

Anomie

is a social condition in which there is a disintegration or disappearance of the norms and values that were previously common to the society. The concept, thought of as “normlessness,” was developed by the founding sociologist, Émile Durkheim. He discovered, through research, that anomie occurs during and follows periods of drastic and rapid changes to the social, economic, or political structures of society. It is, per Durkheim's view, a transition phase wherein the values and norms common during one period are no longer valid, but new ones have not yet evolved to take their place.

A Feeling of Disconnection

People who lived during periods of anomie typically feel disconnected from their society because they no longer see the norms and values that they hold dear reflected in society itself. This leads to the feeling that one does not belong and is not meaningfully connected to others. For some, this may mean that the role they play (or played) and their identity is no longer valued by society. Because of this, anomie can foster the feeling that one lacks purpose, engender hopelessness, and encourage deviance and crime.