

Learning Theories of Crime

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Edwin Sutherland
 - Differential Association Theory
 - Prior to this theory crime was explained by social class, broken homes, age, location, and mental disorder
 - Argues that crime is learned by interacting with others, especially intimate others
 - Theory argues that above influences crime but only because they affect likelihood individuals will associate with others who engage in crime

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Edwin Sutherland
 - Differential Association Theory (9 Statements relating to the theory)
 - Criminal behavior is learned
 - Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication
 - The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups
 - When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes
 - (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple;
 - (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Edwin Sutherland
 - Differential Association Theory (9 Statements relating to the theory)
 - The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable
 - A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law (Primary statement of differential association)
 - Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Edwin Sutherland
 - Differential Association Theory (9 Statements relating to the theory)
 - The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning
 - While criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values since non-criminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Edwin Sutherland
 - Critiques of Differential Association
 - Examines the process by which people become criminals, but does not explain why people have the associations they do
 - Many believe the theory maintains an overly simplified view of the way people choose their models
 - Explains how people become involved in crime but not why they continue in crime
 - Money, drugs, prestige?

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Gresham Sykes and David Matza
 - Techniques of Neutralization
 - Like Sutherland felt that criminal behavior is learned
 - When article was written, it was a common belief that delinquents held views different from their lawful peers
 - Sykes and Matza argued opposite; that delinquents generally disapprove of delinquency
 - Felt juveniles could engage in acts of delinquency through neutralization

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- Gresham Sykes and David Matza
 - Techniques of Neutralization
 - Data suggest differences in the extent to which individuals accept the neutralization techniques
 - The more techniques accepted the more likely one is to engage in crime
 - Also, individuals who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to lead to crime

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- Gresham Sykes and David Matza
 - Developed 5 rationalizations and techniques of neutralization
 - The Denial of Responsibility
 - The Denial of Injury
 - The Denial of Victim
 - The Condemnation of the Condemners
 - The Appeal to Higher Loyalties

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- Gresham Sykes and David Matza
 - The Denial of Responsibility
 - Argues that act was far more than an accident
 - Act is the result of forces beyond his control
 - Delinquent views himself/herself as the victim
 - The Denial of Injury
 - Turns on the question of whether or not anyone has clearly been hurt by deviance
 - Delinquent feels that there was no harm despite the fact that the act was illegal

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- Gresham Sykes and David Matza
 - The Denial of Victim
 - Claims that the injury is not really an injury
 - Insofar as the victim is physically absent, the awareness of the victim's existence is weakened.
 - The Condemnation of the Condemners
 - Focus is shifted to the motives of those who disapprove of the act
 - Wrongfulness of own behavior is more easily repressed

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- Gresham Sykes and David Matza
 - The Appeal to Higher Loyalties
 - Deviation from norms may occur not because the norms are rejected but because other norms are accorded precedence
 - Loyalty to the group is considered greater than loyalty to society
 - Critiques of Neutralization Theory
 - Studies have found that both delinquent and non-delinquent boys utilize neutralization techniques
 - Ignores the aspects of the social structure that make justifications easier

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Ronald Akers
 - Social Learning Theory
 - Reformulation and extension of differential association
 - Contains same components of differential association but contains more
 - Differential association was incomplete
 - argues that criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others, but does not specify the mechanisms by which behavior is learned
 - Akers drew heavily upon behavioral and social learning approaches to behavior in an attempt to explain crime

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Ronald Akers
 - Social Learning Theory
 - Embraces variables that operate both to motivate and control criminal behavior, both to promote and undermine conformity
 - Relies upon 4 major concepts
 - Differential Association
 - Definitions
 - Differential Reinforcement
 - Imitations

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Ronald Akers
 - Social Learning Theory
 - Differential Association
 - The process whereby one is exposed to normative definitions favorable or unfavorable to illegal or law-abiding behavior.
 - The groups with which one is in differential association provide the major social contexts in which all the mechanisms of social learning operate
 - Associations must consider priority, duration, frequency, and intensity

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- Ronald Akers
 - Social Learning Theory
 - Definitions
 - One's own attitudes or meanings that one attaches to given behavior
 - Both general and specific
 - General – religious, moral and conventional values
 - Specific – definitions that orient the person to particular acts or series of acts
 - Some definitions favorable to deviance are so intensely held that they almost require one to violate the law

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- Ronald Akers
 - Social Learning Theory
 - Differential Reinforcement
 - Balance of anticipated or actual rewards and punishments that follow or are consequences of behavior
 - Punishment may be direct or indirect
 - Direct (positive) - painful or unpleasant consequences are attached to a behavior
 - Indirect (negative) – a reward or pleasant consequence is removed.
 - Punishments may be non-social; i.e. physical in nature

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- Ronald Akers
 - Social Learning Theory
 - Imitation
 - Engagement in behavior after the observation of similar behavior in others
 - Includes behavior learned in groups and by media
 - Akers has recently modified his social learning theory into the social structure and social learning model (SSSL)
 - combines social structure and social process
 - Has been called the “leading theory of crime”

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- Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti
 - Subculture of Violence
 - Attempts to explain why some groups have higher rates of violence
 - Wolfgang found that the homicide rate was highest among lower-class, young, African-American males
 - Found many disputes were between friends, relatives, and acquaintances over what seemed like trivial issues
 - They note that the subculture of violence is not completely at odds with the larger culture

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti
 - Subculture of Violence
 - Suggests that there is a potent theme of violence current in the cluster of values that make violence up the life-style, the socialization process, the interpersonal relationships of individuals living in similar conditions
 - Theory is made up of 7 statements

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Learning Theories of Crime

- Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti
 - Subculture of Violence
 - No subculture can be totally different from or totally in conflict with the society of which it is a part.
 - The entire subculture is not based upon violence
 - Subculture shares some values with the larger culture
 - To establish the existence of a subculture of violence does not require that the actors sharing in these basic value elements should express violence in all situations.
 - Persons living in a subculture of violence do not engage in violence continuously, else normal social functioning would be impossible

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- Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti
 - Subculture of Violence
 - The potential resort or willingness to resort to violence in a variety of situations emphasizes the penetrating and diffusive character of this culture theme
 - The number and kinds of situations in which an individual uses violence may be viewed as an index of the extent to which he has assimilated the values associated with violence.

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- Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti
 - Subculture of Violence
 - The subcultural ethos of violence may be shared by all ages in a sub-society, but this ethos is most prominent in a limited age group, ranging from late adolescence to middle age
 - Did not argue that a particular group shares in the use of violence, only that data shows greatest frequency in limited subgroups
 - The counter-norm is nonviolence
 - Violation of expected violence could result in removal from the group

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- Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti
 - Subculture of Violence
 - The development of favorable attitudes toward, and the use of, violence in a subculture usually involve learned behavior and a process of differential learning, association, or identification
 - Not all persons exposed to the presence of violence absorb and share in the values
 - The use of violence in a subculture is not necessarily viewed as illicit conduct and the users therefore do not have to deal with feelings of guilt about their aggressors.

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- Elijah Anderson
 - The Code of the Streets
 - A contemporary theory of the subculture of violence theory
 - Argues that there is a code of violence in poor, inner-city African-American communities
 - It should be noted that blacks are no more likely than whites to endorse values that justify violence
 - These values are more common in disadvantaged neighborhoods
 - Anderson studied black neighborhoods but could be present in white neighborhoods as well (if disadvantaged area)

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- Questions??
- Comments??

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