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Race and Anomie:
A Comparison of Crime Among Rural Whites and Urban Blacks Based on Social
Structural Conditions

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Criminal Justice & Criminology

by
Mical Dominique Carter
May 2011

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ABSTRACT

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by

Mical Dominique Carter

This study examined the relationship between social structures and crime among rural white and urban black males in North Carolina through the theoretical framework of Merton's Anomie. Using demographic information on the state's inmate population provided by the North Carolina Department of Corrections, the subjects' individual characteristics were studied alongside community level conditions to establish whether anomic conditions did coincide with specific types of crimes and whether individuals from each group would commit the same types of crimes. The study population came from the rural counties of Graham, Alleghany, Swain, and Mitchell and the urban communities within Charlotte of Mecklenburg County. Univariate and Bivariate analysis were used to establish the significance and strength of any relationships between the variables. The findings indicated that while the category of offense was different for each group, the implied intent was the same. Both committed crimes that would benefit them in a pecuniary manner.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those who have come before me and could not be here to share in this moment.

My dear Grandmother, Mildred Aretha Mitchell,

My grandfather Leonard Carter Sr., and

My great-aunt, Shirley Sensabaugh Preston.

You all grew up in a time in which schools were segregated and the means to attaining one's goals were at times limited for young minorities. I hope that I have made you proud in my efforts to take full advantage of the opportunities I have been given.

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CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
LIST OF TABLES	10
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	11
Background of the Problem.....	12
Purpose of the Study	12
Hypotheses.....	13
Definition of Terms.....	13
Limitations.....	14
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
Theory.....	16
Merton's Anomie.....	16
Durkheim's Anomie.....	18
A Critical Distinction.....	19
Criticism of Merton's Anomie.....	20
Related Studies.....	22
Rural Anomie.....	26
Urban Anomie.....	29
Continuation of Anomie.....	33
Cohen's Status Frustration and Opportunity.....	33

Agnew’s General Strain.....	35
Further Exploration of General Strain.....	37
Conclusion.....	38
3. METHODOLOGY	40
Population	40
Anomie in the Counties of Study.....	41
County Selection Information.....	42
Rural Counties.....	42
Urban County.....	44
Variables.....	47
Dependent variables.....	47
Independent Variables.....	47
Analysis.....	47
Hypotheses.....	47
Univariate Statistics.....	48
Bivariate Statistics.....	48
Summary.....	49
4. RESULTS	50
Univariate Analysis	50
Bivariate Analysis	54
Race and Crime.....	55
Summary.....	58
5. DISCUSSION	60

Methodology.....	61
Experimentation of the Hypotheses.....	62
Findings.....	63
Limitations.....	64
Implications.....	65
Further Research.....	67
REFERENCES.....	68
APPENDIXES	76
Appendix A: Agnew’s Anomie Scale.....	76
Appendix B: Economic Demographics.....	77
Appendix C: NC Elementary School Performance Level.....	78
Appendix D: NC High School Performance Level by Course.....	79
VITA.....	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Anomie Scale at the County Level	46
2. Frequencies of Nominal Variables.....	51
3. Frequencies of Ordinal Variables.....	53
4. Descriptive Statistics	54
5. Cross-Tabulation of Race and Relevant Dependent Variables	55
6. Race Chi-Square Tests.....	57
7. Black Theft.....	58
8. White Drug Crimes.....	58

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When analyzing race and crime, researchers often times come to the same general conclusions; minorities are more inclined to commit crimes, or certain types of crimes such as street crimes, minorities are more likely to be apprehended due to the lack of sophistication in their chosen criminal activities, and/or minorities are more likely to be formally processed within the criminal justice system and thus are over-represented in statistical data. The latter of course is pretty obvious and indisputable.

Merton's theory of anomie argues that it is the disjunction between goals and legitimate means to attaining those goals that leads an individual to innovate or participate in deviant or criminal activity. If this is indeed the case, minorities are not the only ones susceptible to crime. Therefore, one could deduce that crime is not a racial problem but a situational problem. By removing race from the equation through establishing that those disenfranchised and alienated from main stream opportunities are victims of a blind socioeconomic condition pertaining to social class and not necessarily race, researchers can no longer use theories as a means for perpetuating existing racial stereotypes and legal discrimination. If nonminorities fall victim to criminogenic social structures, those nonminorities who control the social structures may be more inclined to change said social structures

Background of the Problem

Through analysis and application of Merton's theory of anomie to regional crime among differing ethnicities, this study compared the types of crimes committed by rural whites to those committed by urban blacks from the inmate population, as of January 2010, of four North Carolina counties. The theoretical focal point for this study pertaining to legitimate opportunities for attaining socially defined aspirations and innovation adaptations for achieving socially defined aspirations directed the collection of data, its analysis, and the discussion of the relationships that exist between race and regional crime when anomic conditions are present.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare the criminal activity of urban black males to that of rural white males under the framework of anomic conditions. There is a plethora of research analyzing the relationship between race and crime, but few consider anomie theory. Most focus on the types of crimes committed by blacks, whether it be the sophistication level, presence of victim, or harm to victim, or the prejudicial treatment of blacks by the criminal justice system as a whole. There is also little research aimed towards finding similarities between crimes committed by black and whites to determine if the two groups share analogous criminogenic environments. The current research focuses on whites from Appalachian counties and blacks from a major metropolitan area and the types of crimes committed by each group in order to determine if any similarities exist.

Hypotheses

I seek to discover whether there are similarities between the types of crimes committed by urban blacks and rural or small town whites. The theory of anomie to be applied to this study argues that deviance will occur when there is a disjunction between goals promoted by society and resources, legitimized by that society, for achieving those goals. Given that both of the sample groups exhibit characteristics consistent with anomic conditions, the criminal activity of the inmate population can be evaluated to determine if the patterns follow the anomic adaptation of innovation and if the patterns are similar in nature. Thus the research hypotheses were stated as follows:

H1: The crimes committed by each group will have similar motives.

H2: The types of crimes committed by each group will be the same.

Definition of Terms

In order to alleviate ambiguity as this paper proceeds, the following key terms and concepts pertaining to this study will be defined.

Anomie: The disjunction between culturally defined goals and culturally acceptable means for attaining those goals.

Innovation: An adaptation to anomie in which an individual accepts the culturally defined goals yet, due to the lack of valid channels to achieving the goal, rejects the traditional means and creates new ones.

Rural Community: Towns containing fewer than 2,500 persons or counties containing fewer than 100 individuals per 1,000 square miles.

Urban Community: An area with cities containing over 50,000 individuals.

In order to interpret the findings, variables pertaining to the data must also be defined.

Drug Offense: Any crime pertaining to the illegal possession, use, manufacture, distribution, trafficking, or sale of drugs.

Other Crimes: Any crime not specifically identified in the variables offense or crime category (For the purposes of this study, crimes placed into the other category include kidnapping, fraud, possession or discharge of a firearm, arson, failure to register as a sex offender, accessory after the fact, child abuse, etc.)

Theft: Any crime that consists of taking property or currency from another individual or entity without permission to do so (For the purpose of this study, the variable “theft” includes various types and degrees of burglary, robbery, and larceny and includes breaking and entering as it is often a precursor to theft)

Limitations

Due to the nature of the population of study there are some limitations that should be addressed. The first limitation is the disparity between comparison population sizes. In an effort to minimize the amount of disproportionality among sample groups, data were collected from only one state. Using the largest county in North Carolina as the representative urban population resulted in over 2,000 subjects. Though four of the most economically unstable and smaller counties in

NC were chosen, the sample size they were able to provide paled in comparison to that of Mecklenburg.

Another limitation of the study pertains to the inability to measure anomie on an individual level. Individual nondemographic information was not available from the data set collection tool used. The subjects for this study were inmates in North Carolina correctional facilities, therefore qualifying as special subjects. Given limited resources, it was not possible for this group to be interviewed or surveyed on a case by case basis to determine individual anomie levels. Instead, anomic conditions were verified on the county level. However, in an attempt to simulate the measurement of anomie for a population level analysis, a new anomie scale was constructed for this study and used to compare anomie rates amongst the counties.

Lastly, there is the matter of criminal activity represented in this sample. Due to the source of data used in the current study, the criminal activity analyzed and interpreted here does not include information regarding crimes that were unreported or undetected by law enforcement. The nature of the data also overlooks the criminal activity that was filtered through the criminal justice system prior to the reaching the correctional branch as focusing only on crime that was serious enough to warrant incarceration. In this regard, any prejudicial treatment on the part of the criminal justice system could have affected the representation of subjects and distribution of variables present in the current study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

When discussing the topic of anomie as it applies to the study of crime, there is much confusion about what anomie really means. This of course is largely because there are two very different anomic theories; one from Emile Durkheim and one from Robert Merton. In order to establish the track in which this thesis will apply the theory of anomie to crime it is important to distinguish between the two.

Theory

Merton's Anomie

Robert K Merton's theory of Anomie as presented in his work *Social Structure and Anomie* suggests that certain social structures place pressure on certain individuals within that society to engage in nonconformist as opposed to conformist conduct. This pressure manifests itself through two channels: the recognition of socially and culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests and the culturally and socially defined acceptable means to actualizing said goals, purposes, and interests. The acceptable means defined by that society may not be the most efficient or accessible means for securing the desired goals, and when that is the case, anomie, a sense of normlessness conducive to deviance ensues (Merton, 1968).

Merton identifies five approaches to handling the acquisition of culturally defined goals through culturally defined means. The first approach is conformity, which is the acceptance of both goals and means set forth by society. This

consists of ideal and law abiding behavior. This is the most commonly practiced approach as it perpetuates the norms of a given society (Merton, 1968).

The next approach Merton identifies is innovation, or the acceptance of culturally defined goals with the rejection of acceptable means to attaining those goals. This occurs when institutionalized methods for attaining the goals are unavailable to the individual, yet the pressure and expectation of attaining the goals is still very prevalent. The result is deviant or criminal behavior as the individual relieves the stress of failure by disregarding traditional methods of attainment in favor of more accessible alternatives (Merton, 1968).

The third approach Merton describes is that of ritualism, or a rejection of the culturally defined goals while still embracing the acceptable means for attaining those goals. It is the opposite of innovation and could be viewed as complete assimilation. Ritualism consists of an individual who has basically lost hope of ever attaining certain goals yet has been socialized fully to conform to the mores of the given society without reward. This approach does not result in deviant behavior (Merton, 1968).

The approach that is the complete opposite of conformity is retreatism, or the rejection of both the goals and the means laid out by society. This is the least common of all approaches and is practiced by members of society who have checked out if you will. Often times these individuals have been traumatized by their continuous failure to attain culturally defined goals due in part to societal blocks to *both* acceptable and illegitimate means. Paradoxically, the failure to adapt to illegitimate means comes from a mental or moral block caused by the

socialization process of the society that is also restricting the individual from any acceptable means. Unable to cope, the individual escapes. Although there is often no criminal behavior here, the actions or lack thereof from these individuals are often viewed as deviant, such as with vagrants. In the case of actual criminal behaviors, the charges are often *malum prohibitum* rather than *malum in se*, such as in the case of drug addicts (Merton, 1968).

Lastly, there is the approach of rebellion that consists of rejecting both the means and the goals which have been defined by mainstream society and exchanging them with a whole new set of goals and acceptable means. An example of rebellion would be cults who create their own values different from that of mainstream society and stipulate their own guidelines for maintaining those values (Merton, 1968).

Durkheim's Anomie

Emile Durkheim viewed deviance as a healthy and normal part of society. It was a necessary evil of sorts as it allowed society to recognize the boundaries defining social norms. By being able to distinguish between behaviors that lie on the extremities and behaviors that fall within the norms of a culture, society is able to construct a set of mores and values deeming certain behaviors to be deviant or criminal. Without the presence of deviant behavior as a reminder, a society would lose sight of what its mores are. Stated simply, deviance is the way in which a given society self-regulates (Durkheim, 1933; Hilbert, 1989).

For Durkheim, anomie is the condition in which society is no longer able to recognize deviance or protect its mores. It is a state of utter normlessness

brought on by a significant macro level change, such as a depression. This sudden and dramatic change in the social structure of a society discombobulates individuals by changing their ways of thinking and behaving. Without a collective school of thought, there are no social norms to abide by and chaos proceeds resulting in the collapse of that society (Hilbert,1989).

Durkheim expands his concept of anomie to address suicide. The physical manifestation of anomic conditions results in suicide. It is important to note that in his discussion, suicide pertains to both individual and social definitions. On the societal level, anomic suicide occurs when the society collapses in response to the chaos caused by a significant event. Individual anomic suicide occurs when the individual responds to the lack of standards defining deviance and or conformity by choosing to die along with the society. The normlessness leads to nothingness which leads to individual death (Hilbert, 1989).

A Critical Distinction

Previous discussion of anomie has often combined and or confused the two differing theories, using the concepts of one under the title of the other (Hilbert, 1989; Besnard, 1988). Other researchers have led readers to believe that Merton's anomie is just a continuation of Durkheim's. However, neither of these ideas is accurate (Clinard 1964; Cohen 1968; Coser, 1971; Hilbert, 1989; Nisbet 1974; Thompson 1982).

Both Durkheim and Merton view anomie as the result of weaknesses within the social structure rather than individual conditions. However, that is where the similarities end. Durkheim viewed deviance as normal and necessary.

Merton on the other hand viewed deviance as merely problematic. In laymen's terms, Durkheim's theory suggests that deviance prevents anomie and Merton's theory suggests that anomie causes deviance. Durkheim contends that crime may not be eliminated because it consists of actions along the extremities of human behavior. If one act is deemed acceptable, another act will take its place and fall along the outermost extremity of behavior. Merton's work suggests that making acceptable means available to all individuals would solve the problem of deviance, particularly crime. Though Merton used the term anomie to refer to a sense of normlessness, as did his predecessor Durkheim, the concept of normlessness meant very different things to each theorist (Hilbert, 1989). For the purpose of this study, the anomie that will be applied to this research is Merton's anomie.

Criticism of Merton's Anomie

Some of the criticism of Merton's theory stems from a basic misunderstanding of his primary focus. Merton *describes* the retreatist, rebellious, and ritualist approach in his work; however, his theory is meant to *explain* innovation. Neglecting to consider this, some researchers have criticized Merton's theory for not being applicable when explaining all deviance (Cohen, 1966; Dunham, 1964). Researchers have also argued to disprove the relationship between social class and crime yet have neglected to address the issue of the disjunction between goals and means among lower class individuals (Karacki & Toby, 1962; Reiss & Rhodes, 1961; Thio, 1975).

Hyman's study sought to refute Merton's implication that the same level of aspirations are present among upper and lower class individuals. The data he was able to collect showed that the aspiration levels of the lower class were in fact lower than those of upper class individuals (Hyman, 1966; Thio, 1975). Hyman then received criticism regarding his aspiration level results for the lower class. In other related studies, lower class subjects were shown to have expressed aspirations for success without actually attempting to pursue said aspirations (Han, 1969; Rodman, 1963; Turner, 1964), thus supporting the argument against Merton's suggestion that aspirations affect the classes equally if not more heavily influential on the lower class.

Hood and Sparks (1970) have joined other sociologists in their critiques of Merton's affirmation that lower class individuals are more likely to commit acts of deviance than their upper class counterparts. They argue that this fails to acknowledge the often unreported acts of deviance such as white collar crime. The abundance of lower class representation in the crime that is reported could be attributed to the lack of sophistication in lower class crimes and the discriminatory use of discretion to arrest and convict those individuals as opposed to upper class persons (Thio, 1975).

So why has Merton's anomie been supported over the years with so much success despite its flaws and shortcomings? According to Thio (1975), the success of Merton's theory is due largely to the fact that it perpetuates prevailing stereotypes concerning the lower class. These stereotypes, reinforced by the media, political agendas, and even academia, present crime as a lower class

problem and neglect to call attention to upper class crime. Ironically, the social structures inhibiting access to legitimate means for success are perpetuated by the theory arguing against them.

Related Studies

Srole (1956) is credited with creating an anomia scale consisting of four indicators. The indicators include feeling that authority figures no longer care about one's needs, considering social order as pointless and volatile, feeling pessimistic about everything, and being alienated from mainstream social norms. The scale has been criticized for not actually measuring anomie but social stratification or strain. Because this scale has so few components that in reality serve as very weak indicators of a anomie, the use of Srole's scale has little if any bearing on more recent research (Bell, 1957; Meir & Bell, 1959; Roberts & Rokeach, 1956). What resulted was a often times a modification or combination of scales incorporating anomic feelings with those of strain and status frustration, concepts that will be discussed later in this review (Rose, 1966).

Rhodes conducted a study of anomia among high school seniors in Tennessee to test the relationship between anomie and family occupational level, occupational aspiration, and urban or rural school context (school context broken up into four categories; urban white-collar, urban blue-collar, rural nonfarm, and rural county). The teens were classified in three groups, white collar, blue collar, and farming. He used the technique described above of combining Srole's scale with supplemental tools in order to more accurately measure anomie. The relationship between anomie and the three variables was statistically significant

at the 0.05 level and negative. What he found was that blue collar teens had more anomie than white collar teens in all sorts of environments except for rural nonfarming communities, a result partially because there were few students belonging to the farming category. He also found that white collar teens with low aspirations had high levels of anomie as well. This suggests that it is not necessarily the lack of means or opportunity so much as the distance between aspirations and opportunity in either direction. A limitation of Rhodes's study was that due to the complexity of the survey questions, he had to use seniors and was unable to account for high school drop outs, a demographic that typically belongs to lower class families and could account for a great deal of anomie (Rhodes, 1964).

Lefton conducted a study on race and anomie involving autoworkers in at a plant in Cleveland, Ohio. The sample of autoworkers contained both those with and without seniority. Due to the technological advancements coming about during the time of the study, those with less seniority were in jeopardy of being laid off, thus presenting an additional element of strain. Once again the researcher decided that Srole's anomie scale would be used, but additional measures were necessary. Lefton created a scale indicative of expectation that concerned 12 questions regarding three focal points: occupational and economic concerns, esteem and prestige concerns, and familial and personal concerns (Lefton, 1968).

Overall the results indicated a statistically significant negative relationship between expectations and anomie. However, when analyzing anomie and

expectations separately for whites and blacks, the findings revealed that though expectation levels among all black automotive workers were basically the same, those more advantaged workers scored higher for anomie. According to Lefton, these results may indicate that the inability for their occupational or economic success to manifest itself in other areas of life, unlike the success of their white counterparts. Black workers, regardless of the level of success they had at work, still returned to the same neighborhoods, with the same quality of housing, and same quality of school systems as their less successful black colleagues, a reality conducive to a high level of frustration (Lefton, 1968)

Unlike Lefton and Rhodes, McClosky and Scharr (1965) did not find any relationship whatsoever between anomie and goals. McClosky and Scharr conducted a study using both national data and state data pertaining to the population of Minnesota. They chose to measure goals using two different scales. The first scale measured “hunger for wealth and the coveted objects that wealth can purchase,” and the second measured “the strength of a person’s actual commitment to the values of success and prestige, and his yearning for achievement and recognition” (McClosky & Scharr, 1965, p. 39).

Interestingly enough, Srole (1965) was one of the primary critics of their work. He noted that the data they used had a high rate of entries with no response. He also argued that the wording of the questions given to respondents in the study may have led to confusion or misinterpretations that invalidate the responses. A possible reason for the low response rate could be that individuals with higher goals may be less inclined to take the time to complete and return the

survey. This of course would skew the distribution and explain the inability to find a relationship between anomie and goals (Agnew, 1980).

Barnet (1970) also found no significant relationship between anomie and goals, particularly after controlling for religious beliefs and education level. Barnett used Srole's scale to measure anomie and a scale created by Rosen to measure achievement values. Criticism of Barnet's work revolves around the fact that both scales overlap, containing questions that are incredibly similar. The Rosen scale also measures pessimism and powerlessness that adds a new dimension to the data. This greatly weakens the findings of the study as Rosen's scale was indicative of multiple types of relationships with anomie (Agnew, 1980).

Interested in expanding upon the findings gathered from Barnett, McClowski, and Schaar, Agnew (1980) conducted a study called "Success and Anomie: the effects of variations in the goal of success on anomie." His study tested three hypotheses: H1: Social status will have a strong positive effect on success orientation, H2: Success orientation will have a significant positive effect on anomie, H3: As social status increases, the effect of success orientation on anomie will decline. Agnew created his own anomie scale as well as success orientation scale (see Appendix A) that incorporate aspects of Srole and other researchers. Using data from the Harris survey#2319, Agnew ran regression analysis on his data, resulting in the following findings: Social status had a negative relationship with success orientation, success orientation was positively related to anomie, being one of the strongest predictor's of anomie, second to

education. The third hypothesis was rejected as no significant relationship was found. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Agnew's findings is that there was a bit of contradiction among responses pertaining to lifestyle desires and goals. The respondents often indicated that they had high aspirations for certain socially desirable goals that required the means through hard work, yet they had an aversion to the means, indicating they were in favor a shorter work hours and decreased educational and occupational standards (Agnew, 1980).

Rural Anomie

In an effort to determine a regional relationship to certain types of crimes, studies have shown that the south ranks highest across the nation in certain violent crimes and firearms ownership. Data, records, and crimes statistics even imply that this pattern of violence dates back as far as the beginning of the 20th century if not earlier. This inclination towards more violent crimes has been linked to regional and cultural norms as well as religious beliefs legitimizing violent responses to various stimuli. These culminate in what theorists refer to a southern subculture of violence (Corzine & Moore 1986; Ellison, 1991; Redfield, 1880).

It is unclear when the southern subculture of violence began. Some propose it originated during the antebellum era, particularly during the settling of frontier land (Bruce, 1979). Others argue that the tradition of violence arose during the post civil war era as a response to the military domination and exploitation of southern resources (Cash, 1941; Hackney, 1969). Whenever its inception, it is generally agreed that the subculture of violence in the south

centers around a sense of honor chivalry and defensiveness. It is not meaningless violence but violence for cause (Ellison, 1991).

In order to establish that a subculture conducive to violence exists, two stipulations must be met. Individuals in a particular area must exhibit values and beliefs different from the rest of society. Secondly, one must be able to recognize the mechanism by which individuals in the subculture are socialized from generation to generation (Lizotte & Bordua, 1980; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967).

Though research on these mechanisms is somewhat inconclusive, Reed was able to draw some general conclusions from his observations in southern communities. First, southerners only approved of violence in regards to certain situations, and the understanding of when violence is deemed appropriate is only present among fully socialized individuals. Reed identified factors that may contribute to this socialization process including: early reinforcements through play ground scuffles and other youthful interactions, close community ties and organizational involvement that may foster or encourage certain attitudes, political and religious affiliations that further these beliefs, and strong tradition of military service (Franklin, 1956; Gastil, 1971; Reed, 1982,).

Ellison (1991) conducted a study using the General Social Survey data set for 1983. After running a series of analytical tests, including ordinary least squares regression, Ellison made some interesting findings: approval of violence does not differ significantly among natives of the south and migrants, and prolonged exposure to nonsouthern culture will weaken the socialization process.

When considering the variables of age and race, Ellison expected to find that whites were more likely to endorse violent behaviors and the inclination towards violence decreased with age. However, when controlling for one's native status, the relationship between support of violent behaviors and age was positive, suggesting that the socialization process is weakening with newer generations. He also found that there seemed to be no significant difference between various southern ethnicities as to their attitudes towards violence. It is important to note that the study measured attitudes towards low-level violence and not serious violence and that it measured attitudes towards violent offenses to strangers, though much of the violence in the south is directed towards acquaintances.,

In a case study conducted by Brinker and Crim (1982), four depressed rural counties in Oklahoma were observed to determine the effects of their economic conditions on the younger residents. Using Srole's anomie scale, high school seniors and recent graduates were surveyed and compared across counties. The results indicated that the poorest counties with the highest, though still extremely low, percentages of minorities returned the highest anomie levels. When using regression the variables most significantly related to anomie were fathers' education, fathers' occupation, and grade point average. The reason the father's acquisitions were of interest, being that the job market was not large enough to accommodate both parents of double headed households. They also found that of those who moved away from the county anomie levels were lower. These findings support previous work indicating that the wider the disjunction between opportunity and goals, the higher the anomie levels. In this case,

however, the anomie did not lead to deviance. In fact, the four counties exhibited a lower overall crime rate than the state average. What seemed to transpire was acquiescence among young adults as they accepted the meager opportunities available and complied by taking up farm and factory work (Brinker & Crim, 1982)

Urban Anomie

A great deal of the research surrounding urban black anomie focuses on the economic conditions present in those communities. The assumption is that economic circumstances depriving individuals of means to achieving societal goals will consequently lead to anomic feelings among the inhabitants of that community. This of course is furthered by the research arguing that middle class African Americans experience lower levels of anomie than lower class African Americans (Bullough, 1967). This line of thinking makes sense when interpreting Merton's anomie; however, other researchers have found kinks in this premise's armor.

Wilson conducted a study in which anomie levels were compared across three inner-city neighborhoods experiencing different levels of racial change or integration. Typical of this line of research, Srole's anomie scale was used and covariance analysis was employed to test its association with other variables including employment, education, home ownership, and length of time residing in one's neighborhood. The inner-city neighborhoods were categorized as Ghetto, Northeast, and West Side. The Ghetto was the poorest of the neighborhoods with the highest percentage of black residents, and contained a large number of significant black establishments. The Northeast neighborhood was again

predominately black, but due to relatively recent shifts in ethnic makeup, lacked the social establishments in place in the Ghetto. Lastly, the West Side neighborhood was experiencing the most amount of instability with a ethnic makeup approaching 50% black and 50% white (Wilson, 1971).

Contrary to what many researchers who subscribe to Merton's anomie would expect, the Ghetto neighborhood returned the lowest anomie levels. The West Side neighborhood, experiencing the greatest amount of ethnic change and identity uncertainty, returned the highest amount of anomie. These results however were more specific to the African American population than Caucasians, as the latter exhibited little variance among all neighborhoods except the Ghetto. The explanation of this occurrence possibly being that the white representation in the Ghetto was minimal at best, and those residing in this community were painfully aware of their atypical minority status (Wilson, 1971).

The lack of high anomie levels among African Americans in the Ghetto community may be explained by the argument that it is not the poverty levels of the community, but the stability of the community that affects anomie (Landers, 1954). What this means is that continuously evolving communities are unable to establish their own identity. The members of the community are in a constant state of flux, preventing the establishment of social norms specific to that community. The Ghetto community was able to shelter itself from the socially accepted goals of mainstream society through the strong stable ethnic representation that created a subcultural effect. The stability of this neighborhood allowed members to reject middle class goals for new goals appropriate and

attainable within a black lower-class community. In doing so, they decreased the disjunction between goals and means, thus decreasing anomie (Wilson, 1971). Wilson was not alone as others have argued that blacks have developed thriving subcultures within poor urban communities (Berger, 1970; Blauner, 1970; Hannerz, 1969; Keil, 1966; Liebow, 1967; Moynihan, 1965). It is important to note, however, that Merton's anomie may still apply to black urban lower-class neighborhoods that are not isolated from the goal aspirations of the mainstream middle class.

Also among the findings of this study was that duration of residency had a negative relationship with anomie regardless of race. Therefore, whites in the Ghetto who had resided there for several years experienced lower levels of anomie than new imports. As to be expected, education and home ownership were also negatively related to anomie, homeownership indicating that the individual has a desire to be where he or she is if he or she chooses to buy property. An interesting finding was that anomie was positively correlated with household size, presumably representing a financial strain, and perhaps a psychological one as well (Wilson, 1971).

In response to Wilson's study, Kapsis (1978) sought to determine if there was an alternate explanation to the subcultural theory for lower anomie scores. Kapsis, along with predecessors, postulate that while urban blacks may develop a tolerance for modified forms of success, they are still quite aware of mainstream values (Della Fave, 1974; Rodman, 1963). In fact, he argues that if

presented with an improved situation and opportunity structure, African Americans would adopt the preferable goals of the mainstream (Kapsis, 1978).

According to this line of thinking, it is not the substitution of values indicative of a subculture that accounts for the lower anomie scale, but an unconsidered factor. A neighborhood must have some connection to society in order to gain certain protections and services. Without this connection, these communities will be viewed as throw-aways and will fall victim to a lack of law enforcement and public facilities as well as participation from its inhabitants as they resign themselves to the belief that the government does not care about the well being of their community (Suttles, 1972).

In his study, Kapsis compared anomie levels of two urban neighborhoods in San Francisco. The first neighborhood, called South Side, was predominately black (a more recent development) and economically disadvantaged, yet had strong establishments and had few complaints regarding local services and facilities. The second neighborhood, North Ghetto, was again predominately black but had been established for quite some time as the city's oldest black neighborhood. Unlike South Side, North Ghetto was not fully incorporated and the majority of the inhabitants were living in the county rather than city limits. As a result, facilities and services were unsatisfactory and the neighborhood was treated a throw-away community (Kapsis, 1978).

An adaptation of Srole's Anomie scale and Landers perceived normlessness index were used to evaluate the subjects' anomie levels. Multiple regression was employed to estimate the relationship between area of residence

and anomie as well as the effects of other neighborhood related variables. The results were somewhat inconclusive with part of the analysis lacking statistical significance and the other a weak relationship. This is partially due to the dual jurisdiction of the North Ghetto being both city and county and the study sample being relatively small and in need of expansion to include other areas. Though the findings failed to truly support or reject either Wilson's or Kapsis's argument, it shed light on the need for further exploration of the discriminatory municipal support and involvement in poor urban communities (Kapsis, 1978).

Continuation of Anomie

Among those who have continued to explore the concept of Merton's Anomie are Cloward, a former student of Merton's, and Ohlin, who merged anomie with Chicago School theories such as *differential association* and *cultural transmission*. They also explored subculture theories as it reinforced the idea that deviance is a product of the social and not the individual consciousness. The similarity amongst all of these positions is that deviance is viewed as a construct of other people's, not necessarily the actor's, beliefs (Cohen, 1955).

Cohen's Status Frustration and Opportunity

In his dissertation, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang (1955)*, Cohen expands upon the concepts of Merton's anomie to explain the behaviors of young gang members. He suggests that delinquent subcultures develop in response to the lack of success that results from societal blocks to legitimate means. Frustrated with their inability to achieve a higher status, these individuals substitute new sets of criteria for attaining an alternative status that is much more

realistic, given the conditions of the social structure they reside in, a coping mechanism much like the rebellion adaptation described by Merton (Cohen, 1955).

This new status identity is often times the antithesis of the ideal middle class projection of success. The socially acceptable values are replaced with those condoning violence as a means for conflict resolution, organized crime a mechanism for procuring all things pecuniary, and an overt disrespect for authority. Thus, in densely populated urban areas, youths who share the same frustration over the status the social structure forces upon them can find solace in their ability to ban together and redefine success on their own terms. It is a fundamental flaw in our society, which allows for the dominant social class to dictate success expectations amongst a stratified population, which will continue to present anomic conditions to individuals without altering how we respond to their adaptation, thus perpetuating the development of subcultures (Cohen, 1955; Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 2007).

Continuing with this train of thought, Cohen also argues that the disjunction between goals and means depends on opportunity. That opportunity structure is a product of collective members of society. So the adaptations themselves are a response to those members of society, and in turn, society must respond to those adaptations. These responses can present themselves in four different forms: opening up legitimate opportunities, opening up illegitimate opportunities, closing off legitimate opportunities, and closing off illegitimate opportunities (Cohen, 65).

The first response, opening up legitimate opportunities, is one of the most widely discussed responses as it can manifest itself through job placement initiatives for criminals and decriminalizing certain *malum prohibitum* crimes. The second response, opening up illegitimate opportunities, is already in practice through police discretion. Closing off legitimate opportunities is by far the most detrimental of all responses. Stigmatizing individuals for past indiscretions and preventing them from being able to have access to legitimate avenues of success only increases their proclivity towards crime. Lastly there is the closing off of illegitimate opportunities that consists of basic acts of deterrence. These various responses will act as a mechanism for social control, reinforcing the structures already in place to define social norms, or social change, calling for policy change and reformation (Cohen, 65).

Agnew's General Strain

Due to the criticism of Merton's anomie theory discussed earlier in this review, interest in anomie waned during the 1970s and little attention was paid to it during the 1980s. Not until Agnew proposed the general strain theory did researchers renew their interest in anomie, or as they were calling it at this point, strain again. In his general strain theory, Agnew suggests that there are two other types of strains on an individual that could lead to crime. These strains included the removal of positive stimuli from the individual or the presentation of negative stimuli. These, along with failure to achieve certain goals, created an environment conducive to crime. The more strains present, the more likely someone is to resort to crime (Agnew, 1992).

Aware of the fact that strain was not necessarily indicative of crime, Agnew sought to find out what caused people under strain to decide to either participate in criminal activity or conform to the law. Agnew proposed that there were certain factors that decreased one's risk of engaging in criminal activity. These factors included but were not limited to social support systems, deterrent effect of criminal sanctions, and the presence of strong social bonds. Conversely, there were also factors that encouraged criminal involvement including: low self-control and learned criminal behavior or exposure to criminal behavior. These variables when present alongside strain can increase one's likelihood of participating in crime (Agnew, 1992). Agnew later went back to add emotions to his contributing factors, suggesting that as individuals feel bad they want to do whatever they can to feel better. This is particularly true for anger. Agnew argues that when anger and strain are both present, crime, in particular violent crime, is more likely to occur (Agnew, 2001; Lilly et al., 2007).

Agnew found four factors that would increase the likelihood that strain would lead to crime. First, if strain is seen as unjust, the individual feeling the strain is more likely to get angry. As stated above, the presence of anger and strain together increases the likelihood of crime. Second, if the strain is high in magnitude, then the immediate solution offered by criminal activity may seem more appealing. Third, if the strain is associated with low social control, then the individual has fewer ties regulating their behavior. Lastly, if the strain creates pressure to respond with "criminal coping" then the individual may see no other

plausible option but to mirror the actions of the source of his or her own strain (Agnew 2001).

To add support to Agnew's line of thinking, McCarthy and Hagan conducted research on runaway youths. Their analysis found that negative home conditions did correlate with delinquency. The cases observed in their work demonstrated the struggles minors face when leaving an unhealthy home environment and opting instead to live on the streets. In many cases the individuals could not find work, if they were of age that is, did not have consistent shelter, and were hungry. Lacking other resources they often times resorted to stealing and prostituting themselves (Hagan & McCarthy, 1992; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).

Further Exploration of General Strain. Messner and Rosenfeld took Merton's theory of anomie and applied it the macro level to the American society. They adhere to Merton's proposal that the culturally defined goals and expectations, the American dream if you will, exemplifies a certain lifestyle that just is not attainable for every individual. In response to this dynamic the most effective way to attain the lifestyle or goal is to innovate, often times stepping outside of the bounds of the law (Messner & Rosenfeld, 1994).

Messner and Rosenfeld continue to formulate their institutional-anomie theory by explaining the amount of power the American society gives to the economy. Despite the best of intentions, all social institutions ultimately default to the economy. School systems, the institutions that are supposed to give individuals the tools to attain success, are often plagued by budget cuts. This of

course limits their resources, thus limiting their abilities to empower pupils. Another example is the institution of the American family. In most modern families both parents have to work. Not only do people spend a significantly larger amount of time at work than they have in the past, but modern technologies have allowed for the workplace to have a virtual leash of sorts on its employees. This can be seen in the amount of business handled via e-mail, cell phones, and PDAs. These factors culminate in an American dream creating an anomic condition through its constant pursuit of economic growth. This economy driven paradigm makes controlling illegal innovation unrealistic (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001).

Conclusion

Anomie has been a topic of research since Durkheim pioneered his theory during the early 20th century. Merton then followed with his work shortly after. A great deal of research actually confuses or combines the approaches of the two theorists; however, in truth, they were very different and independent suppositions. Durkheim's theory focused on crime as a normal and necessary aspect of society, a mechanism by which social norms were reaffirmed. Merton on the other had a much more critical view of anomie, focusing primarily on the social structure dynamics blocking success for certain sectors of society.

Early exploration of anomie as it pertained to race indicated higher levels of anomie among minorities, suggesting that the proverbial glass ceiling was a source of heightened strain for the educated and accomplished minorities. When applied to socioeconomic status, those impoverished and working class

individuals usually exhibited a higher level of anomie than their middle or upper class counterparts; however, further analysis indicated that privileged individuals who have low attainment desires may experience the same level of anomie as underprivileged individuals.

Much of the recent work pertaining to anomie follows the work of Agnew and his general strain theory, "strain" being an alternate nomenclature for anomie as it was adapted and elaborated on during this period of research. This is why further evaluation of Merton's work seems to taper off during this time. However, the work of Agnew is quite visible. While studies have been conducted both to compare anomie level between races and to compare anomie levels among various social classes, comparing the types of crime within an established anomic conditions both on a racial and regional level is an area of research that lacks exploration. The current study proceeds by first establishing anomie levels among select rural and urban counties. From those counties criminal activity is compared among racial and regional lines to determine if anomic conditions lead to similar adaptations and innovations in particular.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Population

The purpose of this study was to compare the crimes committed by urban blacks to those committed by rural whites in order to determine if anomic conditions lead to similarities between the two. This necessitated that the subjects be pulled specifically from regions most pertinent to the study. This also required the population to be separated among racial lines.

The population for this study consisted of inmates from North Carolina Correctional Facilities. The subjects include all black male inmates between the ages of 16-60 from the county of Mecklenburg, and all white male inmates between the ages of 19-60 from the counties of Graham, Alleghany, Mitchell, and Swain, the latter's age range only being different for lack of inmates of a younger age. Due to the specific nature of this paper, the subjects could not be chosen randomly. Demographic information regarding the subjects was gathered from the North Carolina Department of Corrections via their website that provides a statistics generator for researchers interested in individual characteristics of the inmate population.

The NCDOC did not provide a data set to run analysis of the demographic variables provided in the statistics. To circumvent this dilemma all of the information provided on the inmates was entered into a data set specifically created for this paper using PASW 17.0. The variables consisted of age, race, county of residence, offense qualifier, most serious offense committed, and

highest grade level completed. Due to the large number of responses for the most serious offense category, the variable was recoded into a more general list in which all related offenses were placed in a generic category. The same was done for the specific offenses of drug related crimes and crimes of theft, which were recoded into more specific categories. Other variables were condensed as needed for more concise analysis.

Anomie in the Counties of Study

In order to proceed with the study from the theoretical framework of anomie, it was established that the counties to be compared exhibited anomic conditions. This of course, was the basis for which both hypotheses were founded, yet the data collected from the North Carolina Department of Corrections were unable to verify the presence of anomie for each subject individually. Drawing inspiration from the anomie scales of other researchers such as Srole, a new anomie scale was constructed for this study. Prior studies have used anomie scales that were applicable at the individual level; however, due to the constraints of this study, most particularly the special nature of the study population, a new anomie scale had to be constructed that could be applied at the macro, or community level. This scale consisted of five statements that either did or did not pertain to the county in question. Statements that did apply were counted as a value of 1 and those that did not a value of 0. These statements were a measure of the success opportunities or availability of means present in the counties of study. The closer the index value was to 5, the more anomic the community.

-
1. The Poverty level for this county is above the national average
 2. The unemployment rate for this county is above the national average
 3. School systems in this county are performing below the state achievement levels
 4. Schools in this county exceed maximum capacity
 5. There are no postsecondary educational facilities in this county.
-

Figure 1. Anomie Scale

County Selection Information

Rural Counties. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) categorizes each of its counties on an economic gradient based on the national ranking of economic depression. Counties classified as distressed are the most economically depressed, ranking in the bottom 10% of the nation's counties. Counties that are at-risk rank between the worst 25% and 10% of the nation's counties. Transitional counties are within the top 25 and worst 25 counties nationwide. The transitional counties are basically those coming out of a weak economy and developing into a stronger one. Next there are competitive counties that are between the top 25% and the top 10%. Lastly, there are attainment counties that are among the top 10% nationwide and have the strongest economies (ARC, 2010).

According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the counties of Mitchell, Graham, Alleghany, and Swain are at at-risk of becoming economically distressed counties. This of course means that they rank within the bottom 25% of economic success on a nationwide level, suggesting that these communities are either coming out of a depression or heading towards one. These Counties were chosen because anomic conditions can be present in at-risk communities as means, such as job opportunities and educational facilities grow more limited (ARC, 2010).

From the theoretical perspective of anomie, these rural counties should exhibit conditions that would serve to block an individual from being able to attain various goals through the unavailability of means and opportunities. As of 2010, all four rural counties were economically depressed with poverty levels below the national poverty rate of 14.3. All of the counties also exhibit unemployment rates that are higher than the national average of 12.0. When considering educational opportunities, though struggling in key areas such as math and science, all of the rural schools are performing on average above or on par with the state level of achievement. Interestingly, two of the counties do not have any postsecondary schools or training facilities in the area, making it necessary for anyone wanting to advance continue their education to move away from the area or commute when near enough to the border. Out of the rural counties, only Swain has a crime rate that is higher than the national average. When applying anomie to the communities of study, it is apparent that lack of educational resources, high unemployment and high poverty rates are all components that aid in creating

anomic environments as they represent blocks to legitimate mechanisms for success (ARC, 201; U.S. Census Bureau) (see Table 1).

Urban County. According to the Concentric Zone Model, communities can be broken down into five districts. On the outskirts of the community you have the fifth district, the commuter or suburban zone. This zone consists of mostly affluent white collar racially homogenous neighborhoods. Very little crime takes place in this area. Next you have the residential area where middle class white collar families live. These neighborhoods have a little more diversity than the commuter zone and yet still consist of single family homes and little crime. The working class zone encompasses neighborhoods that are close to major employment zones and has a mostly blue collar and diverse population. The second zone is the zone in transition. This is the inner city where mostly lower income housing and factories are located. These areas are very diverse often containing higher minority than nonminority representation. Conditions are somewhat rundown, as this is the buffer between the working class zone and the inner zone, the Central Business District (CBD). Often times the population in this area changes frequently as individuals and families attempt to use their resources to move out into the working class zone. The CBD is the downtown center of the community. This district encompasses most of the major businesses and employers as well and contains very little housing. This could be considered a heterogeneous zone as various ethnicities from various social standings flow in and out of the zone on a daily basis. Because of the social disorganization

present in the transitional and Central Business Districts, crime is more prevalent in these areas (Lilly et al., 2007).

The County of Mecklenburgh is the largest County in the state of North Carolina. Home to Charlotte, NC, this county has a thriving economy. It is also one of the most diverse counties in the state. Mecklenburg County has a decreasing crime rate, as seen in the declining crime index, 464.8 as of 2009, though still higher than the national average of 319.2.(Onboard Informatics, 2010). Though economically viewed as a successful county, Mecklenburg embodies all of the necessary elements of Chicago School Concentric Zone model that would indicate a great deal of disorganization in the areas surrounding the Downtown Charlotte area, or the transitional and central business districts and the surrounding neighborhoods, or working class zones. For this reason, Mecklenburg was chosen as my comparison county representative of urban and inner city conditions (see Table 1) (US Census Bureau).

For the most part, Charlotte is thriving economically; however, there are some communities within the city that have fallen prey to the typical inner-city plights. The areas of Charlotte, NC within the jurisdiction of the zip codes 28208, 28206, and 28216 are three of the most economically disadvantaged areas in Charlotte and just so happen to be the areas that have an African American representation of well over 50% of their population. Perhaps due to the economic conditions there, the schools in these communities are performing dreadfully when evaluated and compared with the state averages (see Appendices B, C, &

D). As was the case in the rural Appalachian counties, these three communities are a perfect representation of inner-city anomic conditions to compare with my rural communities (U. S. Census Bureau, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction).

Table1

Anomie Scale at the County Level

Anomie Scale	Counties				
	<u>Meck- lenburg</u>	<u>Mitchell</u>	<u>Swain</u>	<u>Graham</u>	<u>Alle- ghany</u>
1. The Poverty level for this county is above the national average	1*	1	1	1	1
2. The unemployment rate for this county is above the national average	0	1	1	1	1
3. School systems in this county are performing below the state achievement levels	1*	0	0	0	0
4. The crime rate for this county is above the national average	1	0	1	0	0
5. There are no postsecondary educational facilities in this county.	0	0	1	1	1
Total Index Value	3	2	4	3	3

* Statistics for these index items based on information from the three inner-city communities referenced in the community section of this chapter, not the entire county.

(US Census Bureau; NCDPI, 2011)

Variables

Dependent Variables

The current study investigated the effects of anomie on crime based on regional classification. The following variables were measured to analyze crime: offense and offense qualifier. The variable offense was then recoded into the variables offense category, drug crimes and theft. The recoded variables, drug crimes and theft, were condensed versions of the offense variable collapsed into the dichotomous variables of drug crimes and those not related to drug crimes and theft and those not related to theft. All of the dependent variables were measured at the nominal, or categorical, level.

Independent Variables

The independent variables for this study pertained primarily to demographic information. They included: age, race, county of residence, and education level. Age and education level were recoded into new variables that were condensed versions of the originals. Age and level of education were originally measured on the ratio level; however, when they were recoded and condensed they were measured at the ordinal level.

Analysis

Hypotheses

The purpose of the study was to test the following hypotheses regarding types of criminal activity among the sample population.

H1: The crimes committed by each group will have similar motives.

H2: The types of crimes committed by each group will be the same.

The first hypothesis test to determine whether the general reasons for and effects of the crime committed are the same among each white rural inmates and black inner-city inmates. For example, if one group was to commit murder and the other group was to assault someone, both actors would have the basic intent to physically harm the victim. The second hypothesis tests whether or not the offense category most often perpetuated is the same among each group.

Univariate Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the variables, both independent and dependent. This allowed for basic distribution information to be analyzed and for certain measures of central tendency to be interpreted as well. These statistics served to illustrate certain characteristics across the population level that needed to be broken down for individual level, in terms of county that is, distribution.

Bivariate Statistics

The analysis used for this study when analyzing the relationship of two variables was cross-tabulation. Upon reviewing the cross-tabulation, the chi-square test for significance was analyzed. The target significance level was 0.05 or lower, indicating that the probability of the relationships appearing as a result of chance was less than or equal to five out of 100 times. For those cross-tabulations that returned a chi-square statistic meeting the significance level criteria, Cramer's V test was applied to the variables as well. The Cramer's V measure was the measure of association that depicted how strong the relationships between the variables actually were.

Summary

The current study was designed to analyze the relationship between regional criminal activity and race within anomic conditions. In the collection of data, the researcher controlled for the race of the comparison groups by collecting only information on black inmates from the urban county of study and white inmates from the rural county of study. In order to establish the severity of anomic conditions within each county of study, an anomie scale was used to create a standard index measure. Lastly, univariate and analysis as well as bivariate analysis, in the forms of chi-square and Cramer's V used to test the significance and strength of any relationships between the variables.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

There were only a few techniques used to determine the significance and strength of the relationships in the current study. The first techniques employed were univariate statistics that consisted of frequency distributions and descriptive statistics. These were used to illustrate the demographical information pertaining to the subjects, not to explain any relevant relationships. Bivariate analysis was also used to determine relationships between various variables. Due to the nominal and ordinal nature of the variables, the Chi-square test of independence was the measurement tool of choice.

Univariate Analysis

Frequency Distributions were run on the nominal variables of this study to establish basic demographic makeup (see Table 2). In total, there were 2,327 subjects in the study ($n=2,327$). All were male, with 95.3% coming from Mecklenburg, and the remaining 4.7% coming from the counties of Graham, Alleghany, Mitchell, and Swain collectively. Because of the County representation, it follows that 95% of the study population are black and 4.7% are white.

In order to establish some general patterns of criminal behavior, distributions were also computed for the variables of offense category and offense qualifier. As depicted in Table 2, 33.1% of the crime committed across both study populations belonged to the category of theft. In regards to participation level, the majority of offenders were principal participants with the

frequency for offense qualifier being distributed as follows: principal participant 92.9%, attempted participant 3.9%, conspirator 2.9, and other categories representing 0.4% of the sample.

Table 2

Frequencies of Nominal Variables

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
County		
Mecklenburgh	2,218	95.3
Graham	16	.7
Alleghany	18	.8
Mitchell	56	2.4
Swain	19	.8
Total	2,327	100.0
Race		
Black	2,218	95.3
White	109	4.7
Total	2,327	100.0
Offense Category		
Murder	373	16.0
Theft	771	33.1
Rape	104	4.5
Sex Offense	73	3.1
Drug Offense	324	13.9

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
Assault	81	3.5
Habitual	394	16.9
Other	207	8.9
Total	2,327	100.0
Offense Qualifier		
Principal	2,161	92.9
Attempted	90	3.9
Conspiracy	67	2.9
Other	9	.4
Total	2,327	100.0

(NCDOC, 2010)

Frequency distributions were also run for the ordinal level variables. Separate tables were created for these variables in order to include the cumulative percentages, a measure not appropriate for nominal level variables (see Table 3). For the variable measuring education level, the majority of the individuals, 66.3%, studied completed 9 to 11 years of schooling, Cumulatively, a staggering 75.6% of the sample failed to earn a high school diploma, completing 11 years of schooling or less. The frequency for the variable of age indicated that though 35.6 % of the inmate population ranged from 21 years of age to 30, the majority of inmates, 57.7%, were 31 or older.

Table 3
Frequencies of Ordinal Variables

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Education Level			
O to 6 years (Grade school)	23	1.0	1.0
7 to 8 years (Middle school)	193	8.3	9.3
9 to 11years (Some high school)	1,543	66.3	75.6
12 (High school graduate)	550	23.6	99.2
13 to 16 years (college)	17	.7	100.0
15 plus years (Graduate school)	1	.0	100.0
Total	2,327	100.0	
Age Group			
16 to 20	156	6.7	6.7
21 to 30	828	35.6	42.3
31 to 40	649	27.9	70.2
41 to 50	485	20.8	91.1
51 to 60	208	8.9	100.0
Missing	1	100.0	
Total	2,327		

Descriptive statistics were used for the two interval-ratio level variables; age and education level. Included were the minimum and maximum scores as well as the mean and standard deviation of the scores (see Table 4). For the

variable age, the youngest individual was 16 years of age, and the oldest 60. The average age was 34.43, with a median of 33. Given that the majority of the sample was over 30 years old, these values do not appear to have a skew. However, when considering the mode and largest age group frequency, there may be a skew.

The average education level was 10.36 years of schooling, with a median and mode of 11 years. (See Table 4). The distribution ranged from no schooling to 18 years of school, indicative of graduate level studies. This distribution also appears to be normal.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mode	Median
Age	16	60	34.43	10.71	22	33
Education Level	0	18	10.36	1.45	11	11

Bivariate Analysis

Because anomie was not able to be measured on an individual basis, this analysis used cross-tabulations and the Cramer's V statistic. This technique, though simplistic, is most appropriate for the nature of the variables. These variables, for the most part, are nominal level variables. The purpose of the Chi Square analysis was to determine whether or not two variables are independent of one another. This is done by creating a cross tabulation table and then comparing expected frequencies to actual frequencies. Generally the accepted level of significance is 0.05 or less, meaning that the odds of the relationship being purely that of chance are no more than five out of 100.

If the Chi Square statistic returns a value of 0.05 or less, then the next step will be to test the strength of the relationship. This can be done using the Phi coefficient when the cross-tabulation involves two binary variables and Cramer's V statistic when the variables have more than two categories. The statistic will be between 0 and 1 with a stronger relationship nearing 1 and a weaker relationship nearing 0.

Race and Crime

In order to examine a possible relationship between race and crime, the race variable was cross-tabulated with the offense category variable, recoded education level variable and offense qualifier. The recoded education level was first collapsed and the n cross-tabulated. Next, a cross-tabulation was run between the race and education levels, and then race and offense qualifier (see Table 5).

Table 5

Cross-Tabulation of Race and Relevant Dependent Variables

	Race	
	Black	White
Offense Category		
Murder	360 (16.2%)	13 (11.9%)
Theft	755 (34.0%)	16 (14.7%)
Rape or other Sex Offense	154 (7.1%)	20 (18.3%)
Drug	303 (13.7%)	21 (19.3%)
Assault	75 (3.4%)	6 (5.5%)

Table 5 (continued)

	Black	White
Offense Category		
Habitual	378 (17.0%)	16 (14.7%)
Other	190 (8.6%)	17 (15.6%)
Education level		
0 to 8 years (Middle school)	199 (9.0%)	17 (15.6%)
9 to 11 years (Some high school)	1,482 (66.8%)	61 (56.0%)
12 (High school graduate)	521 (23.5%)	29 (26.6%)
13 plus (college)	16 (0.7%)	2 (1.8%)
Offense Qualifier		
Principal	2,062 (93%)	99 (92.9%)
Attempted	81 (3.7%)	9 (8.3%)
Conspirator	66 (3%)	1 (0.9%)
Other	9 (0.4%)	0 (0%)

When using the recoded variable for offense category, one that combined all similar or related crimes into a smaller list of crime categories, the cross-tabulation would appear to reveal a difference in the types of crimes committed by each racial group. Blacks appear to commit more theft, which for the purposes of this study consist of all degrees and forms of burglary, robbery, larceny, and breaking and entering. Whites, on the other hand, appear to commit more drug related crimes, which include all degrees of possession, distribution, trafficking, and manufacturing. This relationship is significant with a Chi-square value of 51.897 at the 0.000 significance level. This relationship, however, was very weak with a Cramer's V value of 0.149 (see Table 6). Another relationship that would

need to be analyzed when considering means and aspiration relationships is that of educational attainment. However, as Table 6 also indicates, the relationship between race and education level was not significant with a Chi-square value of 9.142 at the 0.058 significance level.

Levels of participation, often referred to as offense qualifiers, are the categories such as principal participant, or the primary actor in the criminal scenario, attempted participant, if the criminal act was never completed, and conspirator if there was participation with fellow actors to jointly commit a criminal act. Understanding the role an individual played in the commission of a crime may shed light on an individual's true propensity towards crime in terms of individual motivation versus social forces such as peer pressure. Once again a chi square test was used, resulting in a value of 7.718, with a significance level of 0.111, exceeding the standard 0.05 level and demonstrating that there is no relationship between these two variables.

Table 6

Race Chi-Square Tests

Variables	X ² value	df	Sig.	Cramer's V
Race*Offense Category	51.897	7	0.000	0.149
Race*Education Level	9.142	4	0.058	
Race* Offense Qualifier	7.718	3	0.052	

Though the relationship between crime category and race is weak, the indication that blacks and whites commit differing types of crime deserves further exploration. Using the recoded variables for crime categories, theft participation

was analyzed for black urban males. Drug crime participation was then analyzed for white rural males as well (see Table 7). Amongst the various crimes of theft, black males committed armed robbery 65.1% of the time. As indicated in Table 7, the majority of the drug related crime committed by whites, 52.4%, involve trafficking.

Table 7

Black Theft

Theft	Frequency
Armed Robbery	502(65.1%)
Robbery	67(8.7%)
Breaking and Entering	112(14.2%)
Larceny	37(4.8%)
Fraud	17(2.2%)
Burglary	36(4.7%)

Table 8

White Drug Crimes

Drug Offense	Frequency
Sell/Distribution	5 (23.8%)
Trafficking	11 (52.4%)
Possession	3 (14.3%)
Manufacturing	2 (9.5%)

Summary

While there was a shortage of significant relationships among these data, there was evidence to support one of the hypotheses presented in this study.

Cross-tabulation demonstrated that though whites and blacks committed different

types of crimes, failing to support H^1 , they both committed financially motivated crimes, supporting H^2 . An important consideration when interpreting these data is that the population for Mecklenburg County, the urban community, was much larger than the combined rural counties. This can affect the validity of cross-tabulations, a matter that is discussed further.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Through the application of Merton's Anomie to both the urban and rural communities, this researcher sought to compare the types of crimes committed by inner-city blacks and rural whites with the anticipation of possibly finding congruent relationships. Merton's theory of anomie supposes that it is societal blocks to socially acceptable means for attaining socially defined success that causes certain types of crime and deviance. If this is the case, then it is not race that determines a proclivity towards criminal activity, but societal responses to various groups of individuals based on social structure dynamics.

The literature relevant to Merton's anomie explores his proposition in various manners. Because anomie is something that can be quite difficult to measure, as individuals may or may not view the same conditions as anomie, much of the earlier research on anomie focused attention on developing measurement tools such as Srole's anomie scale. Perhaps the most common criticism of Merton's anomie is that it is not applicable when trying to explain certain types of crimes such as white collar crimes or *malum prohibitum* crimes such as gambling, prostitutions, or solicitation; however, it is clear upon analysis of Merton's work that he intends for anomie to be applied to crimes which exemplify innovative techniques to circumventing inequality..

Agnew has taken over where Merton left off by developing and expanding upon anomie in his general strain theory. Much of the recent literature concerning opportunity and attainment dynamics is in response to Agnew's work, not

necessarily Merton. Though this explains the shortage of Mertonian research over the last couple of decades, one would think that the studies on anomie and race under each paradigm would be more extensive. Though there have been studies that measure and compare anomie levels among the races, as well as studies that apply anomie to regional conditions, little has been done to use anomie to compare types of crimes committed by different anomic groups. This analysis sought to use the knowledge gained from those studies to explore this possible relationship further.

Methodology

Data were gathered from the North Carolina Department of Corrections through its online statistical generator. Certain variables were selected for study including race, county of residence, highest grade level attended, offense qualifier, age, and offense category. The variable offense category was then recoded to into two more variables, one pertaining to drug crimes the other pertaining to property crimes. The recoded drug variable broke down drug offenses into the categories of selling and distribution, trafficking, possession, and manufacturing. Similarly, the theft variable was broken down to reflect the categories of robbery with a dangerous weapon, robbery, breaking and entering, larceny, and burglary. These recoded variables were analyzed to determine what type of crimes the comparison groups were committing.

The counties used for this study were Mecklenburg, Alleghany, Graham, Mitchell, and Swain. Mecklenburg was used as my urban anomic example as it is the most highly populated county in the state and contains the city of Charlotte.

The other counties were selected as my rural examples as they were identified as economically at-risk counties by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Out of these counties the black inmate population was chosen for Mecklenburg and the white male inmate population was chosen for the remainder. An anomie scale was constructed for this study, and based on information from the U.S. census Bureau and North Carolina Board of Instruction, characteristics such as poverty rates, unemployment rates, crime rates, school achievement levels, and availability of postsecondary schools were analyzed to determine the validity of the identification of these counties as anomic.

The mechanism chosen for analysis was chi square statistic. The variables were cross-tabulated and the chi square test applied. If the relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level then the Cramer's V value was applied. As a general rule it was assumed that a Cramer's V value of 0.1 or less was considered to have little if any relationship. A value of 0.1-0.3 a weak relationship, 0.31-0.5 a moderate relationship and 0.5 or more a strong relationship.

Experimentation of the Hypotheses

The methods discussed above were used to test the following hypotheses:

H1: The crimes committed by each group will have similar motives.

H2: The types of crimes committed by each group will be the same.

Cross-tabulation was used to test for relationships indicative of these relationships. The primary dependent variables were offense category, or type of crime committed, and offense qualifier, or level of participation in the criminal act in question. Related independent variables were race and education levels. The results from the presence or absence of a relationship between these variables would be indicative of the applicability of the hypotheses.

Findings

The information gathered on relationships between race and offense qualifier, and race and education level were actually in support of the thought process put forth in this study, which would hold that there would not be a difference between the races regarding these matters. Though the Chi Square values for these variables were not significant at the 0.05 level, this perhaps could be a residual effect of the disproportionate population sizes and that must be taken into consideration as Cross-tabulations and Chi-square tests are sensitive to that.

When analyzing types of offenses committed, the relationship between race and offense was significant though weak. The data indicated that the white males from the distressed smaller counties are more involved in the trafficking aspect of drug related crimes. On the other end of the spectrum, black males from the urban county are more likely to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon than any other property crime. All forms of burglary or robbery are going to be carried out in an effort to gain some sort of monetary or asset based

benefit. Drug crimes, on the other hand, can serve dual purposes of self-medication or a means of attaining monetary assets.

Limitations

The limitations of this study pertain primarily to the issue of access to the study population. The data obtained from the North Carolina Department of Corrections did not provide personal level information regarding income, household income, number of individuals in the inmates' households, socioeconomic status, and personal goals. In the previous studies discussed in the literature review, researchers were able to either survey or interview their target population thus using an anomie scale for measurement of goals and attainment disjunctions. Due to the special nature of the population of study and limited resources for travel and time, this one-on-one technique could not be implemented. Anomie, for the purposes of this study, had to be discussed on the macro level as it pertained to the communities from which the inmates come from rather than the inmates themselves.

Another limitation comes in the form of statistical analysis. The population for this study resulted in an imbalanced number of subjects for the comparison groups. This of course is because this study is dealing with some of the smallest counties in the state of North Carolina and comparing them, though collectively, to the largest. Though many of my analysis exhibited statistically significant relationships between the variables, the limited sample size for these smaller counties could have contributed to the weakness of these relationships.

One should also note the simplicity of the statistical analysis. The variables evaluated were basic categorical variables particularly referring to demographical information. Due to the nature of these variables, the chi square analysis and then Cramer's V were employed.

A final consideration when interpreting the data is that the population of study is the inmate population of North Carolina. This limits the criminal activity evaluated in this study. Unreported crimes are not included, nor are crimes that are handled informally, exonerated, or given a sentence other than incarceration. In this regard future studies would be wise to use self-report information to gather a better picture of criminal activity as a whole.

Implications

These findings suggest that the crimes committed by whites and blacks may not in fact be that different. Though the most frequently appearing serious crimes for rural whites were drug related crimes, specifically trafficking, and the most frequently appearing crime for urban blacks were crimes of theft, specifically armed robbery, commission of these crimes typically results in the same thing: monetary gain. In accordance with Merton's argument that anomie occurs when individuals experience a block to legitimate means for attaining socially constructed goals, individuals from both groups used the adaptation of innovation to achieve the same goals. Though drug crimes may also be considered a retreatist adaptation to anomie, the nature of the drug crimes perpetuated by the subjects, those that are a mechanism for acquiring status, would most appropriately indicate innovation.

An interesting factor related to the findings is that property crimes, specifically armed robbery, can be a particularly violent nature. This could suggest that the decision on the part of black urbanites to participate in the more violent or aggressive crime of robbery with a dangerous weapon could be related to an unevaluated variable. Whether this could be a subcultural influence or environmental influence specific to urban anomie is an area that calls for further investigation.

The findings in this study suggest that changes in how criminologists approach race in criminality are in order. Race should not continue to be exemplified as a leading indicator of crime. Doing so will only allow the society to continue to overlook the criminogenic dynamics present in the current social structures. From a critical criminologist's perspective, the power structure in currently in effect is only a mechanism designed to keep certain individuals from challenging or threatening the successes of the elite. Bringing attention to the fact that different populations can be affected by this anomic conditioning could encourage the public to take more responsibility in enacting change.

The solution to anomie, if there ever is one, will be to open up means and opportunities either by legitimizing certain innovations or by ensuring that individuals have access to healthy and thriving goal opportunities. Public initiatives towards increasing funding for educational expenditures and monitoring the job market are steps towards nipping anomie in the bud. This is a matter of public concern as it requires active involvement in the workings of the

political system to ensure that those in office are enacting policies that are conducive to a prosperous community.

Further Research

For the reasons discussed in the limitations and implications above, this paper should be used as a stepping stone for further research. Continued work would need to use a measurement of anomie on the individual level for each subject. For the most socially relevant results, prior anomie scales could be employed; however, a modified anomie scale designed for modern lifestyles and goals would be most beneficial.

Expanding upon the findings from the cross-tabulation involving each group of subjects and their criminal activity, further research should be done to establish a possible pattern of criminal activity among differing possibly anomic groups. Are these groups committing similar crimes? Are these groups committing different crimes with similar results? Or, are these groups exhibiting completely unrelated behaviors? Further clarification of these questions is definitely warranted as it would add to the argument either proving or disproving race as a primary indicator of crime and preferences for certain criminal activities. This paper will hopefully lead to more advanced exploration of the nature of rural crime as well as deviation from criminological views perpetuating the concept of crime as a racial epidemic.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Agnew's Anomie Scale

Srole Anomia Scale	Agnew's Approximation of Srole's Anomia Scale
1. There's little use writing to public officials because often they aren't really interested in the problem of the average man,	1. Most people in government are not really interested in the problems of families like mine.
2. Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.	2. A person should live for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.
3. In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better.	3. In our country, opportunities for success are available to everyone.
4. It's hardly fair to bring children into the world the way things look for the future.	4. You should not expect too much out of life.
5. These days a person doesn't really know whom he can count on.	5. If you don't watch yourself, people will try to take advantage of you.

(Agnew, 1978)

APPENDIX B

Economic Demographics

Region	Poverty Level	Unemployment Rate	% White	% Black
US	12.4%	9.3%	75.1%	12.3%
Alleghany	17.2	11.8	95.7	--
Graham	19.5	17.3	91.9	--
Mitchell	13.8	12.3	97.9	--
Swain	18.3	13.8	66.3	--
Mecklenburg	9.2	11.4	--	27.9
28208	21.6	10.0*	--	71.6
28206	26.4		--	79.2
28216	12.5		--	60.2

(US Census Bureau, 2011; Employment Security Commission, 2011, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011)

APPENDIX C

NC Elementary School Performance Level

Region	Grade Level									
	<i>3rd</i>		<i>4th</i>		<i>5th</i>		<i>6th</i>		<i>7th</i>	
	Reading	Math	R	M	R	M	R	M	R	M
State	66.4%	81.9%	71.6%	83.0%	71.1%	81.2%	75.3%	80.5%	66.8%	80.2%
Alleghany	76.3	88.1	81.3	92.9	68	90.2	81.7	85.8	74.41	87
Graham	60.9	81.6	71.1	88.7	77.9	85.8	90.4	89.2	65.2	79.8
Mitchell	71.2	85.3	80.5	90.8	69.5	89.6	82.1	82.7	67.5	83.1
Swain	57.6	69.6	76.1	87	77.2	87.5	74.8	87.1	73.7	81.8
Mecklenburg by Zip Code										
28208	39.5	63.2	55.6	64.2	31.2	59.7	43.9	49.7	26.1	45.9
28206	43.7	60.8	42.83	61.1	32.9	65.2	38.3	59.3	26.3	44.7
28216	41.5	69.9	56.5	84	53.6	73.8	62.7	67.3	53.6	67.9

(Department of Public Instruction, 2011)

APPENDIX D

NC High School Performance Level by Course

Region	Courses							
	English1	Algebra 1	Algebra 2	Geometry	Biology	Physical Science	Civics & Econ.	US History
State	82.4%	77.8%	84.9%	82.3%	81.2%	76.4%	78.7%	81.6%
Alleghany	82	78.1	94.2	94.5	87.9	66.3	86.6	75.2
Graham	91.5	77	85.2	88.2	88	83.6	76.3	80.7
Mitchell	89.8	77.7	86.9	90.9	80.9	81.3	78.5	90.9
Swain	86.6	73.7	86.5	76.3	71.5	80.8	90.4	75
Mecklenburg by Zip Code								
28208	75.7	62.8	77.1	80.9	74.2	69.5	60.8	77.8
28206	74.5	66.7	76.3	63.8	72.9	66.4	72.4	73.3
28216	71	69.2	79.8	55.5	67.5	79.8	69.5	92.4

(Department of Public Instruction, 2011)

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