

Differential Association Theory

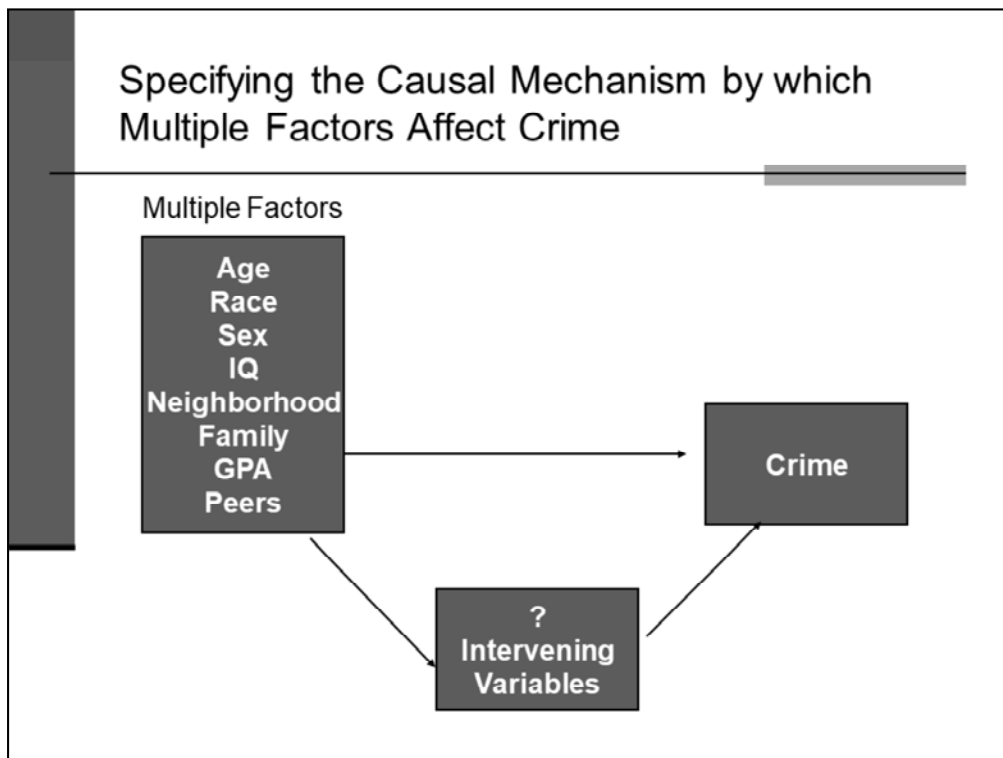
- I. Sutherland's Method
- II. Normative Conflict
- III. Differential Association Process
 - A. Learning in interaction
 - B. Criminal techniques or skills
 - C. Definitions of crime
 - D. Necessary and sufficient conditions
- IV. Differential Social Organization
- V. Normative Conflict and Laws

Learning Objectives

1. Understand Sutherland's method
2. Know how crime is rooted in normative conflict
3. Understand the differential association process
4. Be able to state the necessary & sufficient conditions of crime
5. Understand how differential social organization explains crime rates across groups
6. Understand where definitions favorable to crime come from
7. Know how the three key concepts are related
8. Know the criticisms given in lecture

Sutherland's Method

- Dissatisfied with multiple factor theories.
 - Correlation does not imply causation
 - Wanted to explain **why** some factors were related to crime
- General theory: necessary and sufficient conditions for crime
- Logical Abstraction
 - Asked: "What do males, young adults, blacks, and inner city residents have in common that causes them to commit crimes?"
 - What is in the black box explaining these correlations? What is the intervening mechanism?



Normative Conflict

- **Group Conflict Model of Society:**
 - Society is segmented into groups that conflict over values, attitudes, appropriate behavior
 - Consensus is not a given, but must be achieved
- **Normative (Culture) Conflict:**
 - In society, some groups define laws as rules to be observed, others as rules to be broken.
 - Amount of crime in a society is determined by normative conflict.
 - **Consensual societies:** Low division of labor, uniform values, absence of conflict.
 - **Conflict-ridden societies:** High division of labor, heterogenous values, conflict.

Differential Association Process

- Explains how normative conflict in society translates into individual criminal acts
- Crime is learned in interaction in primary groups
 - Criminal techniques and skills
 - Definitions favorable and unfavorable to law violation (motives, verbalizations, attitudes)

Excess of Definitions Favorable to Crime

- Criminal behavior occurs when a person has learned an excess of definitions favorable to crime
 - Refers to specific criminal offenses
- **Four Modalities** (weights for each definition):
 - Frequency
 - Duration
 - Priority
 - Intensity
- If $DFC/DUC > 1.0$, then crime will occur
 - DFC = weighted definitions favorable to crime
 - DUC = weighted definitions unfavorable to crime

Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Crime

1. Person has learned an excess of weighted definitions favorable to crime.
2. Person has learned the necessary skills and techniques.
3. The opportunity to commit the crime is present.
 - If you can find one person who refrains from crime when these conditions are present, the theory is wrong.
 - If you can find one person who commits a crime when these conditions are not all present, the theory is wrong.

Definitions Unfavorable to Crime

- "Crime doesn't pay."
- "Marijuana causes brain damage and leads to cocaine and heroin."
- "Turn the other cheek when insulted."
- "Always be a law abiding citizen and you'll be respected."
- "Don't drink and drive – you can hurt someone."
- "Don't throw your life away by breaking the law!"
- "Sinners will be damned for eternity."
- "Never rat on a fellow criminal or hold out on them."

Definitions Favorable to Crime

- “The Justice Department should be going after real criminals, not me!”
- “It’s technically not sex if there isn’t penetration and if you don’t touch her!”
- “I can drive after five beers, no problem.”
- “If someone questions your manhood, you have to stand up for yourself.”
- “Everyone cheats on their income taxes – it’s not really a crime.”
- “I was planning to give them money back after I solved my financial problem.”
- “It’s not a crime if no one gets hurt.”
- “A sucker is born every minute.”

Techniques of Neutralization (Sykes and Matza)

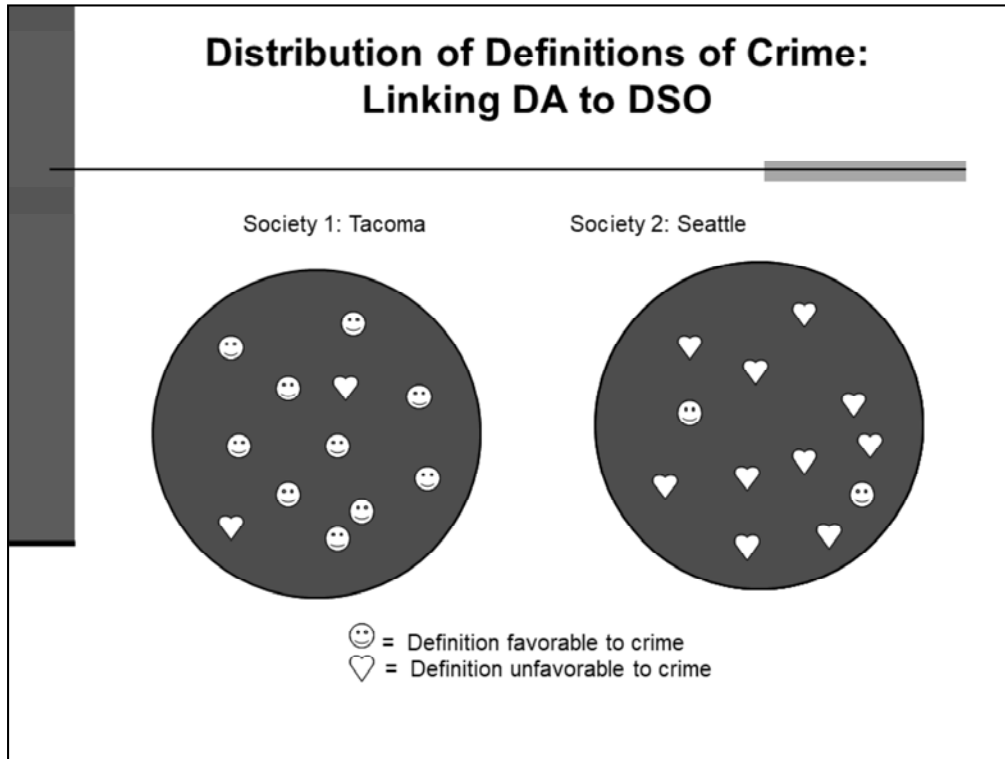
- Denial of responsibility
- Denial of injury
- Denial of the victim “he deserved it”
- Condemnation of the condemners “reject the rejectors”
- Appeal to higher loyalties

Differential Social (Group) Organization

- Explains how normative conflict causes group or societal rates of crime.
 - The crime rate of a society (group) is determined by differential social (group) organization.
- **Differential social organization:** the extent to which a society (group) is organized in favor of crime versus organized against crime.
- Important feature of social organization: how that organization influences the group's definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime.

Crime Rates Predicted by Differential Social Organization

Organization Against Crime	Organization in Favor of Crime	
	Low	High
Low	Moderate Rates	High Rates
High	Low Rates	Moderate Rates



Normative Conflict and Criminal Law

- Criminal laws are an expression of normative conflict
 - A politically powerful group organizes against behavior that violates one of their values or interests.
 - Two groups are in normative conflict: the group that engages in the behavior vs. the powerful group.
 - Note: definitions for and against are neutral with respect to law.
 - The powerful group succeeds in outlawing the behavior.
- Implications:
 - Now definitions favorable to the behavior are pro-criminal definitions and definitions unfavorable to behavior are anti-criminal definitions.
 - The weaker group will have a higher rate of criminal behavior.

Origins of Criminal Acts & Definitions Favorable to Crime

- They are present (as neutral definitions) before the behavior was outlawed.
- Imported from a different culture.
- Invented by modifying existing neutral (or criminal) definitions.

Criticisms of Differential Association

- Assumes a deterministic model, which is unlikely to hold for social science
 - But we can translate the theory's propositions to a probabilistic model
- The social psychological hypothesis (ratio) is probably an oversimplification
- Need to incorporate a situational decision-making model (e.g., rational choice)
- Differential social organization is underdeveloped: what is the theory of structure?
- Learning process needs to be specified more clearly (e.g., social learning theory).