



Theoretical Perspectives on Criminal Behavior

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Abstract One of the most widely accepted theories for criminal behavior, especially among sociologists and social psychologists, is that criminality is a learned behavior. The differential association theory was devised by Edwin H. Sutherland (1) and proposes that people learn to act criminally by associating with others who share their beliefs, as opposed to those who hold opposing ones.

After more than 30 years, neither major theoretical updates nor empirical evidence for Sutherland's hypothesis (2) have been found. The purpose of this research is to provide an empirically grounded and theoretically sound presentation of differential association within the context of current apparel.

While the theory of differential association is right in its central claim that criminal behavior is learnt, it fails to account for learning principles discovered in recent laboratory research, which renders the theory seriously defective. Since Sutherland established his idea before the discovery of the fundamental principles, it needs to be reevaluated and reinterpreted in light of laboratory tests performed between 1940 and 1964.

Keywords: Criminal behavior, theoretical perspectives, criminology, sociological theories, psychological theories, biological theories, environmental factors

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Introduction|:

Human social behavior relies heavily on reaction patterns, and these patterns can be maintained by spontaneous reinforcement. Among two guys in the same circumstances, the one who steals tells us at least three things about himself: (1) the stolen object has some desirable characteristic; (2) previous stealing behaviors have been reinforced; and (3) previous theft behaviors have resulted to punishment. Some people don't agree with differential association since it doesn't provide a satisfactory explanation for why people behave differently when they're in close proximity to those who share their family, social, racial, etc. People who fit the statistical

profile—those who live in high-crime regions, who are Black, or who are young adult males—may or may not actually commit crimes. The fact that everyone's educational background is different, even though they all work in the same place, makes this a highly selective process. Those who flout the law, in Sutherland's view, just make things worse. Food, sex, work, health care, housing, travel, entertainment, etc., all contribute to people's well-being and are therefore common targets of social action. Those who help us develop into indispensable allies. One can encourage others to break the law in a number of different ways. When discussing their "reputation," members of a criminal or juvenile gang may use encouraging language to encourage other members to engage in illicit behavior. Criminals often brag about their exploits and the damage they've caused. Another person can be involved in a crime after the fact if they assist in covering up the criminal's identity or "fencing" the stolen goods. If detected disobeying the law, offenders face being screamed at, arrested, and maybe killed. All of them, in Sutherland's view, indicate "attitudes" that are either permissive or restrictive of illegal behavior. Some people may be more likely to engage in criminal activity than others, and the idea of differential association brings this possibility into question. Is it more about money or about fitting in with others that people feel successful? Sutherland's argument fails to take into account the importance of sex, autos, and wealth as reinforcers in American culture. Instead, it highlights the value of supportive relationships. We seek out individuals who share a common criminal affiliation but no other common criminal ties in order to test the hypothesis of differential association. If they feel out of place in society, some people may turn to illegal means of obtaining either money or transportation. A good man may decide to kill his wife when he has an argument with her or learns that she is cheating on him. Since the absence of a negative feeling is interpreted as reinforcement, the idea of differential reinforcement can be used to explain the occurrence instead of the concept of differential association. The husband's actions toward his wife play a vital role in the murder plot, but only become criminal after her death.

When people find out about a theft, they are more likely to commit it themselves. The local populace is also in favor of it. Only those with criminal tendencies and social networks may benefit from education about criminal behavior, in Sutherland's view. Even if there was no criminal intent in the initial stimulus, a criminal response could nevertheless arise. The socially acceptable reactions to various cuisines are taught to the public. He was breastfed as an infant and has since learned to feed himself, whether by shopping, cooking, or simply asking. The practice of "stealing food" may be one that can be rewarded or conditioned with genuine food. If a mother refuses a child's cookie request, the kid learns that he can sneak one while she isn't

looking. Not the mother or a band of bad kids, but the cookie is to blame for encouraging theft. This kid has learned a lot even if they've never been put in a situation where they have to disobey. Young people often use cars for transportation. When he's old enough, he'll enroll in driving school. If he had easy access to cars—his father had one, or he had the money to buy one—he presumably wouldn't steal them. If he has no other choice, though, he will steal a car. A woman can get a fur coat in a number of ways: through hard work, as a gift, through marriage to a wealthy guy, or through the bartering of sex services. The possibility of teaching criminal behavior is not without Sutherland's findings indicate the presence of unauthorized associations inside the educational process itself.

The hypothesis posited in this study suggests that criminal conduct can be acquired in environments lacking actual criminals or criminal influences. However, the theory of differential association restricts the learning process to the adoption of criminal attitudes. Consequently, individuals residing in environments characterized by criminality exhibit a reduced propensity to engage in criminal behavior, while those involved in criminal activities tend to inhabit non-criminal settings.

The significance of individuals, potentially surpassing that of discriminative signals, in the behavioral process lies in their ability to indicate the likelihood of a particular activity being rewarded. Based on established sociological theory, individuals exhibit distinct behavioral responses in the presence or absence of specific individuals. Individuals exhibit distinct behavioral patterns depending on the presence or absence of specific individuals, such as a worker's behavior varying in the presence of their boss, or a man's behavior differing when his wife is present compared to when she is not. The rationale behind this phenomenon is very simple: certain actions are incentivized or discouraged in the presence of a certain individual, as opposed to when they are absent. A notable illustration within the field of criminology pertains to the phenomenon wherein individuals exhibit distinct behavioral patterns contingent upon the presence or absence of a law enforcement official. Motorists attempt to ascertain the presence or absence of law enforcement officers in order to gauge their likelihood of encountering a patrolman.

A parent who is overweight may potentially influence their child to engage in criminal behavior, while an associate who has delinquent tendencies can act as a triggering factor for involvement in unlawful activities. The inclusion or exclusion of a particular individual might serve as a means of reinforcing or punishing illicit conduct. Consequently, associations have the potential to serve as discriminatory or reinforcing stimuli, thereby perpetuating illicit conduct.

Individual Factors and Co-occurring Factors:



Male young adults from underrepresented groups who live in impoverished areas commit the majority of formal criminal and delinquent acts. Deprivation is a prominent trait observed in slums, as residents experience a lack of essential social reinforcements within the economic framework. Individuals do not receive incentives for adhering to legal regulations. Through lawful methods, an individual belonging to the middle-class demographic can obtain essential provisions such as sustenance, apparel, and an automobile.

Behavior theory considers the extent to which an individual is satiated or deprived. Individuals exhibit distinct responses to eating depending on their level of hunger. An individual experiencing sexual deprivation may respond to stimuli that would not elicit a sexual desire in a person who is sexually satisfied. Prisoners who are provided with access to beefsteaks and female companionship exhibit a reduced likelihood of engaging in homosexual activities or resorting to consuming rats during their period of confinement. Due to a deficiency in emotional responsiveness required for reinforcement, young adults exhibit a higher propensity for engaging in illegal behavior compared to their older counterparts. When people acquire appropriate behavioral reactions to obtain desired reinforcers, the occurrence of criminal behaviors diminishes.

Moreover, should individuals persist in engaging in illicit behaviors, it is highly probable that law enforcement agencies will become cognizant of their patterns, hence potentially leading to the imposition of additional penalties, such as incarceration, in order to discourage such conduct. When examining the concept of conditioning, it becomes more comprehensible to understand the impact of comic books and television on behavior. Let us consider a hypothetical scenario whereby a group of one hundred married women are engaged in the act of viewing a televised program that portrays a wife committing the act of homicide against her spouse. Following the conclusion of the program, it was observed that 99 wives resumed their employment, while the last wife resorted to committing the act of homicide against her spouse.

She could have killed her husband even if she hadn't seen the television show, so we can't really attribute her actions to a specific event. However, it is imperative to inquire as to why the act of killing her husband was perceived as reinforcing for this particular woman, but it did not hold the same reinforcing effect for the other ninety-nine individuals. Given the unique dynamics of their marital relationship, it is reasonable to infer that she want her spouse to relinquish his

position or role. The individual exhibited a typical response observed in individuals when faced with unpleasant circumstances, as she engaged in the process of eliminating the negative stimuli.

There exists a prevalent idea that adolescents who are exposed to media containing violent content are prone to displaying instant aggressive behavior. The present argument posits that the factors that shape behavior are primarily the stimuli presented on a television screen. However, it is important to note that the actual agents responsible for affecting behavior are the immediate environment and surroundings of the child. The degree of similarity or comparability between two contexts, as well as the influence of the observer's prior conditioning, have an effect on the extent to which responses to a television program can be extended to individuals who view the program. The observation of a television program depicting the gassing of Jewish children does not necessitate or imply that individuals should engage in similar actions. Rather than engaging in emulation of the Nazi regime, it is imperative that we adopt measures aimed at mitigating the likelihood of future occurrences of such heinous acts. The fundamental Pavlovian stimulus-response (S-R) paradigm forms the foundation for the notion that a television stimulus can evoke a distinct reaction in a viewer. Nevertheless, the behaviors associated with this process often exhibit a degree of unpredictability.

Summary:

The study of criminal behavior encompasses a diverse array of theoretical perspectives, each offering unique insights into the complex interplay of factors contributing to deviance and delinquency. From classical notions of rational choice to modern biosocial and ecological frameworks, scholars have sought to unravel the mysteries of human behavior in the context of law and society. By critically examining these theoretical perspectives and their empirical foundations, researchers can continue to refine our understanding of criminal behavior and inform evidence-based interventions aimed at reducing crime and promoting social justice.

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