheim believes this elimination has occurred regularly and progressively.

Further, Durkheim states that as a number of varieties of crime have progressively disappeared, there was no compensating factor, for no varieties that are distinctively new have arisen (Durkheim 1960 164). Begging was accepted at the time that he wrote, but he notes that in the past, in eras before his book was published, idleness was punished. The crime of *lese majeste* is another example of a crime that in modern times no longer offends a collective consciousness (Durkheim 1960 164). Once again, though Durkheim falls short of saying explicitly that crime rates would fall as the division of labor emerges, his statements above, taken in context, would seem to imply it: if varieties of crime have disappeared with no new forms arising, this would suggest a net decline in crime.

Durkheim argued that the solidarity to which the newer, restitutive law corresponds is of an altogether different nature (see Hadden 1997). The rules of conduct which it regulates lie in the realm of differences, outside of the common consciousness. The sentiments evoked by the violation of these rules are not sufficiently violent or severe enough to lead to a demand for punishment; a restoration of order is all that is necessary. We see then, that restitutive law is a manifestation of the type of social solidarity that is based on mutual and complementary differences, hence, on the division of labor. This solidarity is called "organic." Durkheim believed the bonds of organic solidarity to be stronger than those of mechanical solidarity. Mechanical solidarity, though enfeebled, would not die out completely.

There are four remaining passages of *Division of Labor* that are important in getting to the root of what Durkheim actually said about the relationship between crime and societal development. The first deals with Durkheim's discussion of the increasing rates of suicide as societies develop, noted in the first chapter of Book II of *Division of Labor*. Might this be evidence that deviancy or crime would rise as societies develop?

The answer to this question is unequivocally "no." Again, it is important to examine the context. Durhkeim is refuting the argument of economists that the division of labor is caused by the increasing need for human happiness (Durkheim 1960 234). He argues that if the achievement of happiness was the only cause of the division of labor, then the division of labor would quickly end once happiness has been achieved (1960 237). As another way of refuting the economists' arguments, he conceptualizes happiness in a more specific way, as a state of health. He then looks at the issue of whether health has improved with civilization. He compares the savage with civilized man, noting the greater

contentment of the former (Durkheim 1960 244). Then, he argues that the multiplication of suicide as civilization emerges could hardly be construed as happiness. Looking at rates of suicide, he notes that the rate may undergo periodic fluctuations, either up or down, but when headed rapidly upward, would be an indicator of a lowering of the general average happiness level of a population. This in turn he interpreted as a weakening of the public health (1960 249). He dances around the issue of whether the rise of suicide in Europe is normal or abnormal; that subject is covered in a later book. Significantly, nowhere in this section does Durkheim state or imply that other forms of deviancy or crime would "ride the coattails" of this increase in suicide.

A second issue that Durkheim addressed had to do with how traditional ways of doing things would become less binding, and long standing traditions would erode as societies change from the segmental (mechanical) to the organized (organic) type. This process leaves room for "individual variations" to arise, and some scholars speculated that Durkheim was really talking about deviance or crime in this section. But was he?

Durkheim notes that as societies develop and the social milieu extends itself, the collective conscience spreads itself over more and more concrete things, and accordingly becomes more abstract. For example, law, morality and civilization in general become more rational and universal, and less bound by local custom (1960 287-289). This "indetermination" of the collective conscience leaves a larger place for individual variability. In particular, as the segmental type of society characterized by mechanical solidarity declines, the individual is detached from his natal environment, thrust into a more populated environment, and is freed from the power of the local elders to judge and regulate his behavior. He is thus less and less bound by the authority of tradition in general (1960 291-297). With the effacement of the segmental type, society is losing hold of the individual.

There is tension in reading this section; one expects upon turning the page to find Durkheim using outbreaks of adolescent rebellion or crime to bolster his argument. This never happens. Instead, crime is mentioned only once in this section, near the end. He states that traditional kinds of authority will lose their hold upon individuals, but this does not mean that violations of the collective conscience will be ignored by the proper authorities:

> ...the crimes and delicts to which organized punishments are attached never leave the organs charged with suppressing them indifferent. Whether the city be great or small, whether society be dense or not, magistrates do not leave the criminal or delinquent go unpunished. (Durkheim 1960 301)

Durkheim continues by stating that some of the traditional behaviors that will erode or extinguish are likely to be minor, or to violate the collective conscience in less intense ways than does crime (1960 301).

Therefore, nowhere does Durkheim say explicitly or even imply that the individual variability that occurs as societies change will result specifically in crime or even deviance. Looking at his overall argument, it would not have been wise to do so, for he argues that the newer kind of solidarity is overall a stronger bond than the older type.

Third, there is the issue whether or not an abnormal form of the division of labor, an anomic form, might lead to crime. In this abnormal form, Durkheim refers mostly to the economic realm. Small product markets merge into larger ones, but because the producer has much less contact with buyers in this new contingency, he cannot "see" the limitations or boundaries of his market, and his production level becomes unbridled and unregulated (1960 370).

Moreover, large businesses may advance at such an unpredictable, successful rate that for a while there is a kind of chaos in the marketplace that is very unsettling to the worker. The long standing rules of workplace conduct seem not to apply in such situations. Machines replace men; manufacturing replaces hand-work; the worker is regimented, separated from his family throughout the day and estranged from his employer when not working (Durkheim 1960 370). Would this stress push people over the edge into deviant conduct or even crime? In this chapter, the word crime does not appear. Nowhere is there any suggestion at all that this form of the division of labor creates crime or even deviancy. Even if it did, it would not much concern Durkheim as he considered the anomic division of labor to be an abnormal, tempo-

rary condition.

Finally, there is the issue of whether or not the anomic period of the economic markets opens a window in which deviant or criminal conduct may develop. Here, the lag in time that it takes for organic solidarity to completely form itself is the issue, because it is during this lag time that the window of opportunity for crime to develop may appear.

Again, the context of Durkheim's writing is the key. This discussion appears in the conclusion to the work, where Durkheim not only sums up the basic points of Books I and II, where the functions, causes and conditions of the division of labor are spelled out, but also tries to reconcile those books with Book III, where the abnormal forms are mentioned. Going back to basics, he argues that the division of labor is a moral phenomenon. He reemphasizes that both mechanical and organic solidarity have moral value, in fact, morality is the totality of the conditions of social solidarity, regardless of type. The division of labor can give rise to solidarity only if it is moral and just. Without being specific as to any particular abnormal form of the division of labor, Durkheim observes:

> It has been said with justice that morality...is going through a real crisis. What precedes can help us to understand the nature and causes of this sick condition. Profound changes have been produced in the structure of our societies in a very short time... Accordingly, the morality which corresponds to this (segmental) social type has regressed but without another developing quickly enough to fill the ground that the first left vacant in our consciences...the functions which have been disrupted in the course of the upheaval have not had the time to adjust themselves to one another... (1960 408)

Durkheim makes the case that the abnormal forms are temporary, "sick" conditions, and by doing so, expressed confidence that they can be effectively neutralized at some future time. Note in addition that nowhere in this discussion does Durkheim say that deviancy or crime is the expected outcome of this crisis in morality.

Durkheim's extended discussion of crime in *Rules of Sociological Method* (1958) begins with a point discussed in *Division of Labor*: that crime is present not only in the majority of societies of one particular species but in all societies of all types. There is no society that is not confronted with the problem of criminality. Its form changes; the acts thus characterized are not the same everywhere; but, everywhere and always, there have been people who have behaved in such a way as to draw upon themselves penal repression. The basic point being made is that crime is a normal phenomenon. It is a general phenomenon that is bound up with the general conditions of collective life everywhere. It appears in all human societies. Though crime may be declining in some locales, it is increasing in others. A decline somewhere within a geographic boundary does not mean that crime in general is decreasing (Durkheim 1958 64-66).

At this juncture in *Rules*, Durkheim cites some statistics that appear at least on the surface to contradict arguments made in *Division of Labor*. He notes that from the beginning of the nineteenth century, European statistics indicate a marked increase in rates of criminality; they had everywhere increased - in France by 300 percent (1958 66). However, the context of this statement is very important. He is trying to demonstrate that the decline of crime in one specific place should not be construed as a general decline, because offsetting the decline are rates that are increasing elsewhere, namely France.

The larger parameter of this argument is the issue of the definition of normal and pathological social facts, and the differences between the two. In this narrative he is trying to make the case for crime as a normal social fact. Thus, the observation that crime is everywhere and that it is increasing is made within the context of demonstrating the generality or the normality of crime, based upon its general appearance in the collective life of all societies. The more crime the better, in making Durkheim's case; also, the more crime the more it is a regular pattern or persistent part of the social structure. The main contrast he is trying to draw here is with the arguments of criminologists of his time, such as Garafalo, who appeared to assume as a basic presupposition that crime is an abnormal phenomenon.

In a footnote to a later paragraph (1958 75), Durkheim clarifies what he meant about the increase of crime in France, and more generally, in Europe. Here, he says that the increase in crime in the nineteenth century

Table 1: Durkheim on Crime and Societal Development

I. *The Division of Labor in Society* (1960)
- A. Crime is an act that offends the strong, well-defined states of the collective consciousness (pp. 79-80).
- B. Such states are fewer now than in the past, and the number decreases more as societies approximate the modern type (pp. 152-153).
- C. A large number of crime types have disappeared over time (pp. 154-156).
- D. No new types of crime have arisen (p. 164).
- E. Increasing rates of suicide that accompany development demonstrate a lowering of the average happiness level of the population as well as a weakening of public health (pp. 237-249).
- F. Individual variations that advance as the segmental type recedes are minor infractions not likely to be crime (pp. 287-301).
- G. Common conscience will be enfeebled but will not die out (p. 301).
- H. Anomie in the economy contributes to stress, but not necessarily deviancy or crime (p. 370).
- I. Increase in crime not necessarily a result of inadequate development of organic solidarity (p. 408).

II. *Rules of Sociological Method* (1958)
- A. Crime is a normal pheonmenon (pp. 64-66).
- B. Increases in crime in one place likely offset by decreases elsewhere (p. 66).
- C. Difficult to tell if rapid increases in crime are normal or not; more study is needed (p. 75).

III. *Suicide* (1951a)
- A. Distinct social contexts encouraged suicide, anomie is only one of them (pp. 152-276).
- B. No positive correlation exists between suicide and crimes against property (pp. 338-339).
- C. No positive correlation exists between suicide and homicide (pp. 339-360).
- D. A tentative and exceptional link between suicide and homicide exists in the most economically advanced areas (p. 358).
- E. Suicide not a normal phenomena, nor is the rapid increase in suicide in Europe (pp. 361-392).

was not a normal phenomenon at all, and refers the reader to his book, *Suicide*, where certain social facts he uncovered show the increase in crime to be morbid and not normal. Following up on this, I found in *Suicide* a general discussion of the relationship between suicide and crime. Although there is no clear relationship between the two, there is embedded in the discussion the brief mention of a rapid rise in homicides in areas where economic development is most pronounced and a condition of "acute anomy" has settled in (Durkheim 1951a 358). In this case the increase in that specific kind of crime is morbid.

Notice that the conversation in Chapter 3 of *Rules*, where the aforementioned footnote appears, is along a similar line: it is about whether the *increase* in the crime is normal or abnormal. That is a different matter altogether and far different than the context of trying to prove normalcy. In proving normalcy, the more that Durkheim can show that crime exists, and the more consistent it is, the better. Increases in crime do not detract, but rather add to his argument. The increases simply demonstrate that crime is an important part of collective life.

Shifting his attention now to the issue of the normalcy of the *increase* of crime in Europe, Durkheim says in the footnote that it might happen that an increase of certain forms of criminality would be normal, "for each state of civilization has its own criminality. But on this, one can only formulate hypotheses" (Durkheim 1958 75). He is saying, then, that he could not say for sure if the increase of crime in France or Europe is normal or not; that it would depend upon careful study and examination of each country's situation and stage of evolutionary development, and that to speculate at present would be hypothetical.

In *Suicide*, as the title suggests, Durkheim (1951a) considers a fairly consistent and stable form of deviancy in late 19th century Europe. Suicide had been against the law at one time, but by the time of Durkheim's writing of the book, it was deviant behavior but for the most part no longer considered crimi-

nal. This deviancy met the criterion of a social fact and was not considered an immoral act. By looking at rates of suicide instead of looking at suicide as an individual problem and further by not judging the morality of the act, Durkheim's approach differs with much that was written by psychologists and psychiatrists of his era (1951a 41-81).

There were distinct social contexts that encouraged suicide, according to Durkheim's analysis. One was anomie - the sudden, abrupt changes in the society that rendered society a poor regulator of human conduct. In a condition of anomie, the rules guiding normal conduct are disrupted. Especially in the economic sphere, chronic anomie led to virtually unregulated markets and opportunities for wealth, and stresses of sudden success or failure may lead to suicide. Another form is egoistic suicide, where there is less than adequate integration of the individual into family life and society in general. A third type is called altruistic, where there is comparatively greater integration of the individual in society, as in the lower societies. Last, there is fatalistic suicide, where there are far too many norms for the individual to successfully follow (Durkheim 1951a 152-276).

Though not passing moral judgment upon suicide, Durkheim was not prepared at all to declare suicide a normal social phenomenon. Nor did he, after considerable careful study, determine that the increase in rates of suicide in Europe were normal. Here, he is clearly more prepared to pass judgment on the normality or morbidity of the increase in suicide, mostly because of the careful book length study that he gave the subject matter. Recall that he declined to comment on rapid increases of crime in *Division of Labor*, citing the need for further study.

However, he did not find any kind of general linkage between suicide and crime in the form of a consistent positive correlation between the two. There was no relationship between suicide and crimes against property. Comparing rates of suicide and homicide, he found that the two are generally inversely related to one another. The trend was so marked that Durkheim commented that in countries "where homicide is very common it confers a sort of immunity against suicide" (1951a 351). One of the few exceptions to this trend: there was a link of sorts between homicide rates and suicide rates in the most economically advanced areas (1951a 358), but this is a very small and basically insignificant discussion within a much larger one that points to little or no positive relationship between suicide and other forms of crime. Thus, Durkheim implies that a rate of suicide should not be considered a proxy for homicide rates or for any other form of crime. The converse would also hold true: homicide rates could not proxy for suicide rates or other forms of deviancy.

Table 1 provides a summary of this section. Nowhere in any of the three classic works reviewed does Durkheim state unequivocally that the division of labor leads to increased rates of crime. Most of his argument appears to suggest the opposite, although the issue is very complex. Durkheim believed crime and societal development to be closely intertwined. As societies develop, the nature of social solidarity changes as well as the nature of law. He notes that the average intensity and degree of determinateness of collective states of consciousness that demand an individual be punished diminishes as societies develop; also, that a large number of criminological types have disappeared over time without being replaced. These comments suggest or imply a net decline in crime, although nowhere does Durkheim make such a statement on his own. He also fails to link high suicide rates, increased opportunities for "individual variation" or an anomic form of the division of labor with increases in crime. The complexity of the issue of crime rates, however, is exposed in *Rules*, where Durkheim notes that increasing crime in France and, more generally, Europe (together with evidence that crime has existed in all societies and epochs) could be considered evidence for the normality of crime, i.e., for its patterned, regular occurrence in collective life; yet, whether the *increase* of crime in Europe, by itself, or in any given country in Europe was normal or abnormal would need to wait for further careful evaluation of that society and its stage of evolutionary development. Finally, in *Suicide*, Durkheim sees hardly any link between suicide and crime in general. There is a link between homicide and suicide in the most advanced countries. This is an exception and not the rule. He does acknowledge as well that the overall increase in suicides in Europe in the nineteenth century is morbid. Thus, he is suggesting that anomy may con-

Table 2: Linkages to Durkheim's Classic Work on Crime and Societal Development by Contemporary Comparative Criminologists

Linkage	Representative Theorists	Citation to Durkheim	Comments
Modernization Theory	Clinard & Abbott (1973)	Durkheim (1958)	Uses method but not theory of Durkheim
	Shelley (1981)	Lunden (1972)	Relies upon Lunden's Summary of Durkheim
	Neumann & Berger (1988)	Durkheim (1933, 1950)	Relied more on Shelley than on Durkheim
	Arthur (1991)	Durkheim (1951b)	Argument not based on Durkheim
	Bennett (1991)	Durkheim (1964)	Argument not based on Durkheim
	Bennett et al (1997)	Durkheim (1964)	Argument not based on Durkheim
Reinterpretations of Durkheim's Work	Webb (1972)	Durkheim (1933)	Rejects Durkheim's definition of crime; relies upon own interpretation
	Messner (1982)	Durkheim (1964)	The study is based on Giddens' reinterpretation
	Krohn (1978)	Durkheim (1953)	Uses interpretations based on secondary sources

tribute to abnormal increases in suicide in certain specific areas and that this may also contribute to homicide, but on an exception basis. A long discussion of the relationship between crime and suicide yields basically no relationship between the two. Durkheim does not say explicitly or recommend anywhere that a suicide rate could proxy for crime rates, nor is the converse of this statement true.

ARGUMENTS OF THE DURKHEIMIAN COMPARATIVE CRIMINOLOGISTS

Table 2 summarizes the analysis of the Durkheimian comparative criminology literature. Here we are tracing out the roots of the theoretical arguments put forth by scholars of the Durkheimian school. A writer was considered Durkheimian if he/she was mentioned in at least one comparative criminology literature review as having advocated or tested a Durkheimian theory, and an examination of the theoretical orientation of that author shows at least one reference to Durkheim or his classic works on crime and societal development. Having passed this hurdle, more questions were asked: How did they cite Durkheim and how did they use his writings to justify their research, or to provide a theoretical orientation for the research? We are not concerned with the actual empirical research results and whether they supported or failed to support a Durkheimian point of view. Nor are we concerned about the theoretical adequacy or inadequacy of Durkheim's writings for model building in comparative criminology.

There were two ways that these Durkheim-inspired criminologists managed to link themselves to Durkheim's classic works. The first was through the development of a new theory called Modernization Theory that had tenuous links at best to Durkheim's classic works. The second was through various reinterpretations of Durkheim's classic works.

Modernization Theory

The roots of modernization theory are often traced to the groundbreaking work of Clinard and Abbott (1973). The authors begin their cross cultural study of crime with a straightforward statement that in the lesser developed countries, a sure sign of a nation's ongoing development would be its increasing crime rate. The lesser developed countries of the Third World appeared to be going through the same kinds of transitions that led to increases in crime in Europe during the 19th century. These countries had been mostly ignored within criminology before Clinard and Abbott's book, thus the book fills a huge void in the research literature. Unexpectedly, the authors include no references to Durkheim's work on crime and societal development. There is a reference to *Rules of Sociological Method* because the comparative sociological method that Durkheim advocated in that book is the same method

that Clinard and Abbott use in their study:

> To obtain the objective of comparative criminological theory research should proceed, according to Durkheim's criteria of a comparative sociology, first in a single culture at one point in time, such as the United States, second, in societies generally alike, such as many countries in Europe which have similar cultural, economic, and technological conditions, and third, after proper modification, tested on completely dissimilar societies, yet sharing some common features such as those of many less developed countries. (Clinard & Abbott 1973 2)

Shelley's (1981) work is the most widely recognized as the preeminent statement of the modernization theory. She elaborated upon some of the themes drawn out by Clinard and Abbott, and an early chapter in her book has become a classic statement of modernization theory. She contends that youth in the developing countries, as they migrate to urban centers to escape economically deficient rural areas, break the traditional personal, family and community ties of a mechanical form of social integration. Social controls, both formal and especially informal, weaken (if not disappear) and deviant and criminal behavior increases. This theory became very influential in comparative criminology and many scholars subsequently adopted it as a theoretical perspective.

Shelley's ideas about crime and societal development follow Durkheim's closely at some junctures. Durkheim did in fact argue that, especially for the young, the transition to urban life in a more organized society would reduce down the influence of traditional ways upon those individuals. He fell well short, however, of explicitly stating that increased deviancy and/or crime would be the ultimate result of this process. So where did Shelley connect with the idea that deviancy or crime would be the outcome of the modernization process? Here is a quotation from her work (1981 5-6):

> When society is in a state of rapid transition, the rules of society break down and people no longer can appraise their situation. Ambition was perpetually stimulated but never satisfied. This condition Durkheim called "acute anomie." Chronic anomie occurs when overwhelming importance is attached to economic progress as the supreme goal in and of itself and secondary consideration is given to the regulation of human conduct and the control of individual ambition. These conditions which prevailed in the nineteenth century contributed significantly to the variety of social problems observed in that society.

Shelley's footnoted reference for this passage is Walter Lunden's biography of Durkheim that appeared in Hermann Mannheim's *Pioneers in Criminology* (1972). Lunden was a distinguished professor of criminal justice at Iowa State University and his opinion carried much weight in the criminological community, but the interpretation and emphasis given to Durkheim's work is clearly his own emphasis, and this was picked up by Shelley. Durkheim did mention acute anomy in *Suicide*, but it was an abnormal condition that was well outside the major trend that Durkheim reported. It was correlated with both homicide and suicide, but it was a minor exception to the overall trend of no relationship at all between suicide and homicide. Durkheim mentioned chronic anomie as well, also in *Suicide*, but the background discussion here was trying to explain the social contexts that fed the fairly consistent rates of suicide in Europe. It was only one social context–the one producing anomic suicide-among many he identified. By definition the word chronic means "of long duration," and not a permanent condition. Further, as we've seen, Durkheim does not suggest anywhere or imply in any of his works that a rate of suicide is a proxy for a rate of crime or any other kind of deviancy. Thus to argue that a society's rapid transition and change *must* lead to crime and other social problems is a generalization based upon very sparse evidence.

Neumann and Berger (1988) were among the first to explicitly state the debt owed by modernization theory to Durkheim's work, and they called the perspective that Clinard, Abbott, and Shelley had generated "Durkheimian-Modernization Theory." The authors also constructed some alternative and competing theories that could be tested with cross cultural data, the purpose being to discern which model had the best empirical support from the data.

As Neumann and Berger (1988) present

Durkheimian-Modernization theory, they made numerous references to Durkheim (1933, 1950) as well as to Clinard and Abbott (1973) and Shelley (1981). They recognize, as well, several other scholars who were influenced by these writers or who independently argued along similar lines. In the final analysis, however, the theory presented is based more on Modernization theory than on Durkheim, as the following quotations suggest:

> The diffusion of modern norms and values disrupts the equilibrium of traditional societies and breaks down the extended family, local community ties, sacred-religious institutions, traditional beliefs, and ascribed status relations. A complex division of labor weakens the collective consciousness, creates a growing differentiation among people, and enables individuals to challenge cultural values and social rules. (Neumann & Berger 1988 282)

> The transition from traditional to modern society creates a temporary disequilibrium... weakening informal social controls and traditional normative restraints on criminal impulses. Unless new social controls and norms develop, modern individualism and the social conflict associated with growing cultural heterogeneity increase crime. (Neumann & Berger 1988 282)

The first sentence of the first quotation resonates with Shelley's ideas; the second sentence is an effort to join Shelley with Durkheim. The second sentence is not reflective of Durkheim's views at the point where it states that (there is) "a growing differentiation among people, (that) enables individuals to challenge cultural values and social rules". Durkheim fell well short of saying this, so this has to be Lunden (1972) or another scholar who is really speaking here.

In the second quotation, (again an effort in joining Shelley to Durkheim) the second sentence is not an argument that Durkheim made in the three classic works that we reviewed earlier.

Arthur (1991), like Neumann and Berger, was concerned with testing the link between development and crime that is proposed in modernization theory with data from Africa. As he states in his paper, modernization theory emphasizes the influence of social structural changes such as industrialization, rapid urbanization, breakdown in familial relations, increased socioeconomic development, and population growth on criminal behavior. His general approach appears to be that of Shelley (1981) although phrased a bit differently. Perhaps influenced by Neumann and Berger's (1988) elaboration of a "Durkheimian-Modernization" approach, Arthur sees the need to link his work both to Shelley and to Durkheim. The links to Shelley are obvious enough to readers of the paper; however, the link to Durkheim is somewhat tenuous, based upon one sentence:

> According to Durkheim, dislocations in society brought about by increasing economic activity weaken the effectiveness of norms and rules, thus leading to anomie and deviant conduct. (Arthur 1991 500-501)

Arthur's reference here is to a 1951 edition of *Division of Labor*. I could not locate this particular edition, but it appears to be one of the many reprints of the 1933 edition and as such is essentially the same as the basic text I used to gather Durkheim's original views (Durkheim 1960). The section that Arthur appears to be referencing is the chapter on the anomic division of labor. As we've seen, anomie in the economic realm was acknowledged but nowhere was there a statement made to indicate that deviant conduct would necessarily be the result.

Richard Bennett gained a reputation in the 1990s for his statistically sophisticated tests of theoretical models utilizing cross-national data. In 1991 he weighed in with his own test of modernization theory, with data from over 40 countries in differing stages of development. His summary of modernization theory:

> ...with growth in size and density societies evolve more complex divisions of labor. This complexity transforms the dominant mode of social integration from mechanical solidarity with collective conscience to organic solidarity. Durkheim suggests that when development of normative systems attendant to organic solidarity lags behind the division of labor, an abnormal condition–anomie–exists within which variation and innovation take place, including deviance and crime. (Bennett 1991 344)

The author's reference to Durkheim in this quotation is to the 1964 edition of *Division of Labor*. Bennett is referring here to the section near the end of the book where Durkheim discusses the "moral crisis" of the modern world and how organic solidarity does in fact, in abnormal conditions, lag behind and not develop properly. However, as mentioned earlier, there is no suggestion on Durkheim's part that deviance and/or crime will absolutely be the result.

The Durkheimian perspective continues to be an important perspective today. Bennett, Shields and Daniels (1997) recently found it to be an important perspective to put to the test with data from three Caribbean nations. The explanation of Durkheim's perspective, however, has not changed much — in fact, it is expressed in just about the same way as in Bennett's 1991 paper.

Reinterpretations of Durkheim

Even before modernization theory took root in comparative criminology, scholars were contemplating the usefulness of Durkheim's work for comparative studies of crime. Webb's (1972) study utilizing American data is vitally important because it tests a sophisticated Durkheimian model. Even though cross-national data are not employed, I discuss the study here because Webb is a cross cultural sociologist based in New Zealand, and the theoretical section of the paper demonstrates a thorough reading of Durkheim's work on crime and societal development.

Webb (1972) purports to provide an empirical examination of what he calls an "unsubstantiated but generally accepted proposition" found in Durhkheim's *Division of Labor*: that deviance or crime will increase concomitant with an increasing division of labor. While various interpreters of Durkheim's work have insisted that Webb's proposition is true, there is no doubt at all, based upon the analysis of Durkheim's original views in *Division of Labor*, above, that Durkheim never argued this. Webb, to his credit, admits as much in a footnote:

> Nowhere in the *Division of Labor* does Durkheim explicitly indicate that an increased division of labor or differentiation leads to a rise in the rate of crime. (Webb 1972 644)

The lengthy footnote continues:

> His definition of crime, of course, precluded such a conclusion for he conceived of crime as actions which offend strongly defined states of the collective or common conscience, as represented in repressive law, and the violation of which engenders punishment rather than restitution...Furthermore, the collective conscience loses its intensity and diminishes as the society becomes more functionally integrated and thus, by definition, there would be less crime with increased differentiation. (Webb 1972 644)

Thus far, Webb is remarkably in line with what Durkheim wrote. Struggling, however, to justify the main theoretical argument of his paper, Webb continues the footnote:

> Thus, if we extend these arguments to their logical conclusion, in time nothing will offend the collective conscience or else it will cease to exist and there will be no crime. (1972 645)

As we've demonstrated, this is not what Durkheim said. He said the collective conscience would be enfeebled but that it would not die out. It does not retreat entirely, and at least a portion of it remains and will always remain. Durkheim wrote that even among the exceptionally well behaved, if the group had the power and authority to punish, there would be some kind of crime.

Webb concludes the footnote by saying that Durkheim suffered logical flaws in his classic work. Durkheim was wrong about crime and its relationship to societal development. Crime was increasing rapidly in Europe at just the time he had hinted that it might be decreasing. Durkheim's definition of crime is the culprit: if only the master theorist had defined crime as a violation of law, then he would have been all right, as specialty laws were increasing and would continue to increase with societal evolution. Facing a theoretical dead end, Webb chooses to focus on Durkheim's supposed view that individual variation and divergent tendencies would increase with societal differentiation. He chooses to operationalize these various divergent tendencies as deviancies and specifically as crime rates. This, of course, is something Durkheim himself would not have allowed, as implied from his writing in *Suicide*. Moreover, individual variation and di-

vergent tendencies did not necessarily mean more crime. In fact, Durkheim does not really tell us if there would be more crime. The hint he provides is that the behavioral infractions that would occur as societies become more organized would most likely be minor, but not criminal.

Stephen Messner's (1982) project is similar to Webb's, as it is an effort to formulate and test a Durkheimian model of societal development and crime. Messner is trying to test a link between development and homicide with cross-national data from 50 countries. Messner concedes up front that the "Durkheimian" model he is testing does not follow closely the writings of Durkheim because it is heavily influenced by a reinterpretation of Durkheim offered by Giddens (1971). Giddens argued forcefully against a conservative interpretation of Durkheim's thought and proceeded to draw out the implications of Durkheim's writings for political sociology.

Messner, like Webb, comes to the proper conclusion after reading Durkheim: there is no good reason to anticipate a significant association between development and crime on the basis of arguments present in *Division of Labor*. This confirms the arguments made in this paper. Messner then proceeds with Giddens' reinterpretation, which stresses the role of moral individualism in the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity. Giddens' argument is that as society becomes more developed, there is a shift in value orientations in the direction of greater moral individualism. The collective conscience no longer completely envelopes individual consciousness, thereby undercutting the effectiveness of mechanical solidarity. Messner concludes that this contributes to an increase in serious criminality (1982 229). This statement is informed by Gidden's reinterpretation, and is not something that Durkheim said.

Krohn's (1978) objective was to use Durkheim's theory of the emergence of the division of labor as a model by which the variance in international crime rates could be explained, and thus is trying to reach the same goal as Messner. Krohn argues that Durkheim recognized, in his later works, the possibility that a chronic state of anomie could occur concomitant with industrialization, and that this would produce an increase in the crime rate:

> Durkheim suggested that normally the emerging division of labor would produce an organic solidarity based on the functional interdependence demanded by the evolving forms of production. But he also recognized that the evolution to organic solidarity did not proceed rapidly or uniformly. He envisioned two situations in which the division of labor would not naturally elicit organic solidarity. One was an abnormal condition in which the evolution of the division of labor was proceeding adequately, but the expected concomitant evolution of a normative system appropriate for the new modes of production was lagging behind. The need for a normative system appropriate for the emerging division of labor stems directly from the fact that the division of labor increases individual variation and innovation. (Krohn 1978 655-656)

Krohn references the 1953 edition of *Division of Labor* which appears to be one of the many reprints of the 1933 edition. The part of the book he is referring to, as far as I can tell, is the one referring to "individual variations" that may occur with the enfeebling of the common conscience. Unfortunately, there is no necessary need, based on Durkheim's writings, to believe that this is an absolute precursor to deviancy or to criminal conduct. As for anomie becoming a "chronic" state of industrial society, Krohn draws on secondary sources (Nisbet 1965; Gouldner 1962; Parsons 1937; Zeitlin 1968).

With all due respect to the scholars mentioned, these are reinterpretations of Durkheim and not Durkheim's views. Earlier, we emphasized that Durkheim believed that anomie, though chronic, was not a permanent condition. It was one of many conditions feeding the stream of fairly consistent suicide rates. The rates he examined, though substantial and consistent, did not qualify as a normal social fact. Suicide was an abnormal condition. Only in the most exceptional of circumstances was anomie related to abnormally high suicide or homicide rates.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the question posed at the beginning – are the theoretical arguments of the comparative criminologists based upon Durkheim's classic work, or not – the question must be answered resoundingly in the negative. The arguments constructed by the

criminologists are not based upon Durkheim's classic writings about crime and societal development. Of all the writers reviewed, Webb (1972) gave the most careful reading and study to Durkheim's work and really did try to understand the master's work. Unfortunately his ultimate decision was to conclude that Durkheim had erred in his definition of crime and had made other logical missteps as well.

My purpose in writing this paper was not to set up a "straw man" situation where an "accurate" or "correct" reading of Durkheim's writings is held up as an impossible standard which scholars are then criticized for not reaching. Durkheim's writings are sufficiently complex that even among the great contemporary theorists there are debates about what he really meant. Let me be clear about this: I am not trying to negate the valuable efforts of the Durkheimians, who have been able to advance our knowledge of comparative criminology in spite of not getting the original concepts exactly right. For instance, Clinard and Abbott's (1973) book was an important work for future comparative studies. It was enhanced by the use of Durkheim's method although it was not based upon Durkheim's writings on crime and societal development. Though many of its assertions have been qualified by subsequent research, it successfully advanced the knowledge base of comparative criminology. Much the same could be said of Shelley, Webb, Messner, Krohn, and all the others studied here. These works are landmarks in their own right and often quoted and should continue to be quoted.

Just as healthy skepticism was evident early in this paper about the theoretical orientations of the comparative criminologists, a similarly critical view could be taken of the overall objective of this paper. What difference does it make whether the Durkheimians accurately portray the master's writings as long as the basic intellectual tradition of the work can be traced backwards to him? Does it really matter whether scholars borrowed incorrectly from the master works? Or more generally, is the paper "much ado about nothing" or "angels dancing upon the head of a pin" with respect the historical accuracy of the criminologists in quoting Durkheim's work?

I cannot disagree more. This paper is about intellectual honesty, integrity, and tradition. Having survived a rigorous doctoral training in social theory that included considerable reading of the original master works of sociological theory, I feel that it is best to read the original sources and have an appreciation for what the giants of the field actually meant by such concepts as collective conscience, crime, or anomie, or the division of labor. In fact, understanding the original work, logically, is a prerequisite for a full appreciation and understanding of the revision or reinterpretation of Durkheim's work by such greats as Nisbet, Gouldner, Zeitlin, and Parsons.

Again, I am not criticizing the method or motives of scholars of the Durkheimian school of comparative criminology here. I am much more concerned with the implications of what they have done for the current and future generations of sociology students. Perhaps I fear most an entire generation of sociologists reared on secondary sources, or even worse, Internet sources of questionable quality. They might rely more on these than on the classic works, believing - as Webb and the others did - that Durkheim's work is no longer relevant to today's world, or needs serious adjustment before it can be relevant. These individual students, in bypassing Durkheim for newer voices, may end up with little or no understanding of the master works beyond the level of rote memorization. By so doing, they will have forsaken a rich theoretical heritage. It is not a heritage they *must* utilize in their careers, but it is one that they should embrace as part of their complete study of the field of sociology. At worst, I fear that, in following the trail of secondary sources onward into projects of social research, student hypotheses might be constructed upon what they fully think is a Durkheimian base, but what is actually a kind of junk science far removed from the original masters. An effort to decrease, ward off or prevent this scenario from occurring was my motive in writing the paper. It is in this spirit that the paper was written.

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