

S E T H A B R U T Y N

Toward a General Theory of Anomie
The Social Psychology of Disintegration

Abstract

Though anomie is one of sociology's most unique conceptual contributions, its progenitor, Emile Durkheim, was notably ambiguous about its meaning. Consequently, its use in contemporary sociology has varied wildly. In part, the confusion surrounding anomie stems from Durkheim's insistence that it is *caused* by *deregulation*, which has resisted operationalization. Nevertheless, careful consideration of the "four faces" of anomie most prominent in the sociological canon—that is, (1) the anomic division of labor, (2) anomic suicide, (3) Mertonian strain, and (4) the micro-level symbolic-cultural versions—reveals that disruption and disintegration, rather than deregulation, are the common threads woven through each. Drawing from this insight, a new theoretical conceptualization for anomie is offered that defines it as (a) a social psychological force operating at both the (b) individual- or "meso"/corporate unit-level of social reality that results from (c) chronic or acute *disruptions* that, in turn, generate (d) real or imagined disintegrative pressures. Furthermore, disruptions are not only predicated on the real or imagined loss of social ties (*dissolution*), but also on the real or imagined loss of attachment to a coherent social reality (*disjunction*) and/or physical space (*dislocation*). This recalibration allows anomie to enter into deeper dialogue with a wide range of other phenomena that may in fact share some overlapping elements with anomie related to the pain of potentially losing cherished social relationships and the motivation toward self-harm, anti-social *and* even pro-social behaviors to escape this social pain.

Keywords: Anomie; Durkheim; Disintegration; Shame; Sociological Theory.

Introduction

A N O M I E I S, arguably, "one of the few words, maybe the only one [...] which belongs to the sociological tribe," [Besnard 1988: 91-92]

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and also an exemplar of sociology's tendency towards conceptual confusion and contradiction. It was used in different ways in the same works by its first proponent, Emile Durkheim [for more detailed reviews, see Lukes 1977; Besnard 1987; Orrù 1987; Deflem 2015]. A slightly different version became crystallized in the sociological imagination by American sociologist, Robert Merton [Marwah and Deflem 2006] and it remains inconsistently measured in empirical research [cf. Pope 1976; Breault 1994]. Generally speaking, the most conventional definition, deregulation as indicated by normlessness, was made famous by Parsons [1951], but ultimately served his theoretical interests more than it contributed to the theoretical and empirical utility of the concept.

At risk of being another paper revisiting an old concept, this article seeks to offer a more robust, precise conceptualization of anomie. To be sure, the approach is not entirely my own, but rather builds on insights drawn from a range of sources. First, the basic argument rests on an idea first made clear by Barclay Johnson [1965], but which has currency among many others: integration is the central dimension of Durkheim's life's work and, therefore, *disintegration* is the process, in Lukes' [1977] sentiments, that Durkheim feared the most. Second, in a set of recent theoretical papers, Abrutyn and Mueller [2014, 2016, 2018] provide some key theoretical points from which this paper extends and develops further: the association of certain emotions with anomie—particularly shame, the role disruptions may play in both leading to shame and anomie, and the centrality of more general social psychological and cultural dynamics. Third, the ideas set forth below build on a burgeoning area of sociology focused on collective trauma [Erikson 1978; Abrutyn 2015; Hutchinson and Bleiker 2008]. The threads drawn between disintegration, the socioemotional side of anomie, and the notion of collective or social trauma offer a deeper, clearer window into how we can conceptualize anomie more robustly.

In short, anomie is the consequence of *disruptions* that, in reality or imagination, threaten or actually *disintegrate* social bonds; it is the *social pain* felt by individuals or collectives in the face of losing these cherished bonds between each other, to social reality, and/or to physical anchorages, and the attribution of full or partial blame for these losses. While it does build on the aforementioned literatures, the newness of the approach and its ultimate contribution lies in (1) elucidation of what I term the “four faces” of anomie, (2) synthesis of a set of common threads found across all four disparate usages with various insights drawn from other subfields in sociology, (3) emphasis

on the *prosocial, proactive, motivational* aspect of anomie, and (4) delineation of a formal theory of anomie. In doing so, the concept of anomie is extended—as intended by Durkheim—beyond its narrow legacy as a motivator of suicide and towards a clearer, broader, and more robustly theorized force capable of motivating a wide range of behaviors, attitudes, and emotions.

The four faces of anomie as foundations

The predecessor: Durkheim's the division of labor

Though less commonly drawn upon, the term *anomie* predates Durkheim's *Suicide* and actually appears in his first great work, *The Division of Labor in Society* [(1893) 1997]. There, Durkheim's suggests (1) in heterogeneous and complex societies, pressures for greater specialization into occupations and professions create high levels of interdependence and, thus, solidarity, but (2) *overspecialization* risks societal disintegration. If society is an organism, then an anomic division of labor is a condition in which the parts become isolated from each other such that interdependence weakens. Boundaries, gatekeepers, and media generate highly different lifestyles, embodied culture, and social reality that effectively block interaction between individuals [Abrutyn 2014]. In short, Durkheim first imagines anomie in functionalist terms: growth in size generates heterogeneity in function that *disrupts* old mechanisms of integration, causing increasing problems in coordination, production and distribution and, ultimately, control. Consequently, an anomic division of labor is characterized by constant disintegrative pressure that erodes the ties between groups and people.

Though less salient in contemporary sociology, for a time, mid-century American sociology was interested in this strand of anomie; and, its methodological decisions prove instructive. Unlike Durkheim who focuses his theoretical lens on society *sui generis*, the level of analysis shifts to the disintegration of “community” in the face of urban and economic disruption. Individuals in cities become highly integrated into their families and churches, but detached from other segments of the community [Poblete and Odea 1960]. Vertical differentiation in factories creates distinctive class patterns and boundary maintenance [Powell 1962]. Put in familiar Durkheimian

terms, any collective conscience that bridges these smaller groups is likely trumped by conflicts in interests over resources while collective rituals disappear altogether. In a sense, then, diversity—whether occupational, class-based, or ethnic/racial—threatens the bonds that allow societies to make and carry out collective-binding decisions.

The conventional face

Durkheim and Deregulation. It was Durkheim's [(1897) 1951] opinion that humans, by their nature, had needs and desires that necessitated regulation. He wrote: "Unlimited desires are insatiable by definition and insatiability is rightly considered a sign of morbidity... Inextinguishable thirst is constantly renewed torture [and, thus], to pursue a goal which is by definition unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness" [Durkheim (1897) 1951: 248]. This assumption led him to hypothesize that rapid changes in social structure, like those caused by an economic boom or bust, will cause suicide rates to rapidly rise as well. Presumably, these rapid changes made a society anomic and these rates were indicators of this social pathology. Of all the faces, Durkheim's *Suicide* deserves the most scrutiny given its status as the "conventional" conceptual frame for understanding anomie.

Regulation or Integration? Previous examinations of Durkheim's thesis that regulation (anomie) and integration (egoism) are distinct, analytically *and* empirically, have not been very successful [Pope 1976; Breault 1994]. Theoretical scrutiny has also challenged this wisdom, leading some to argue that there is perhaps only one dimension (integration) related to suicide [Johnson 1965]. Consider some of the dilemmas. Durkheim's use of regulation explicitly refers to clarity and rigidity in moral guidance to prevent "unlimited desires." But his examples do not always fit this criteria well. Both economic booms and busts should rapidly change the normative structure of society. However when we turn to the individual-level, the way in which these two disruptive events contribute to people's suicide challenges Durkheim's accepted wisdom. Booms, on the one hand, may in fact create a class of people whose aspirations are suddenly unbridled. Wealthy, in a new class with relatively unlimited economic power, and feeling pressure to maintain, if not increase, their wealth, anomie as we typically characterize it, makes sense. Recessions, on the other hand, make less sense. Bankruptcies,

widespread unemployment, and unwieldy inflation all lead to precisely the opposite: sudden circumscription of once-attainable desires as a growing number of dispossessed emerge. If anything, busts are indicative of fatalistic, or over-regulated, suicides. Ironically, booms have found little correlation with suicide rates growing, while busts have found much more consistent evidence. Either way, if anomie is related to unlimited desires, it fails as an explanatory tool for the relationship between recessions and suicides, unless we continue to conceptualize society as anomic and, therefore, commit an ecological fallacy.

If, however, anomie was not coupled with regulation, it might be easier to interpret the economic example, as well as make sense of how and why disruptive events, like divorce, can make people vulnerable to suicidality. This shift would preclude the need to speculate about human nature, about healthy or unhealthy aspirations, and about how societies are sick. Rather than unregulated aspirations, a more proximate consequence of divorce or job loss might be the disruption—real or imagined—of social relationships with individuals, groups, or society as a whole.

The Threat or Actual Loss of Status. Thus, a second and more promising strand of anomie is implicit and, in some degree, explicit in *Suicide* that again reinforces my argument that deregulation is a dead-end whereas disruption and disintegration are key. In a rarely cited chapter on the *Individual Forms* of suicide [277-293], Durkheim further explores the morphology of suicide types. Within a book devoted to *ultimate* causes at the macro-level, he appears to believe that *proximate* causes at the individual-level also matter and, thus, offers his most direct suggestion that sociology can explain why and how people choose suicide. Through examining the (social) psychological manifestations of deregulation, he paints a very different version of anomie to the reader. He remarks:

A man abruptly cast down below his accustomed status cannot avoid exasperation at feeling a situation escape him of which he thought himself master, and his exasperation naturally revolts against the cause *to which he attributes his ruin*. If he recognizes himself to blame for the catastrophe, he takes it out on himself; otherwise, on someone else [Durkheim (1897) 1951: 285].

In essence, as Abrutyn and Mueller [2014, 2018] have cogently argued, Durkheim points to the loss of status as a causal mechanism behind self-harm and suicide. To be sure, he continues to see deregulation as the underlying cause, but offers the emotional consequences of status loss as the more proximate factor. This

explanation is qualitatively different and brings other sociological processes into focus, such as status loss and, to anticipate the fourth face below, broader social psychological processes that can better explain how individuals experience divorce or other individual-level disruptions within society. Later in the chapter on *Individual Forms*, Durkheim returns to the image of a well-to-do banker who takes his own life as a result of bankruptcy [289]. It is telling that Durkheim draws on the example of an individual rather than a discernible cluster of suicides. He first argues psychologically: the banker chooses to die because “he cannot live on a smaller footing.” He then offers a more sociological explanation: the man seeks to “spare his name and family the disgrace of bankruptcy.” No clarity is offered as to how this is related to regulation, or the lack thereof, or why this example—which violates Durkheim’s methodological objection to psychological causes—is offered. By drawing attention to social psychological causes beyond the structural ones he is most known for, Durkheim offers a very different theory of anomie ripe for developing.

To summarize, economic fluctuations, political crises, and divorce as generators of anomie share a common thread, namely disruptions and subsequent disintegration. That is, and consistent with my interpretation of the anomic form of the division of labor, disintegration of the individual from others arises through the disruptions, dislocations, discrediting, and dissolution that ultimately yield anomie. Isolation is indeed one potential consequence of this process; yet, the threat of disintegration may also have pro-social effects, a point many ignore when talking about anomie [Hilbert 1989]. For example, individuals who work to repair damaged relationships may help their sense of self [Goffman 1967] whereas reintegrative rituals [Braithwaite 1989], initiated by others, may also be structured in such a way as to minimize anomie and its consequences. Taken together, the depth and richness of anomie as a concept result from it being recognized as predicated on a process of disruption and disintegration, while reserving egoism for a state or attribute of an individual or group’s location in a wider constellation of actors.

The common interpretation: Merton’s strain theory

Robert Merton’s [1938] *strain theory* is perhaps the most influential interpretation of Durkheim’s anomie, finding strong support in explaining a wide range of deviant behavior, especially crime [Messner

1988; Deflem 2018]. At its core, Merton's thesis can be posited in a few principles. (1) All social organization attempts to couple collectively-approved goals with mechanisms of control that channel behavior towards collectively-approved means of achieving them. (2) Legitimate means are unevenly distributed in society, leading to conflicts between individuals' internalized motivation to meet appropriate goals and their access to the appropriate means to meeting them. Finally, (3) deviant behavior arises from this strain—often in the form of criminal, illegitimate means to achieving societally-shared goals [see also, Messner and Rosenfeld 2009]. In Merton's [1938: 677-678] terms, "continued failure to attain the goal by legitimate measures and from an inability to adopt the illegitimate route" presents the individual with a "twofold *mental* conflict."

Merton undoubtedly drew inspiration directly from *Suicide* in articulating his theory. He seems to share Durkheim's view that industrial capitalism fosters a structural reality decoupled from morality that creates human dispositions that are "eternally dissatisfied [as they incessantly desire] to advance... toward an indefinite goal" [(1897) 1951: 257]. Capitalism, with its amoral propensity towards mass consumption, accumulation, and material success, incubates an unending "context of expansion or increasing upward mobility [and, subsequently] loss in the infinity of desires" [Besnard 1988: 93]. Consequently, anomic societies are marked by structural characteristics (stratification along various categoric distinctions) intersecting with cultural characteristics (a widespread acceptance of material achievement as a symbol of success) and a particular opportunity structure (uneven distribution to the legitimate means of realizing material success) [Deflem 2018].

However, Merton and Durkheim diverge in their understanding of how disintegration drives anomie. For Merton, disintegrating value-systems—rather than disintegration of individual, collective, and generalized social ties—are to blame. As one example, subpopulations that evince strong commitments to monetary success and weak commitments to the use of legitimate means to achieve them have been shown to have higher rates of instrumental crime [Messner *et al.* 2004]. Likewise, deviants tend to make up for any lost relational ties to "normal" people with new ties to fellow deviants [Becker 1963]. Anomie, then, appears to be the threat the individual poses to both the normal relationships and deviants she might be interacting with. The process of disintegration is salient then in that the person poses

a threat to the moral order they inhabit and the one which offers them the means of fulfilling the desires posed by their self.

Derangement and meaning: anomie as social psychological

The fourth and final face of anomie derives from several different social psychological approaches, the first of which is derived from Peter Berger's [1969] *Sacred Canopy*. There, Berger argues that anomie is the social psychological result of competing cosmologies, the collapse of their plausibility in the face of competing claims, and the "terror" of meaninglessness—the latter of which is anomie for Berger. A similar line of thought was posited more recently in Meštrović's [1987], work that returns to the original French to argue that anomie is a bio-psycho-social fact caused by the *derangement* of norms. Like Berger, Meštrović points to bio-psycho dynamics that Durkheim was well aware of to argue that anomie is not societal, but rather found at the individual-level in the biological, psychological, and social experience of the inversion of morality and the inability to take purchase of some type of coherent moral compass. A third perspective can be found in Agnew's [1992, 2001] "General Strain Theory," which holds that the strain Merton discussed as the social psychological consequence of structural anomie is, in fact, anomie. Drawing from the justice and trust literatures, he notes that disjunctions between our expectations or, in some cases, aspirations and real or perceived achievements generate anger, and it is the disjunction and the emotional signal that drive delinquent or criminal behavior. In short, though these social psychological perspectives share, with the other three faces, a strong focus on structural and cultural contexts breaking down, they all three differ in that they challenge the stripping of micro-level, deeply human dynamics away from anomie by equating anomie with social psychological pain that is biological, psychological, and emotional. The question, then, is what do we make of these four different faces and how might we push forward.

Next steps

If we look closely at all four faces, we see a common thread: anomie emerges wherever disruptions erode the bonds anchoring individuals or small collectives to each other, social reality, or other significant objects; of the three, arguably only social reality touches on

deregulation, as the overarching thread tying them together is the process of *disintegration*. In the *Division of Labor* and *Suicide*, anomie is a chronic or acute structural force predicated on overspecialization or the breakdown of coherent, collective morality and the loss of meaning, anxiety, the tendency toward pathology, and so forth. For Merton and his predecessors, anomie is a societal or institutional-level problem predicated on a disjunction between the widespread acceptance of cultural values and the uneven distribution of opportunities to achieve them. And, finally, the social psychological traditions span the gamut in terms of macro- or meso-level reasons for anomie, but coalesce around a psycho-social phenomena that has an affectual and moral dimension. Across all faces, disintegration is the key force and disruption, whether economic, domestic, political, or what not, the engine or motor pushing, accelerating, or sustaining disintegration.

All things being equal, then, it is argued that the social psychological perspective is the best ground upon which to rebuild a comprehensive theory of anomie. First, though Merton [1938] and, later, Agnew [1992] both argued it is *strain* that emerges at the individual-level in the face of anomie, the social psychological tradition posits a version of anomie that integrates the idea of strain, but pushes beyond it. Second, the social psychological perspective brings theory closer to empirical reality. One of the biggest dilemmas facing macro-level theories, first evidenced in Durkheim's *Suicide*, is the ecological fallacy. Societal-level anomie, no matter how one operationalizes it, cannot be directly linked to individual-level behaviors, hence the need for "strain" or some other mediating process. Additionally, the social psychological perspective invites the synthesis of scholarship of emotions, which has become a central locus of research linking aspects of the individual, her attitudes and actions, with the immediate and broader social environment in which she realizes her self and personality [Lawler *et al.* 2009; Heise 1977; Turner 2010]. Moreover, a social psychological approach that takes into consideration emotions, can expand the theoretical traditions from which we can borrow principles with strong empirical support—that is, inspiration can be drawn from Agnew's [1992] use of justice literature and Abrutyn and Mueller's [2014, 2016] use of identity control theory and status beliefs theory. Third, being able to observe anomie as rooted in relational and social psychological properties allows us to better tease out how, why, and when prosocial behaviors or attitudes will be predicated on (or due to the threat of) anomie and how, why, and when self-harm, risk, or anti-social behaviors will manifest.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, I would argue that the version of anomie presented below brings us closer to Durkheim [Gane 2005; TenHouten 2016; Meštrović 1987; Hilbert 1986]. Consider, for instance, that in Durkheim's [(1915) 1965: 33off.] discussion of positive rites in the *Elementary Forms* the foundations of a theory of self are presented. Contained in this section is the basic idea that assembly generates powerful effervescent forces, whether rooted in happy emotions like joy and ecstasy or in negative emotions like the anger of a mob seeking revenge or the grief described in the piacular rituals discussed in great length in the *Elementary Forms*. These emotions anchor us to the real and imagined group, generate and sustain meaning, and become the foundations of identity, status, and other components of the social self [Franks 2006; Turner 2007]. In the *Division of Labor*, Durkheim implies that both negative affect felt for violating the moral order and moral righteousness *prevent* deviance. We are motivated to act appropriately so as not to upset the order, and we know what the order is when someone violates it. The self, as constituted in the *Elementary Forms*, assumes a social psychological and emotional component powerful enough to motivate pro-social behavior to create solidarity and avoid disintegration [Maryanski 2018]. Thus, if Durkheim "was haunted by the idea of [humans] and society in disintegration" [Lukes 1977: 87], and his work points to the powerful motivation to sustain the group in the face of threats, then there must be a concept that captures the social psychological force that emerges when solidarity is threatened or, in fact, dissolved. I have made the case that that concept is anomie, which a wide range of authors have referred to as the terror, fear, anxiety, shame, and anger individuals or collectives experience in the face of disruptions that break social bonds. And, if shame is the emotional signal of anomie, as Abrutyn and Mueller [2014: 337-339] contend, then it is plausible to suggest anomie and shame not only motivate suicidality, but also provide the fundamental basis upon which deviance is prevented [Hilbert 1989]. Unsurprisingly, in *Suicide*, Durkheim remarks:

What is the end of suffering, above all? This problem does not exist for the believer firm in his faith or the man strongly bound by ties of domestic or political society... Even in their sufferings they see only a means of glorifying the group to which they belong... But the more the believer doubts... the less he feels himself a real participant in the religious faith to which he belongs, and from which he is freeing himself; the more the family and community become foreign to the individual, so much more does he become a mystery to himself, unable to escape the *exasperating and agonizing* question: to what purpose? [(1897) 1951: 212]

But, because Durkheim never built this argument explicitly, and because it has, to my knowledge, never been developed systematically, the analysis cannot stop here without leaving far too many questions unanswered. From this reading of the scholarship, then, I draw out a new theory of anomie predicated on a processual, meso-level model of disruptions and the social psychology of disintegration. Thus, the following sections flesh out the contours and formalize this new theory anomie.

A new theory of anomie

Anomic vulnerability

At the heart of our theory lies a single proposition:

Proposition 1: The greater the level of solidarity in social relationships at all levels of social organization, and the more powerful are the disintegrative forces working against these solidarities, the more individuals and collective actors will experience a sense of threat; and the greater this sense of threat, the more they will experience anomie, real or imagined.

The logic of this proposition rests on two related, yet independent, elements of social relationships. On the one hand, the relationships that are most significant to a person present the most fertile ground for anomie. Because the essence of the self is anchored to those that matter most to us, losing these bonds is akin to losing the self [McCall and Simmons 1978; Stryker 1980]. At the same time, when people blame themselves—even in part—for the death of a cherished social bond, they feel intense shame that amplifies the loss of self and other [Retzinger 1991; Tangney and Dearing 2002]. The beauty of this proposition is that it captures a wide range of cases in social life: (1) the individual person's experience of disruption, (2) the disintegration of a small group, such as a child losing her parents in an accident, (3) a prominent community member perceiving a loss of status within his community, and (4) the acute or chronic disruption of a community due to dislocation, conquest, assimilation, widespread discrimination, and the like.

Sociological explanations for why solidarious social relationships matter abound. For our purposes, however, we isolate two particular corollaries explaining the power of strong, significant social ties. On the meso-level:

Corollary 1: Relational solidarity is a positive and multiplicative function of the degree to which (a) interaction is recurring and, thereby, transforms expectations into moral obligations [Goffman 1967; Mauss 1967], (b) exchanges are multiplex and, thereby, sources of greater numbers and varieties of desired resources [Gould 1991], (c) tasks are shared jointly and, thereby, responsibility to relationships is undergirded by affect [Lawler *et al.* 2009], and (d) group-produced “goods” and/or “services” are exclusive and, thereby, in-group/out-group symbolic boundaries are highly distinct, social psychological measures of commitment/attachment are higher, free-riding is difficult, and value of goods/services is instrumentally high [Hechter 1987].

Drawing from a variety of sociological traditions, the four dimensions of group-solidarity capture the normative, instrumental, cognitive-cultural, and affectual sides of social order and control [Abrutyn 2014]. That is, each underscores one typical sociological mechanism to generating or imposing group-commitment. Our second corollary captures the micro-level:

Corollary 2: Relational solidarity is a positive and multiplicative function of the degree to which a relational tie produces an identity and status position that (a) is routinely self-verified [Burke and Stets 2009], (b) offers clear categorical and hierarchical differences between fellow group-members and those who are “different” [Hogg 2006; Ridgeway 2006], (c) is experienced as authentic and trustworthy [Garfinkel 1964], (d) offers exchanges deemed fair and rewarding [Blau 1964], and provides a sense of shared “nomos” or moral reality [Berger 1969].

Similar to corollary 1, corollary 2 offers a wide range of sociological explanations for why people commit to specific identities, regardless of whether alternative identities are available. Research shows we cleave most strongly to identities embedded in a collective conscience, verified by others and our self, offer greater levels of esteem, efficacy, authenticity, and arise from fair and rewarding exchanges [see Turner 2010 for a review].

Thus, at the heart of this new theory is a basic idea: humans become anchored to specific persons and groups both in a corporeal sense—e.g., we interact with them and come to depend on or desire things we get from them—and in a social psychological sense—e.g., identities develop that we become attached to based on these real social ties [Burke and Stets 2009; Miles 2014]. In turn, these two sources of anchorage become things we have to protect lest some aspect of our social self is lost. Anomie, thus, is the social pain we experience when these anchorages are threatened, imagined lost, or disintegrated in objective fact. It is anticipatory in that it serves as a signal to prevent threats or losses, and reactionary in that it is salient in the face of disruptions and disintegration.

The shame signal

If anomie is social psychological, then it must also have an emotional foundation. It is in this most peculiar social emotion of shame that we see the true force of anomie [Abrutyn and Mueller 2014, 2016].

Proposition 2: The more salient the emotion of shame in the face of real or imagined disruptions and disintegration, the more powerful a motivator to act is anomie and the more painful and enduring the experience of anomie.

Shame and Social Relationships. First, an abundance of research has shown that shame is eminently tied to the belief that one has threatened or dissolved a cherished social relationship [Scheff 1997]. Shame signals that one has violated the moral order and is being viewed as deficient, corrupt, polluting, and with contempt by others. Therefore, individuals align their behavior with the behavior of others and the generalized rules they believe their group follows to avoid feeling shame; that is, it is the emotional motivation for pro-social behavior that Durkheim alludes to in the *Division of Labor*. Thus, what other emotion could so closely fit with our conceptualization of anomie as a social psychological condition rooted in disintegrative processes? Individuals strive to avoid destroying the foundations of their social reality and, at the same time, feel a sense of responsibility when these relationships are disintegrating.

Shame and the Self. However, shame is not just the link between the self and others; it is also what makes the self *social*. Cooley's insight that the self is socially constructed as if through a looking-glass is not far from the mark. The self is biological in so far as the brain tags our experiences with emotions to create both memories and our understanding of self [LeDoux 2000]. Consequently, our memories and biological sense of self are inextricably tied to sociological constructs like identity and status to other people, groups, and even abstract systems. In extreme cases, as Goffman's [1961] *Asylums* demonstrates and as research on hospitalized inmates and violent prisoners confirms [Gilligan 2003], chronic shame leads to the *mortification*, or the subjective experience of the death of the self [Baumeister 1990]. Put differently, shame is a signal that the self is at risk of disappearing, and thus no emotion seems more related to anomie than the very emotion caused by the disintegration of social relationships and felt when one attributes this disintegration to one's own failures.

Shame and Anomie. In addition to being the emotional motivation for conforming and acting appropriately, and as a warning signal that one is violating cherished norms, shame can be both an acute and a chronic emotion. In terms of acute shame, research has shown that events or experiences such as divorce or betrayals can quickly generate an intense heightened sense of shame [Lester 1997; Kolves, Ide, and de Leo 2011; Cleary 2012]; as can early life experiences related to family disruptions [Gilman *et al.* 2003]. And while shame is often repressed or displaced in favor of other emotions like grief or anger [Turner 2010], shame begins the cycling of negative feedback loops in which shame leads to other negative emotions, then greater shame, and then more intense negative emotions and so forth [Scheff 1997]. However, chronic shame is also possible. Incumbents in highly marginalized social positions (e.g., sex workers) or identities (e.g., subordinates) are at risk of possessing shame “biographies.” That is, part of the position or identity is deeply tied to a deficient self. In both cases, shame may not only impair normal physiological and psychological functioning, but may also lead to pathological behaviors. Furthermore, because anomie and shame are both predicated on the breakdown of real, imagined, or generalized relationships, those with less social support may experience it more severely.

Collective Shame. Finally, like all emotions, shame is not confined to the individual; rather, groups, organizations, and even communities can develop shame cultures and shame biographies. Shame is a *social current* in the Durkheimian sense of the term. It can ripple through or even encase a group when its members experience an event intersubjectively [Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Summers-Effler 2009]. Hence, economic depressions can, through the experience of rapid status loss and the breakdown of social relationships, spread shame through a neighborhood, a church, or some other collective, as disintegration breeds anomie. Though suicides may spike, the connection between shame and anomie implies a far wider range of common pathological behavior more likely to spike in moments of collective shame such as withdrawal, drug or alcohol abuse, and so forth.

Shame and Pro-Social Behavior. Of course, it is also possible that anomic shame *pushes* individuals or collectives to reinvent the world in more positive ways. Though potentially unhealthy for converts in the long run, religious movements often pull wayward individuals into new webs of social relationships, which in turn often create powerful new forms of communities and, therefore, pro-social

relationships [Poblete and Odea 1960]. Furthermore, the desire to avoid anomic shame is also deeply embedded in our cognitive schema: Berger's [1969] premise that sacred canopies provide plausibility structures that shield us from anomie (or the total breakdown of reality) suggests not only the terror of losing these structures, but motivation to protect them at all costs. Thus, the practical effort to not lose anchorage is inextricably tied to the symbolic-cultural effort to not experience social pain in the form of anomie and shame. Therefore, humans are powerfully motivated to regulate themselves and others to protect the well-spring of self: relational ties.

Having formally posited presuppositions about social bonds and our attachment to them, as well as the emotional dynamics of shame and the loss of or threat to these bonds, we are in position to systematically build a theory of anomie. This discussion begins by exhausting the types of disruptions that might accelerate disintegrative processes and follows with a look at the empirical categories in which disruptions and disintegration may occur. These analytic exercises end with a broader discussion of implications.

Toward a sociology of disruption

Though a systematic theory of crisis is currently lacking, the logic is sufficient: regardless of theoretical persuasion, humans generally act habitually or in patterned ways; threats to or actual disruption of these patterns can be intensely stressful depending on the importance of the pattern. Historical and evolutionary explanations of social change at the societal-level, for example, look to exogenous exigencies like threats or attacks from neighbors or environmental disasters like floods or earthquakes as well as their endogenous counterparts like intense class or ethnic heterogeneity and inequality and resource scarcity as driving forces [Fagan 1999, 2004; Abrutyn and Lawrence 2010]. Recently, Abrutyn and Mueller [2016: 63-64] suggested that disruptions were one key theoretical trigger for understanding why *overintegrated* collectives could foster suicidality. Their logic was as such: people that have "lost very meaningful ties to a social group" experience the loss as "tragedy" and the "disruption to those ties the disaster" [*ibid.* 63]. Identities are deeply rooted in these relationships, and in some cases can even become inextricably entwined. Their thoughts can be brought into dialogue with older traditions of crisis or

disasters [cf. Erikson 1978, 1994] that supplement and push their thinking further. In short, social ties are not the only thing that can disintegrate that matters to humans. The disaster literature and the cultural/collective trauma literature, along with the suicide literature, point towards three analytically distinct, but empirically interrelated, types of disruptions: *dissolution*, *disjunctions*, and *dislocations*. Each one captures a different social “bond” and reflects the fact that we are not only anchored to each other (dissolution), but also have moorings in a stable social reality (disjunctions) and physical spaces in which the daily rounds of life are expected to continue (dislocations).

Dissolution

Our analysis begins with the most obvious disruption: dissolution, or the process by which bonds between real individuals, between individuals and a group deemed significant by the individual, or between an individual and an imagined other, disintegrate. This one is the most obvious, because it is what Durkheim feared most about modernity [Lukes 1977]: urban, liberal democratic, capitalist societies, in his estimation, favored hyper-individualization. His chapter on anomie, for instance, emphasized divorce rates while his chapter on egoism used religious affiliation and variations in suicide rates proxies for modern examples of disintegration. To be sure, explanations surrounding the former have rested on the orthodox interpretation of Durkheim, favoring the idea that divorce causes deregulation. However, contemporary studies of loss in status underscore the fact that deregulation is one of many features of the dissolution of extant, cherished bonds and, often, the inability to find new relationships of equal or greater value [Ebaugh 1988]. Not surprisingly, then, contemporary suicide rates are relatively high in the types of social spaces Goffman [1961] termed *total institutions*. Prisons, psychiatric wards, and the military share in common the tendency to strip away one’s previous biography, impose a singular role-status position, and leave a lasting stamp that makes re-entry into “general” society difficult [Abrutyn and Mueller 2018]. And, it appears to be the case that in both natural and institutional settings, shame is the root emotion where significant bonds are threatened, dissolving, or lost [Retzinger 1991; Scheff 1997; Gilligan 2003], and the individual blames herself. Of note, dissolution can be acute (as in the case of the loss of a spouse) or

chronic (as in the case of an abusive marriage where the threat of breakdown is objectively or subjectively endemic).

Disjunctions

A second type of disruption centers on the sort of cultural-cognitive or symbolic breakdowns emphasized by Berger and Mestrovic: disjunctions, or the process by which meanings no longer square with subjective or intersubjective experiences of reality. Drawing on an array of social psychological literature, Agnew [1992] delineates three particular forms of disjunctions that cause strain or, in our terminology, anomie: (1) between aspirations and actual achievements, (2) between expectations and actual achievements, and (3) between a sense of fair or just outcomes and actual outcomes. The first fits neatly into Merton's [1938] classic thesis. Individuals and groups set broad goals but may experience dissonance between these goals and the ability to realize them. The second one builds, instead, on expectation states theory [Ridgeway 2006, positing that individuals internalize expectations around things like performance, rewards, and the like, and these expectations may or may not square with objective reality. Finally, the justice and equity literatures [cf. Hegtvædt 2006] reveal that individuals carry expectations regarding how justice is to be distributed situationally and globally; when injustice is perceived in actuality, individuals experience intense negative emotions. Consequently, Agnew [1992] argues, *disjunction* along any one of these axes produces anger that potentially motivates risky or self-harming behavior as actors seek to avoid/escape negative stimuli, terminate/alleviate it, seek revenge from the attributed source, or manage it (e.g., drugs). To this, I would add that disjunctions often create a heightened sense of failure, as either the individual blames herself for not meeting expectations or the chronic flux of expectations leads to stress and shame for not knowing what one should or could do [TenHouten 2016]. As such, shame is very likely a corresponding or even preceding emotion to anger in cases where actors blame themselves for the disjunction between aspirations or expectations, and for how it unfolds.

Like dissolution, disjunctions express many of the characteristics discussed above regarding anomie. They are, as just noted, tightly linked to negative affect. In addition, acute and chronic disjunctions are plausible. Clinical research on bereavement following a sudden,

violent death of a close other is centered on meaning-making in the face of senselessness [Neimeyer and *et al.* 2014]. Likewise, individual and collective trauma is characterized, in part, by the erosion of plausibility structures that allowed victims to easily make sense of reality. Consequently, the day-to-day victims inhabit a world, to borrow from Berger [1969], of anomic terror. Not surprisingly, both the acute and chronic examples reveal the role that shame plays in intensifying the disjunction.

Dislocations

The final type of disruption is very often implied in Durkheimian studies, as well as other types of studies, but rarely made explicit. *Dislocation* refer to the disintegrative process between a person or group and the physical space in which their identity is founded. That is, the loss of (or the threat to) the space in which one's identity is anchored makes us feel as though "we and the world around us is fragmenting and disintegrating" [Hutchinson and Bleiker 2008: 388]. In cases like natural disasters, such as the massive flood and displacement of coal miners detailed by Kai Erikson [1978], not only are social ties dissolved due to deaths, but communities that were patterned and stable become no more. Erikson focuses on the intense trauma that follows the flood, as people take up temporary residence in temporary houses alongside neighbors they have no knowledge about; young people move away, as economic ravages reduce opportunities; and, the daily rounds of life are replaced by recurring chaos brought on by well-intentioned government agencies, less well-intentioned economic actors like insurance companies and coal companies, and strangers like Erikson himself. Dislocations are also caused by humans: various wars create refugees; authoritarian policies create asylum-seekers; global economic dynamics destroy traditional kinship structures and create legions of migrant workers sending remittances back home. Dislocations occur naturally too, due to typical life course transitions. Many adolescents move away to college, only to find their bedroom and home is no longer what it once was. Modern capitalism tears asunder extended families, expecting workers to be geographically mobile. Other examples of dislocations include criminals who are placed in detention centers and prisons, aged people in independent and assisted living facilities, military families moving from one base to the next.

Like the previous two types of disintegration, dislocations are acute and, in the case of the military family, potentially chronic. Furthermore, the anomie produced by dislocations does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes: Poblete and Odea [1960], for instance, illustrated how Puerto Ricans moving to New York in the 1950s were driven to deal with dislocation by inventing, whole cloth, new religious communities. Likewise, in the face of chronic dislocations a Paiute spiritual leader invented the Ghost Dance cult, which spread through numerous Native American tribes as a means of solidarity. Of course, dislocations sometimes do have negative outcomes, such as the mass suicide in the first century CE by the Israelite sect, the Zealots.

Theorizing disruptions

Though analytically distinct, these three types of disruption often occur in tandem or sequentially. Furthermore, as has been repeatedly argued, they may affect individuals or entire collectives, acutely or chronically. As such, we offer a final proposition:

Proposition 3: Anomie is a positive and multiplicative function of the degree to which a social tie or set of social ties, a set of meanings, and/or one's physical anchorage are (actually or believed to be) threatened, eroding, or lost.

To illustrate the reach of this proposition, we examine specific examples to illustrate how anomie works.

Individual-level, acute and chronic anomie

Drawing from a body of anecdotal cases [Kalafat and Lester 2000; Lester 1997; Mokros 1995] and clinical research on shame [e.g., Retzinger 1991], Abrutyn and Mueller [2014: 335ff.] examine just how individuals can become suicidal by way of dissolution and the ensuing acute anomie. In essence, individuals are embedded in groups, construct their identities and receive status-based rewards, and, thus, feel the weight of expectations. Durkheim's student, Maurice Hawlbachs offers perhaps the clearest explanation of the underlying logic of acute, individual-level anomie:

A culpable man who is responsible for some act which reflects on his honor feels *diminished* in the eyes of members of his own group... A man who has been insulted, an abandoned, unmarried mother, a gambler who cannot pay a gambling debt, all lose the esteem of those around them and the opinion which they prize most... This, however, is also true of the merchant who is ruined, the

wealthy man who loses his fortune, and the family head whose means are abruptly reduced. *All see their social level lowered. They are, to a certain extent declassed...* One then feels a void enveloping him. Those who formerly surround you, with whom you had so many ideas and so many prejudices in common, to whom you were linked by so many affinities, because in them you encountered yourself as they in you, suddenly become distant. You disappear from their concern and their memory. Those in the milieu in which you find yourself do not understand your bewilderment, your nostalgia, or your regrets. [Hawlbachs 1978: 270, emphasis added]

Failure to meet these expectations has consequences for the self, especially when the individual blames him or herself for the failure. But, suicide is not the only or most likely outcome. In Goffman's [1963b] work on public places, he emphasizes just how mundane everyday life is. Underneath the "success" of everyday life, Goffman argues, is the fear of shame or embarrassment. Micro-rituals of repair occur, often unconsciously, when we violate even the most basic rules [Goffman 1967]. A sociology of anomie, then, must push beyond suicide and think about how we can measure prosocial behaviors.

The other side of individual-level anomie can be found in the consideration of chronic anomie. Durkheim feared that urban, capitalist modernity would be marked by chronic anomie. Indicators, besides the spike in suicidality over the last two or three decades, can be found in the ubiquity of the pharmaceutical industry, the medical model of depression, and the pervasive use of depression/anxiety medication [Horwitz 2002]. Other evidence may be found in a recent look at how etiquette manuals have changed [Abrutyn and Carter 2015]. Goffman famously used these manuals to underscore the shared sense of public behavior. But, as U.S. society has grown more diverse and minorities who were marginalized from public life in the 1960s participate in civic society more and more, etiquette manuals have shifted from strong moral statements about what we ought to do to guides suggesting a set of alternative possibilities for various situations.

Closer attention to chronic anomie underscores its affinity with research on stigma and status expectations, two distinct yet interrelated streams of sociological research [Lucas and Phelan 2012]. First, Goffman [1963a] argued that stigma was a relational attribute between those deemed "normal" and those marked or potentially marked as inferior. Though Goffman stops short of using the terms anomie or shame, it is clear that the dehumanizing impact of stigma matches up quite closely to the literature on how people talk about shame [Tangney and Dearing 2002]. Relatedly, within the status expectation

states research, individuals are defined in social interactions by their status characteristics (e.g., gender, race, education). In this modified version of stigma theory, status characteristics are saturated in beliefs about the esteem, reward, and performance that a person possessing a particular characteristic can expect [Ridgeway 2006]. Status beliefs, like stigma theories, only work when both the higher and lower status individuals accept them, which creates self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, research has consistently demonstrated that higher-status individuals tend to blame others for failed interactions, whereas lower-status individuals tend to blame themselves [Hochschild 1983; Ridgeway 2006]. As such, power-imbalances and dependency matter are theoretical processes that have been largely ignored by empirical studies of anomie.

Finally, research must also consider how dislocations affect individual-level decisions. Divorce, for instance, is not simply the dissolution of a bond, but for one person (or more in some cases) it also means the loss of physical space. Leaving home for college is not about the dissolving of bonds, but the dislocation in space adolescents feel. Conversely, moving to a new town or country for work is dislocation but, again, not necessarily the cause of anomie and negative behaviors. Indeed, “starting over” can be reinvigorating, which raises questions about the underlying forces shaping individuals to be motivated in embracing a new situation versus those pushing an individual to succumb to the pain of anomie.

Collective-level, acute and chronic anomie

Again, Abrutyn and Mueller [2014, 2016, 2018] provide some insights into collective-level anomie. First, rather than examine the macro- or societal-level, they emphasize place and local culture. Some examples of anomic suicide, they reason, are both a product of the milieu and a characteristic of the collective identity to which individuals become attached. For instance, in *Asylums*, Goffman [1961: 13ff.] highlights the complete deconstruction of the inmates’ reality that takes place through the severing of all bonds between themselves and their “old” relationships. To achieve its aims, a totalistic organization like a monastery or psychiatric ward *disculturates*—or, *mortifies* the self—through mechanisms that *tyrannize* and *regiment* the expression of identity and status as well as the encounters themselves. From a Durkheimian standpoint, this may sound more like *fatalism* or *too*

much regulation, but for Goffman the consequences of disculturation go far beyond the regulatory component. Past relationships are forcibly dissolved; classes of individuals are moved from familiar physical spaces to totalistic spaces; biographies are dispossessed; and singular (often spoiled) role/status-positions are imposed. Like Gilligan's use of mortification to describe the figurative death of the self, Goffman sees institutions such as prisons or the military as capable of "killing" the self by wiping clean a person's biography so that it can be redrawn by the organization. Total institutions demand nothing less than total fealty to the authority system and its agents, to other inmates, and to the cultural reality they impose. The moorings holding the self to some stable, consistent, and knowable reality are disintegrated, hence the severe challenges posed when individuals are "released" from the institution.

We can, however, move beyond suicide and anomie to think more broadly about communities or collectives that face either chronic or acute anomie. A clear example may be found in a recent paper on the evolution of the ancient Israelite religion during the 8th to 5th centuries BCE [Abrutyn 2015]. Two key events shape the collective identity of a people, generate the motivation and cultural content of a social movement, and lead to the reconfiguration of a society. First, in the 7th century BCE, the northern kingdom of Israel was razed, its people deported, its land burned, and its way of life enveloped by the Assyrian empire. Biblical scholarship and archaeological evidence point to a small group of northern priests, scribes, and prophets fleeing to the southern kingdom of Judah, and attempting to make sense of the sudden, acute anomie caused by the intersection of dissolution, disjunction, and dislocation. History, of course, is littered with stories like theirs; and, contemporary examples of whole villages fleeing civil war, genocide, and so forth remind us that this type of anomie is not resigned to an ancient historical case. Consequently, this cadre of Israelites came to develop, in Durkheimian fashion, a Yahweh-alone movement that used Yahweh and a set of narratives about their special relationship to him as a means of rebuilding collective identity. Fast forward approximately 200 years later, and the flourishing southern kingdom is destroyed by the Babylonian empire; Jerusalem and Solomon's temple—the political and spiritual centers of this Yahweh-alone movement—are razed; and the elite deported to Babylon. For at least two generations, the Yahwists lived in Babylon in a state of chronic anomie [for instance, see Lamentations, which were written during this time period: Gottwald 1962]. They were

physically separated from their center and, on top of that, they had to make sense of how and why their god, the one true god, could allow this to happen. Again, under intense anomie pressure, this community of scribes, priests, and political elite crafted a new cultural schema that envisioned Yahweh as not rooted to a specific place, but rather in the law books they carried and in the individual souls these laws were inscribed upon. In essence, then, collective social pain was channeled into community-building.

Final thoughts

This paper delves into one of sociology's most unique concepts, anomie, and conceptualizes it to have theoretical and methodological teeth. By blending the core of Durkheim's argument—that disintegration is painful for society—with contemporary scholarship on emotions, it becomes clear that scholarship on stigma and collective trauma tap into the Durkheimian insight that disintegration matters. However, this discussion also finds that anomie makes more sense as a social psychological process and not a macro-level force. As such, it joins distributive justice, self-verification, and power-dependency, as social processes that explain social behavior. Moreover, drawing from the emotions research on shame, which I argue is a key *social* emotion that signals anomie, I move anomie beyond being solely an explanation for suicide (Durkheim) or criminality (Merton) and theorize anomie as a powerful force for pro-social behavior. That is, one response to disintegration is to build community instead of harming oneself or others. In doing so, this work lays a foundation for future theoretical and empirical research to elucidate why or how pro- or anti-social behaviors emerge.

In sum, anomie is best defined as (a) a social psychological force that can operate at the (b) individual- or “meso”/corporate unit-level of social reality and is the result of (c) chronic or acute *disruptions* that generate (d) real or imagined disintegration. What disrupts social relationships, of course, is equally as important as the process of disintegration itself. By rethinking this central sociological concept, sociologists are able to re-categorize a seemingly disparate set of phenomena as anomic and to more consistently operationalize anomie. First, this means we need to shift from macro-level events and individual-level behaviors to the study of how collectives like

communities, organizations, or groups and individuals experience disruptions, disintegration, and the ensuing social pain. Erikson's [1978] study of floods provides one template, but one could just as easily use collective quantitative data to study how and why anomie is produced, and how individuals or groups come to choose one means to dealing with that anomie or another. Second, taking Abrutyn and Mueller seriously, thinking about how networks, cultural sociology, social psychology, and emotions scholarship contribute to the questions we ask about anomie and the strategies we take in answering them seems fruitful.

Third, research could and should emphasize the anomie-avoiding or reducing rituals labeled by Goffman [1967] reparative and by Braithewaite [1989] as integrative. Indeed, we often think of anomie as tightly coupled to suicidality, whereas the majority of individuals facing the real, anticipated, or imagined threat or loss of a cherished social bond engage in rituals meant to prevent the loss from happening. In looking at the mundane and special positive rites that indicate individuals anticipate and seek to avoid social pain, we may come to understand the dynamics around anomie more deeply, providing the sociologist with a better analytic tool and, ultimately, better solutions for protecting individuals and collectives against deleterious effects, and promote the positive pro-social benefits of anomie.

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Résumé

L'anomie a beau être l'une des contributions conceptuelles les plus caractéristiques de la sociologie, son créateur, Émile Durkheim, est resté notablement ambigu quant à sa signification. Par conséquent, son usage dans la sociologie contemporaine a évolué considérablement. La confusion entourant l'anomie découle pour partie de l'insistance de Durkheim sur le fait qu'elle serait *causée* par le *dérèglement*, ce qui n'a pu être véritablement opérationnalisé. Néanmoins, l'étude attentive des « quatre visages » de l'anomie qui occupent une place prépondérante dans la tradition sociologique – c'est-à-dire (1) la division anémique du travail, (2) le suicide anémique, (3) la tension Mertonienne et (4) les différentes versions symboliques et culturelles de niveau micro – révèle que la perturbation et l'absence d'intégration, plutôt que le dérèglement, constituent le fil conducteur de chacune d'elles. En s'inspirant de cette idée, cet article propose une nouvelle conceptualisation de l'anomie comme : (a) une force psycho-sociale agissant au niveau (b) de l'individu ou au niveau plus méso d'une unité collective de réalité sociale, et qui résulte (c) de perturbations chroniques ou aiguës qui, à leur tour, génèrent (d) des pressions désintégratrices réelles ou imaginaires. En outre, les perturbations ne sont pas uniquement liées à la perte réelle ou imaginaire de liens sociaux (dissolution), mais également à la perte réelle ou imaginaire d'attachement à une réalité sociale cohérente (disjonction) et/ou à un espace physique (dislocation). Ce recalibrage conceptuel permet à la notion d'anomie d'entretenir un dialogue plus approfondi avec un large éventail d'autres phénomènes, avec lesquels elle partage parfois certains éléments, liés à la douleur de perdre des relations sociales chères ou encore à la motivation, pour échapper à cette souffrance sociale, de se nuire à soi-même ou d'adopter des comportements antisociaux et même parfois pro-sociaux.

Mots-clés : Anomie ; Durkheim ; Désintégration ; Honte ; Théorie sociologique.

Zusammenfassung

Ogleich die Anomie zu einem der charakteristischsten konzeptuellen Beiträge der Soziologie zählt, war ihr Gründervater, Emile Durkheim, in Sachen Bedeutung mehr als doppeldeutig. Infolgedessen wird sie in der zeitgenössischen Soziologie ganz unterschiedlich genutzt. Die der Anomie anhaftende Konfusion geht zum Teil auf die Beharrlichkeit Durkheims zurück, der ihre Entstehung in der Deregulierung sieht, was nicht wirklich operativ bewiesen werden konnte. Nichtsdestotrotz zeigt eine aufmerksame Betrachtung der im soziologischen Kanon sehr bekannten "vier Seiten" der Anomie – 1. die anomische Teilung der Arbeit, 2. der anomische Selbstmord, 3. die mertonische Spannung und 4. die verschiedenen symbolischen und kulturellen Varianten der Mikroebene – dass Störungen und mangelnde Integration, mehr als Deregulierung, den Leitfadens jeder einzelnen darstellen. Ausgehend von dieser Idee schlägt der Beitrag eine neue Konzeptualisierung der Anomie vor: a) eine psycho-soziale Kraft agiert b) auf dem Niveau des Individuums oder mehr auf der Mesebene der sozialen Realität einer kollektiven Einheit, woraus sich c) chronische oder zugespitzte Störungen ergeben, die schließlich d) einen realen oder erdachten desintegrierenden Druck ausüben. Darüberhinaus sind die Störungen nicht nur auf den realen oder erdachten Verlust sozialer Netze (Auflösung), sondern auch auf den realen oder erdachten Verlust von Verbindungen zu einer kohärenten sozialen Realität (Trennung) und/oder einem physischen Raum (Zerfall) zurückzuführen. Dieses konzeptuelle Ausräumen ermöglicht es dem Anomiebegriff, einen tiefer gehenden Dialog mit einem breiten Spektrum anderer Phänomene einzugehen, die in Verbindung zu dem schmerzlichen Verlust der so wichtigen sozialen Beziehungen stehen oder zu der Motivation diesem sozialen Leiden zu entgehen, sich selbst zu schaden oder unsociale und manchmal sogar pro-soziale Verhaltensweisen anzunehmen.

Schlüsselwörter : Anomie; Durkheim; Desintegration; Schande; soziologische Theorie.