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The Current State of Differential Association Theory

Ross L. Matsueda

With his theory of differential association, Sutherland attempted to identify universal mechanisms that explain the genesis of crime regardless of the specific concrete structural, social, and individual conditions involved. In this article, I discuss the development of the theory and then assess its strengths and weaknesses. After finding Kornhauser's (1978) influential critique of differential association theory to be oversimplified and misguided, I review recent empirical tests. I argue that the theory appears supported, but requires additional research to specify the concrete content of its abstract principles. Such respecification will improve the theory's predictions, empirical tests, and implications for public policy. I conclude by proposing several avenues for theoretical and empirical research.

Edwin Sutherland's (1939, 1947) differential association theory marked a watershed in criminology. The theory was instrumental in bringing the perspective of sociology to the forefront of criminology. Before then criminological research and thought tended to be eclectic and unorganized, lacking a general theoretical perspective to integrate findings and guide research. Through the years, differential association theory has stimulated theoretical refinements and revisions, empirical research, and applications to programs and policy. The first two decades saw several attempts to revise the theory to explain the origin and persistence of delinquent subcultures (Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960), to incorporate principles of symbolic interaction and role theory (Cressey, 1954; Glaser, 1956, 1960; Weinberg, 1966), and to incorporate

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social learning principles (Jeffrey, 1965; Burgess and Akers, 1966; Akers, 1973). During the last decade, the trend of theoretical innovation has been supplanted by two distinct trends. The first focuses on testing the theory: devising methods for operationalizing the theory's concepts, deriving hypotheses from its propositions, and subjecting those hypotheses to empirical verification. The second entails rejecting the theory's principles in favor of social control or integrated theories. This trend was originally stimulated by Kornhauser's (1963) theoretical critique of differential association theory, and Hirschi's (1969) empirical study supporting his social control theory.

This article examines the current state of differential association theory. It begins by reviewing the intellectual development of Sutherland's theory. It then assesses the evolution of the empirical tests of the theory's propositions, as well as evaluating theoretical attempts to revise those propositions. Next, it critically evaluates Kornhauser's (1978) critique and subsequent rejection of the theory's basic assumptions. Finally, the article outlines directions for future research, arguing that the most fruitful line of research is that which identifies the concrete historical content of the theory's abstract mechanisms, principles, and concepts. Such research would have several payoffs: enriching and perhaps modifying the theory's abstract principles, allowing the theory to make concrete predictions, and suggesting ways of translating the theory into public policy.

DEVELOPMENT OF DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION THEORY

Before Sutherland developed his criminological theory, the prevailing explanation of crime was the multiple-factor approach. According to this approach, criminal behavior is determined by a variety of concrete conditions, such as mental disorders, broken homes, minority status, age, social class, alcoholic parents, and inadequate socialization. Such an explanation has the virtue of being multidisciplinary and open-minded, but the weakness of being eclectic and unparsimonious. In 1933, Michael and Adler (1971) published a stinging criticism of the discipline of criminology, arguing that criminology had produced no valid scientific generalizations, had used unscientific methods, and, therefore, needed to be replaced by a panel of scientists from other disciplines. Sutherland's reac-

tion to this report, combined with his growing dissatisfaction with the nonscientific multiple-factor explanation, provoked him to develop both a rigorous definition of an adequate causal explanation (Sutherland, 1973b; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1979), as well as an attempt to develop a scientific generalization that met those requisites (Cressey, 1979).

Sutherland (1973b) argued that the multiple-factor approach yielded a hodgepodge of unorganized factors associated with crime, and thus failed to provide a scientific understanding of criminal behavior. A scientific generalization, he maintained, should provide a necessary and sufficient explanation of crime, identifying those conditions that are always present when crime is present and always absent when crime is absent. Furthermore, he suggested treating concrete correlates, such as broken homes, race, sex, and social class, not as causes in and of themselves, but rather as facts to be explained by a scientific generalization. For example, race and sex cannot by themselves explain crime, since some black males refrain from crimes and some white females commit crimes. What is needed, then, for both understanding and controlling crime is a set of interrelated propositions that together explain all of the observed correlates of crime.

To arrive at such a generalization, Sutherland proposed three methods. The first, which he called "logical abstraction," calls for logically abstracting from those concrete conditions known to correlate with crime to general abstract propositions and universal mechanisms. He asked what blacks, males, persons from broken homes, and persons from lower classes had in common that caused them to have high rates of crime? The answer to this question, presumably, would specify the intervening mechanisms that accounted for the observed correlations between these concrete conditions and criminal behavior. The second method is differentiation of levels of explanation. Sutherland (1947, p. 4) argued that in causal analysis we need to focus on a particular level of explanation and hold other levels constant, rather than trying to explain everything at once. For example, we can develop an explanation of individual criminality without simultaneously explaining aggregate crime rates, or the origins of crime in society. Ideally, of course, a theory would imply explanations at other levels, but those explanations can be explicated later. The third method of constructing a theoretical generalization is analytic induction (Sutherland, 1973b). Pioneered by Thomas and Znaniecki (1927) in their study of the Polish peasant, and later applied to opiate addiction by Lindesmith (1938), analytic induction consists, in four steps, of a case-by-case search for a necessary and sufficient explana-

tion: (1) roughly define the universe of a phenomenon; (2) formulate a tentative hypothesis and try it out on a few cases; (3) if the hypothesis does not fit, either modify the hypothesis or redefine the universe; (4) continue searching for negative cases until confidence in the hypothesis is found.

Sutherland used these methodological strategies to develop his theory of differential association. The general theoretical direction that Sutherland took was influenced by the intellectual context of his time: the Chicago School of sociologists—Park, Burgess, Thomas, Wirth, Shaw, McKay, Dewey, and Mead. The specific substantive direction that Sutherland took was influenced by three developments in criminology. First was the work of Shaw and McKay (1931, 1969), which mapped the geographic distribution of delinquency in Chicago, finding that (1) delinquency rates increased as one moved away from the center of the city, (2) ecological rates of delinquency remained stable over generations despite a complete turnover of ethnic composition, and (3) social disorganization explained the high rates of delinquency in the inner-city. Second was the work of Sellin (1938), Wirth (1964), and Sutherland (1973a) on the influence of culture conflict on crime, which asserted that crime in modern societies is rooted in the conflict of competing cultures. Third was Sutherland's (1937) work on professional theft, in which he concluded that not everyone can become a professional thief, but rather one must be accepted into a group of professional thieves and then indoctrinated into the profession.

The underlying assumptions of differential association theory were implicit in early editions of Sutherland's (1933) textbook, made explicit in the third edition (1939), and revised into final form in the fourth edition (1947). Specified in nine propositions, differential association theory consists of three interrelated concepts—normative (culture) conflict, differential association, and differential social organization—operating at two levels of explanation: the society (group) and the individual (Cressey, 1960). The theory assumes that, in two ways, crime is ultimately rooted in normative conflict.¹ Stated from a static cross-sectional standpoint, normative conflict exists when society is segmented into groups that conflict over norms, values, and interests: Some groups define a given law as a rule to be followed under all circumstances; others define that law as a rule to be violated under certain circumstances; still others may define the law as a rule to be violated under virtually all circumstances. This condition of normative conflict, characteristic of heterogeneous modern industrial societies, results in high rates of crime. In con-

trast, primitive undifferentiated societies are relatively harmonious, integrated, and consensual; they consequently have low rates of crime.

Stated from a historical standpoint, crime originates in the passage of criminal laws, which, in turn, is a political expression of normative conflict. More precisely, the behavior of a group in society threatens the values, interests, or beliefs of a politically more powerful group (normative conflict). The powerful group then mobilizes the state to proscribe the behavior in question. At this point there exists normative conflict about the legal code. Members of the powerful group define the law as a rule to be followed. Some members of the less-powerful group will desist from the behavior, since it is now against the law, and change their attitudes toward the behavior. Others, however, persist in the behavior, maintaining their definition favorable to what is now a crime (Sutherland, 1973b, p. 24).

At the level of the individual, the process of differential association explains how normative conflict produces individual acts of crime.² Criminal behavior is learned in communication with other persons, predominantly in intimate groups. The content of this learning includes two sets of elements. One set is the techniques and skills for committing crimes, which vary from simple techniques known by virtually all members of society, to complicated specialized skills known by only a select circle of members. The second, more important, set of elements learned are the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes—either toward defining the law as a set of rules to be observed or broken. Given the existence of normative conflict, individuals are surrounded both by persons who define the law favorably and by persons who define the law unfavorably. Criminal behavior results when the individual learns an excess of definitions favorable to law violation over definitions unfavorable to law violation (Sutherland, 1947). Not all definitions receive equal weight, however. Rather, each is weighted by four modalities: frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. Therefore, definitions presented more frequently, for a longer time of exposure, earlier in life, and from either a more prestigious source or a more intense relationship, receive more weight in the differential association process.³

Although the theory is stated as a general theory of all crimes, Sutherland suggested that the differential association process could be different for different criminal offenses (Sutherland, 1973d, p. 36). This is consistent with his belief that a general theory of crime would be less useful, in both a theoretical and policy sense, than theories of specific offenses or behavior systems (Sutherland, 1947, p. 218). For some behavior systems,

the techniques, definitions, and associations bear little resemblance to other systems; in other instances great similarities exist. Thus differential association theory may consist of several parallel but analytically distinct subtheories of specific offenses. While specialized crimes, such as professional theft, are probably explained by specialized techniques and definitions pertaining to those sophisticated crimes only, other more generalized crimes, such as vandalism, petty theft, and disorderly conduct, are likely explained by similar and overlapping techniques and definitions. Clearly, the extent to which the differential association process is offense specific or offense general is an empirical question, dependent on the class of crimes considered (Jackson, Tittle, and Burke, 1986).

At the level of the group or society, normative conflicts are translated into rates of crime through the process of differential social organization. Specifically, the extent to which the group or society is organized in favor of crime versus against crime determines its rate of crime. Thus crime rates are a social organizational expression of normative conflict. Given a society in which members are surrounded by conflicting definitions of criminal behavior, and given that individual criminality is caused by learning an excess of definitions favorable to crime, social organization determines crime rates by influencing the probability that members will be exposed to the competing definitions. Stated differently, "organization in favor of crime" refers to group or societal processes that expose individuals to criminal patterns; "organization against crime" refers to processes that expose individuals to anticriminal patterns. Like the differential association process, differential social organization can vary by offense: The organizational determinants of restraint of trade are likely to differ from the organizational determinants of vandalism.

With reference to crime, the important elements of social organization are those that influence the probability that group members will be exposed to an excess of associations with criminal behavior patterns. When applied to a nation, this organization consists of the structure of political and economic institutions; when applied to a community, it refers to community organization; when applied to a delinquent gang, it refers to group structure and process. Many elements of such organizations are irrelevant to crime; thus differential social organization refers to those elements that affect the probability that group members receive an excess of definitions favorable to crime. For example, inner-city black youth have high rates of delinquency because of their social organizational context: structural barriers to economic success, residence in low-income, high-delinquency neighborhoods, and high rates of female-

headed households lead to lax supervision, association with delinquents, and exposure to an excess of definitions favorable to delinquency (Matsueda and Heimer, 1987).

Viewed at either the structural or individual level, differential association theory identifies a dynamic ongoing process of interaction that produces, among other things, criminal acts. The dynamic nature of the theory follows from the process model underlying the pragmatic philosophy of Chicago school sociology (Sutherland, 1973b). According to differential association, then, changes in social interactions cause individuals' ratios of definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime to vary over time. The degree to which definitions vary is dependent on the larger social organizational context of learning: In highly institutionalized contexts, consistent patterns are presented, yielding stable ratios of definitions; in less-structured settings, divergent patterns are presented, yielding fluctuating ratios of definitions. Changes in definitions of crime are also influenced by the individual's receptivity to new definitions either favorable or unfavorable to law violation. Sutherland hypothesized that differential receptivity is determined by the person's current ratio of learned behaviors: Those who have learned an overabundance of anticriminal definitions will be receptive to additional anticriminal definitions and resistant to procriminal definitions, and vice versa (Sutherland, 1973e; Sutherland and Cressey, 1978, pp. 89-90).

Whether, at a given point in time, a person who has learned an excess of definitions favorable to crime actually commits the crime may be dependent on variables exogenous to the differential association process. In an unusual critique of his own theory, Sutherland (1973d) identified two situational variables that he suggested invalidated differential association as a necessary and sufficient explanation of crime. The first is objective opportunity; clearly, without opportunity one cannot violate the law. Opportunity, however, is a complex concept, since the crucial element is perceived rather than objective opportunity. Given a situation of objective opportunity, differential association theory can explain why one person perceives the situation as a crime opportunity while another does not. The second is the presence or absence of alternate behaviors. Given a problematic situation in which crime is one solution, the decision to engage in crime may hinge on the availability of lawful solutions to the problem. Whether or not there are viable alternatives may be a function of the learning process: Some criminals, for example, may have learned that robbery is virtually the only way of obtaining money and have placed themselves in a situation in which they have no alternatives.

In other cases, viable alternatives are limited by structural or objective barriers, such as unemployment or low income. Again, given the existence of alternative solutions, differential association can explain why a person chooses a criminal or lawful situation.

We can state this dynamic process from the standpoint of the group or society. Temporal changes in the crime rate of a group or society are caused by changes in the relative balance of organization for and against crime. This process explains why the rate of crime does not increase indefinitely, as criminal patterns diffuse throughout society. As the crime rate increases and criminal behavior patterns increase in strength and number, conventional groups become organized against crime, initiating crime-control programs and media campaigns, all of which present anticriminal definitions, dry up criminal opportunities, and increase conventional alternatives, which in turn cause the crime rate to level off (Sutherland, 1973b, p. 21). This dynamic process, like the process of differential association, can vary by offense: The differential organizations influencing changes in rates of restraint of trade may differ from those that influence changes in rates of vandalism. Viewed in broader perspective, historical changes in crime rates for a given society are due to social-structural changes, which influence the extent of normative conflict.

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Differential association theory has spawned two major developments—one empirical, the other theoretical. Empirical research has tackled the difficult problem of operationalizing the theory's concepts, deriving hypotheses, and testing propositions. Theoretical developments have explored several crucial problems raised by the theory, such as identifying the precise mechanisms by which crime is learned and specifying a theory of the origins of delinquent subcultures.

Operationalizing and Testing the Theory

Perhaps the most serious criticism of differential association argues that the theory cannot be tested empirically. Cressey (1960) has argued that even though the theory may be untestable, it remains an important principle for organizing our knowledge about the correlates of crime.

Others claim that the theory is of little value if it cannot be tested (Gibbs, 1987; Glueck, 1966; Hirschi, 1969). Some versions of this criticism are on shaky ground because they fail to recognize that theories—being sets of interrelated propositions explaining a given phenomenon—are rarely testable as a whole. What are testable are specific hypotheses, propositions, or empirical implications of the theory (Glaser, 1960, 1962). Another version of this criticism is on safer ground. It argues that the critical variable in the individual-level explanation—an excess of definitions favorable to crime—cannot be observed or measured. Sutherland (1973d, p. 36) noted that implicit in the abstract theory of differential association is the possibility of deriving a mathematical formula expressing a person's ratio of weighted definitions favorable and unfavorable to a specific crime. Even he admitted, however, to the difficulty of formulating such an expression (Sutherland, 1947, p. 7).

Early empirical studies of juvenile delinquency operationalized differential association theory using the concept of associations with delinquent peers, and the frequency, duration, priority, and intensity of such associations. Most of these studies found general support for the theory: Juveniles who reported more delinquent friends tended to commit more delinquent acts (Short, 1957, 1958, 1960; Glaser, 1960; Reiss and Rhodes, 1964; Voss, 1964; Stanfield, 1966; Hirschi, 1969; Krohn, 1974). This strategy assumes that most delinquent behaviors are learned from one's peers, that delinquent peers are likely to transmit delinquency and nondelinquent peers nondelinquency, and therefore the concept of delinquent peers is highly correlated with the concept of associations with definitions favorable and unfavorable to delinquency. The problem with this strategy is that it fails to measure directly the crucial variable, learned definitions of law violation. It is conceivable that some definitions favoring law violation are learned from nondelinquents and some definitions favoring conformity are learned from delinquents. Furthermore, because it relies on cross-sectional data, the strategy cannot rule out a hypothesis based on the opposite causal ordering, such as Glueck and Glueck's (1950, p. 164) "birds of a feather flock together."

Several researchers facilitated a more direct strategy of operationalizing the theory by identifying the content of definitions favorable to crime and delinquency. Thus Cressey showed how verbalizations and rationalizations made up an important component of such definitions, then illustrated them with his studies of embezzlement and compulsive crimes (Cressey, 1952, 1954). Sykes and Matza (1957) then developed their concept of techniques of neutralization to illustrate prodelinquent defini-

tions used by juveniles. Researchers have taken advantage of these refinements and developed survey instruments to measure a person's learned definitions of law violation (Jensen, 1972; Hepburn, 1976; Griffin and Griffin, 1978; Matsueda, 1982; Jackson, Tittle, and Burke, 1986; Tittle, Burke, and Jackson, 1986; Orcutt, 1987; Matsueda and Heimer, 1987).

More recently, researchers have used advances in structural equation modeling to address three issues: response errors in measures of definitions of crime, dynamic processes inherent in the theory, and offense-specific models. Orcutt (1987) found that consistent with differential association theory, marijuana smoking is explained by definitions favorable to marijuana use and number of friends who smoke marijuana. Moreover, he found an interaction effect between the two variables, concluding that, as Sutherland (1973b, p. 40) suggested, predictions from differential association theory are increasingly uncertain as the ratio of definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime approaches unity.

In my own work, I conceptualize the ratio of definitions of law violation as an unobservable, latent construct, which cannot be measured perfectly, but can be measured approximately by observable indicators from surveys. Such indicators, however, contain unreliability, which can attenuate effects that we are interested in. Covariance structure analysis allows us to correct for such attenuation by specifying and estimating a measurement model linking observable indicators to latent theoretical constructs. Using this strategy, we found that differential association is empirically supported: For both black and nonblack males, the process of learning definitions favorable and unfavorable to delinquency is the intervening mechanism explaining the influence on delinquency of age, broken homes, socioeconomic status, neighborhood trouble, and parental and peer processes (Matsueda, 1982; Matsueda and Heimer, 1987). One limitation of this line of research is that it relies on cross-sectional data to examine an inherently dynamic theory.

Tittle and his colleagues used simultaneous equation models to model the dynamic nature of the theory and to examine whether or not the differential association process is offense specific (Jackson, Tittle, and Burke, 1986; Tittle, Burke, and Jackson, 1986). They also examined the efficacy of several distinct operational measures, including associations with criminals, criminal attitudes, criminal normative expectations, fear of legal sanctions, and deviant motives. Using a variety of measures of the differential association process and seeking to disentangle their causal interrelationships, they found that a measure of motivation to deviate was a strong predictor, that the differential association process

worked similarly for a variety of offenses, and that for some offenses, an offense-specific process appeared evident. Although this line of research addresses the dynamic nature of the theory, a better strategy would capitalize on longitudinal data, using panel or event history analysis.⁴

Revisions of the Theory

A number of criminologists have attempted to revise the theory of differential association so it would be more amenable to empirical test. Following the spirit of Sutherland's method, these theorists drew from principles of more general social psychological theories—namely, symbolic interaction and social learning. Thus Cressey (1954) applied the interactionist concepts of role-taking and motivation to link learned definitions of law violation to social roles, the building blocks of social structure. Glaser (1956) applied the interactionist concept of the self, arriving at his hypothesis of differential identification. He subsequently incorporated the concepts of commitment and role-taking and generalized his explanation to differential anticipation (Glaser, 1960, 1978). Other researchers have built upon these principles, investigating personality (Weinberg, 1966) and containment (Voss, 1969). This line of theorizing has great theoretical potential, but still requires additional development. Thus a more explicit conceptualization of the important elements of role-taking and cognitive processes are needed before operational measures can be located, and hypotheses derived and tested.

The second line of revision incorporates principles of operant conditioning and social learning theory to specify the precise mechanisms by which crime is learned. Early versions incorporated Skinner's principles of classical and operant conditioning (Jeffrey, 1965; Burgess and Akers, 1966), while later versions added Bandura's (1969) social learning principles (Akers, 1977, 1985; Akers et al., 1979). According to Akers's social learning theory, crime is initially learned through direct imitation or modeling; the subsequent likelihood of sustaining criminal behavior is determined by differential reinforcement, the relative rewards and punishments following the act. Reinforcement can be direct or vicarious, whereby simply observing another's criminal behavior being reinforced will reinforce the observer's own criminal behavior. Definitions of crime are learned through this process and affect behavior directly, as well as indirectly, by serving as cues (discriminative stimuli) for law violation. Akers and his colleagues have not only specified a social learning theory, they have also developed operational indicators of imitation, differential

reinforcement, and definitions of deviance. Moreover, they find that social learning theory explains substantial variation in substance abuse (Akers et al., 1979) and smoking (Krohn et al., 1985). Additional theoretical work needs to identify the important reinforcers for various definitions, explicitly link these to social organization and social structure, and specify a situational model of cognition and role-taking using social learning principles (e.g., Bandura, 1986).

A third set of revisions attempted to answer two important theoretical questions implied by differential association theory (Cohen, 1955; Cohen and Short, 1958; Cloward, 1959; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). The first concerned the origins of crime: "Where did normative conflict or definitions favorable to crime come from?" The second concerned the specific nature of differential social organization: "What are the social-structural elements that influence rates of crime?" Both questions prompted research on the origins and persistence of subcultural delinquency as a phenomenon of lower-class adolescent males. For Cohen (1955), working-class subcultural delinquency results when lower-class adolescents, who lack the requisite social and academic skills due to cultural and structural barriers, fail to live up to middle-class standards. Those adolescents perceive a sense of personal failure and typically find themselves together in the market for a solution. Through a tentative, probing conversation of gestures—a process best characterized as one of trial and error—a group collectively innovates a new status hierarchy, a delinquent subculture. Reaction formation explains the content of such a subculture: They reduce their anxiety, exaggerating their disdain for middle-class values, leading to definitions favorable to delinquent behaviors that are impulsive, malicious, and irrational from the standpoint of the middle class.

For Cloward and Ohlin (1960), the distribution of delinquent subcultures results from the structures of legitimate and illegitimate opportunity. Borrowing from Merton (1938), they argue that lower-class adolescents share middle-class aspirations of improving their economic status, but are structurally blocked from attaining those goals. Those who attribute their failure to a personal shortcoming are likely to adopt an isolated solution (turning to drugs) to their frustration, while those attributing failure to the inequitable social system, are more likely to adopt a collective solution (turning to violent or criminal gangs). These solutions are structured by illegitimate opportunity—the opportunity to engage in delinquency, to learn delinquent definitions, and to learn techniques of delinquency—which varies by neighborhood organization.

Such structures constitute Sutherland's "organization in favor of crime" (see also Kobrin, 1951). In integrated lower-class neighborhoods, in which bonds form between criminal and conventional roles (such as fences and fixes) and between older and younger offenders, stable subcultures of theft flourish. In unintegrated, disorganized neighborhoods, little opportunity exists to learn and execute such sophisticated crimes, and, instead, frustrated youth must turn to violence to obtain status and vent hostility. Finally, in neighborhoods lacking such organization, drug subcultures develop. Most empirical research on this issue, however, has been unable to locate such distinct subcultures, finding instead a single parent subculture (Cohen and Short, 1958).

The importance of this work lies in its attempts to identify the concrete content of differential social organization and its attempt to explain the origins of definitions favorable to subcultural delinquency. Unfortunately, recent empirical research has trivialized this line of theorizing by confusing levels of explanation—reducing social structural concepts to individual-level characteristics—and by applying the explanation to explain all forms of delinquency, not merely the subcultural form (Cullen, 1984). It is not surprising that such research finds the trivialized theories unsupported.

KORNHAUSER'S CRITIQUE

A recent trend among empirical researchers of crime is not an attempt to test or revise differential association theory, but rather an attempt to reject it outright in favor of either social control theory or a version of integrated theories. Much of the stimulus for this trend originates directly or indirectly from the work of Kornhauser. Directly, Kornhauser's (1978) recent work presents a seemingly devastating critique of differential association from the standpoint of a social disorganization-social control perspective. Indirectly, Kornhauser's (1963) earlier version of the work served as a theoretical framework for Travis Hirschi's (1969) key empirical study, which found support for his social control theory over differential association, and stimulated subsequent interest in the control perspective.

Kornhauser's (1978) essay is an excellent analytical dissection of traditional theories of delinquency along the lines of core concepts of sociology: social structure, culture, social order, socialization, and behavior.

In a rhetorical exercise, she categorizes the major theories of crime into cultural deviance, strain, and disorganization perspectives, then argues that disorganization theories are analytically and empirically superior. Unfortunately, by forcing differential association theory into an oversimplified depiction of cultural deviance theories, she misconstrues Sutherland's enterprise and reduces his theory to a caricature.⁵ Kornhauser defines the parameters of a cultural deviance perspective by claiming they all subscribe to the following six assumptions.

- (1) Human beings have absolutely no human nature, but instead are completely plastic (p. 36).
- (2) There is no consensus in modern societies: Laws cannot reflect consensus, only subcultural values of powerful groups (pp. 44, 192).
- (3) Paradoxically, perfect consensus is the only source of social order: Modern societies, lacking consensus, have degenerated into a war of subcultures (pp. 38, 44).
- (4) Deviance (crime) is completely relative; even the most heinous offenses are lawful in some other time or place (pp. 38-40).
- (5) Conventional (lawful) culture and deviant subcultures are equally strong in influencing behavior (p. 27); socialization is always perfect (p. 194).
- (6) Behavior is always a perfect expression of subcultural values, and, therefore, behaviors are never deviant—only subcultures are (p. 25).

Hence the term "cultural deviance theory."

Each of these assumptions exaggerates Sutherland's writings. Sutherland (1926; 1947, p. 90) did not assert that human beings have no nature, but simply argued that criminal behavior is learned, just like other behaviors. Thus human beings are born with a genetic makeup, with innate drives, and with impulses; however, the specific direction that these drives and impulses take, whether toward crime or conformity, is conditioned by social forces. Nor did Sutherland (1947, pp. 16-17) assume that modern societies are so conflict ridden as to preclude any form of consensus, or that consensus is the *sole* source of social order, or that laws cannot reflect any degree of agreement. Instead, he simply observed that compared to many primitive undifferentiated societies, which present uniform behavior patterns, modern industrial societies present inconsistent patterns of behavior (1947, p. 70). Often these inconsistencies motivate groups to pass criminal laws that outlaw what they regard as undesirable behaviors. Sutherland noted that common-law crimes reflect a general agreement in society about general categories of behavior, and in fact probably originated from a crystallization of mores (Sutherland,

1947, p. 16).⁶ Other laws, particularly statutory laws, clearly reflect conflicts of interests or values.⁷

When Sutherland said that crime is relative, he simply meant that laws differ in different societies. When he said that crime is the result of culture conflict, he meant that the presence of conflict over what specifically should be outlawed gives rise to criminal laws and ultimately crime. He did not mean that consensus is nonexistent. Finally, Sutherland did not state that all cultures and subcultures are equally binding on behaviors, or that socialization is always perfect. Indeed, Sutherland (1973b, p. 21; 1947, pp. 8-9) posited variation in the strength and content of both organization favoring crime and organization against crime. Socialization at the individual level consists of learning definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime, both of which vary in strength (at minimum) by frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. Sutherland (1973b, p. 21) implied that most people refrain from engaging in crime because conventional normative systems and organizations are almost always stronger than criminal organization. It turns out that contrary to the portrait painted by Kornhauser, Sutherland does not fit her caricature of cultural deviance theory: Cultures are not assumed equally binding, socialization is not assumed perfect, consensus and human nature are not precluded.

From those assumptions imputed to Sutherland, Kornhauser (1978, pp. 189-200) derives several propositions about differential association that appear devastating but that are in fact wholly alien to the theory. Sutherland, she argues, assumes that structural differentiation is perfectly mirrored by subcultural differentiation, which in turn perfectly socializes its members to crime if its norms happen to be outside the purview of the law. Thus social structure and culture are indistinguishable: Social structure is a structure of values only. Moreover, social structure and cultures are not treated as variables, but as constants: Crime is explained not by weak culture and structure, but by perfect socialization to equally strong cultures and structures that vary only in normative content. Furthermore, the process by which definitions of delinquency are learned is beyond lawful regulation—the result of the aleatory process of the ever-proliferating structural and subcultural differentiation. Therefore, Sutherland is left with nothing to explain sociologically: Behavior, situations, culture, and social structure are all treated as constants, present everywhere, and, as such, present nowhere (p. 200). Because structure is culture, and culture is everywhere, Sutherland cannot tell us which elements of structure are important, which subgroups will form subcultures, or which subcultures will cause crime—in fact, he assumes that all sub-

groups are equally able to create values to justify their behavior. Finally, Sutherland is left with a conception of society that has no order: While he argues that perfect consensus is the only source of order possible, he denies any consensus in social norms and laws. There cannot be even minimal agreements over the rules of the game that would allow groups to conflict.

Kornhauser's reasoning may be logical, but because she has begun with a faulty premise—forcing differential association into her cultural deviance model—her reasoning leads her astray, causing her to build a straw man. Her misreading of Sutherland stems from her failure to appreciate two principles followed by Sutherland: logical abstraction, and differentiation of levels of explanation. Recall that Sutherland attempted to abstract from concrete historical conditions to a universal generalization, one that located the abstract processes and mechanisms that would determine criminality in all historical contexts. That generalization, based on normative conflict and differential social organization, is formally stated without concrete content. Kornhauser confuses the statement of an abstract generalization with the statement of concrete conditions that can be explained by the generalization. Thus, while not formally stated in the abstract generalization, Sutherland clearly intended that the learning of definitions of crime is not a result of aleatory processes, but is structured by the concrete elements of social organization that determine communication patterns. These elements, which include social disorganization, cultural transmission, group organization, and the like, vary across groups, societies, and historical periods. That is, the concrete conditions vary in time and space, but the abstract mechanisms remain invariant.

Sutherland was acutely aware of the problem of infinite regress, in which causal conditions are invalidated because they are caused by some prior condition, which in turn are invalid because of still prior causes, and so on. His solution was to hold the level of explanation constant at a given point, solve that problem, then move on to another level. Thus questions about why individuals have the associations they have or where definitions favorable to crime come from are important, but exist at a different level of explanation. Nevertheless, in his substantive writings, Sutherland did discuss many concrete mechanisms that addressed, but did not resolve, these questions.⁸

At times, Kornhauser (1978, p. 7) appears to confuse levels of explanation, implying that social structure exists as a variable in the psychological processes operating at the individual level. Sutherland, in contrast,

clearly differentiated the individual from social structure. He argued that historically, structural differentiation led to constraints on communication, divergences in interests, and restrictions on opportunities—all of which helped spawn differing definitions and interpretations of norms. The strength (weight) and content of those definitions or behavior patterns are influenced by the general social organization. Social structure, then, generates motives, attitudes, and rationalizations, and accounts for their distribution, but is, at the same time, analytically distinct from those patterns. At the individual level, a person's location in social structure determines the person's group affiliations, communication patterns, objective interests, and so on, which in turn, influence the kinds of behavior patterns encountered.

Shorn of misconceptions and oversimplifications, the root of Kornhauser's critique of differential association does not involve the confusion of culture and social structure, the failure to treat culture as a variable, or the assumption of perfect socialization. Rather it boils down to this. Disorganization and control theories simply assume that the procriminal beliefs, motives, and interests of criminals do not vary appreciably (if they exist at all) and do not have any causal impact on criminal behavior. All that varies are commitments and beliefs in conventional behavior. Thus by *assumption*, only those definitions of behavior derived from middle-class morality are important; all other interpretations are discounted.

Differential association theory, in contrast, allows for variation in the strength and content of both conventional and nonconventional motives, beliefs, and justifications. Moreover, the theory suggests that members first learn the precepts stated in law, then learn when the precepts apply and when they do not. Variations in these applications, and not necessarily an oppositional normative system, give rise to normative conflict, and constitute the crucial elements of definitions favorable to law violation (Sutherland, 1973c, p. 125; Cressey, 1953; Sykes and Matza, 1957). Since both procriminal and anticriminal organizations vary independently in strength, four possible states of social organization, which vary by offense, are theoretically possible: (1) anticriminal organization can be strong while procriminal organization is weak; (2) the opposite can be true; (3) both can be strong; (4) and both can be weak. Social disorganization is a *special case* of differential social organization, in which only 1 and 4 are possible, since procriminal organization is assumed to be constant (weak) for all crimes.

Kornhauser (1978) concludes by specifying the causal structure of differential association theory, contrasting it with the causal structure of control theory, and bringing empirical evidence to bear on the issue. We can update that empirical evidence. The important distinguishing feature of the models is that for differential association theory, the effect on delinquency of variables representing social structure and social process (including elements of social bonding) should be mediated by the process of learning definitions of delinquency. In contrast, social control theory predicts that the elements of the social bond to conventional society—such as attachment to parents and peers—should influence delinquency directly, regardless of learned definitions. Kornhauser (1978, pp. 238-241) cites early studies of this issue, which found support for social control theory: In the face of definitions of delinquency, attachment to parents and peers directly influenced delinquent behavior (Hirschi, 1969; Jensen, 1972; Hepburn, 1976). Recent research, however, has reached the opposite conclusion. Reanalyzing the data used by Hirschi and Jensen and using causal models that consider the process by which definitions are measured, we have found that for both black and nonblack males, differential association is supported over control theory (Matsueda, 1982; Matsueda and Heimer, 1987). Specifically, our construct representing the ratio of definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime mediates the influence on delinquency of attachment to parents, attachment to peers, broken homes, SES, age, and neighborhood delinquency (see also Ginsberg and Greenley, 1978; Johnson et al., 1987; Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, and Akers, 1984).

The work of Kornhauser (1978) and Hirschi (1969) has stimulated a new trend, which seeks not to test disparate theories against one another, but rather to gain greater explanatory power by integrating the important elements of such theories into a comprehensive model (Elliott, Ageton, and Canter, 1979; Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton, 1985; Hawkins and Weis, 1985; Johnson, 1979; Pearson and Weiner, 1985; Thornberry, 1987). Ostensibly, integrating explanatory mechanisms has the potential for developing a more powerful explanatory framework. Illustrations can be found in integrations of theories operating at different levels of explanation, and answering distinct questions (Cohen, 1955, 1965; Cohen and Short, 1966; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). Some of the recent approaches, however, suffer two weaknesses. First, in an attempt to explain individual criminality, several have attempted to integrate variables derived from distinct levels of explanation, thereby trivializing group- and societal-level concepts (Short, 1979).⁹ Second, these theories often

fail to reconcile conflicting assumptions underlying their constituent sub-theories. Accordingly, the resulting theory typically is less an integrated theory than a reversion to one perspective or another (Hirschi, 1979). For example, clearly the most prominent integrated theory is Elliott and his colleagues' integration of strain, control, and social learning theories. Their empirical tests, which use perhaps the most extensive and carefully collected data set on delinquency, appear to support differential association theory over strain and control theories. They find that the extent of "bonding" to conventional and delinquent peers is by far the most important predictor of delinquency, and mediates the influence on delinquency of strain and control variables. This finding is entirely consistent with differential association and social learning theories. Perhaps what is needed is an integrated theory based on a unified set of behavioral principles, and operating at distinct levels of explanation. The abstract principles of differential association or social learning theory may be an appropriate point of departure (Pearson and Weiner, 1985).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Research that has operationalized, tested, and challenged differential association theory continues to be significant for understanding the strengths and limitations of the theory's principles. There is, however, a second line of research that is sorely needed: Research that specifies the concrete elements of the theory's abstract principles—definitions favorable to crime, differential social organization, and normative conflict. Such research would examine the social organization of crime in a given historical and geographical context, answering questions such as, "What are the important definitions favorable to crime used by certain groups?" "What are the critical institutional elements of differential social organization?" and "What components of social structure are most important for sustaining normative conflict?" Giving these abstract concepts historical content will have enormous payoffs. It will make the propositions derived from the theory easier to operationalize and test. It will allow us to make concrete predictions based on the theory and provide implications for public policy. It will also suggest ways to revise the theory's general principles in light of the evidence. Moreover, such a strategy would enrich the theory by giving meaning to the abstract concepts—indeed by bringing them life—and revealing concrete causal

mechanisms.¹⁰ Such concrete studies, carried out at different levels of explanation—societal, group, individual, and situational—would draw from the broader behavioral and social theories from which differential association is derived. They would not be limited to static studies, but would also examine developmental processes culminating in individual changes and historical processes culminating in societal changes.

Perhaps the most fundamental research problem facing differential association theory involves identifying the content of definitions favorable to crime. Such content is likely to vary throughout history, across communication groups, and by criminal offense, such that a definition of crime pertinent to one offense, one group, and one period of time may be irrelevant for another offense, another group, and another time period. It seems clear that the preponderance of definitions favorable to crime are not oppositional values that repudiate the legitimacy of the law and make crimes morally correct. Rather, most are verbalizations that seek to fit general norms and laws to specific concrete situations.¹¹ What is needed is a series of inductive studies cataloging the important definitions applied to behavior by various groups, and situational studies examining the process by which individuals apply such verbalizations to conduct. This research would likely identify other variations in definitions besides Sutherland's four modalities, and perhaps lead to an alternative causal statement to the concept of a ratio of definitions. For example, the strength of a definition favorable or unfavorable to crime clearly depends in part on its persuasiveness, the rhetorical force of the underlying argument. Indeed, sociolinguistic research on the structure of arguments may be relevant. The definitions concept is likely a multidimensional construct, and research is needed to identify these dimensions (e.g., Tittle, Burke, and Jackson, 1986).¹²

A second problem requiring research concerns the relationships among roles, role-taking, and definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime. With the concept of role, the building block of social structure, lies the link between the social learning process specified in differential association and the broader social processes identified by differential social organization. This line of research would build on the work of Cressey (1954), Glaser (1956, 1960, 1978), and Weinberg (1966) in specifying a symbolic interactionist theory of role-taking, the social act, and motivation (Shibutani, 1986; Stryker, 1980; Bandura, 1986), which is consistent with Sutherland's (1926) thinking. Here, one could address the difficult problem of specifying a situational as opposed to developmental theory

of crime. Sutherland (1939) first made this distinction, arguing that while differential association was a developmental theory, which explained criminality in terms of the prior life experiences of the individual, an equally important problem is explaining crime in terms of the immediate situation confronting the individual (see also Gibbons, 1971). Such an explanation could explain the mechanisms by which a person who has already learned an excess of definitions favorable to crime either engages in or refrains from crime. Thus the explanation would include the intersection of objective opportunity, interactions or role-taking with others, and the process by which learned definitions are interpreted and applied to a developing line of action (e.g., Luckenbill, 1977).¹³ Theoretically, this would call for use of group-process, interactional, and collective behavior theories, as well as theories of choice.¹⁴ Concretely, it would answer questions that Sutherland raised years ago, but did not answer: "What role does objective opportunity and alternative behaviors play in the immediate situation confronting the actor?" "To what extent do criminals learn definitions favorable to crime and then actively seek criminal opportunities and actively ignore conventional alternatives?" Furthermore, it would provide a frame of reference for examining how groups control the behavior of their members, including informal and formal sanctions.

From an interactionist perspective, individuals learn, through socialization, to take the role of the generalized other—including primarily personal groups, but also abstract groups, such as the criminal justice system—and consider their anticipated behaviors from the standpoint of the group (Mead, 1934). Thus the definitions and sanctions of personal groups would be most important in controlling behavior. Formal sanctions would be expected to influence behavior inasmuch as the individual takes the role of the legal system, and, more important, to the extent that his or her personal groups espouse the norms and fear the sanctions of the legal system (Sutherland, 1947, p. 374; Silberman, 1976). Glaser (1960, 1978), with his theories of differential social control and differential anticipation, has begun to spell out principles consistent with this framework (for a more complete treatment, see Matsueda, 1988). It is quite likely that this situational model of the criminal act would prove equally useful as a model of learning criminal behavior. The best example of research along these lines is still Short and Strodtbeck's (1965) classic study of group process and gang delinquency.

Once specified, such models can provide a research framework for analyzing the relationships among social learning, social roles, and role-

transitions within a life-course perspective (Yamaguchi and Kandel, 1985). In turn, this perspective can be used to explain the aging effect, maturation, and other dynamic processes in crime. Research along these lines may reveal that role-transitions are key pivots for changes in interests, commitments, and communication patterns, leading to changes in the efficacy and content of definitions pertaining to crime. It may reveal further that older criminals have learned that the aging process makes crime difficult, that a feeling of burnout offsets the rewards and incentives from crime, and that crime then becomes redefined (Shover, 1985). Furthermore, it may reveal that engaging in criminal behavior acts back on social organization, influencing one's group affiliations, commitments, and communication patterns, and thus influencing the learning of behavior patterns. These group processes, social roles, and life-course variations make up an important component of differential group organization. Given the importance of communication networks in the differential association process, the geographic variation in crime rates may be fruitfully conceptualized as a problem of social networks or sociometrics (Krohn, 1986). Then, methodological advances in network analysis, graph theory, and block modeling can be used to examine networks of crime.

These group influences are, of course, structured by the backdrop of larger institutions and social structures. Much research has shown that neighborhood and community organization, family structures and processes, and school organization are crucial elements of differential social organization, which explain aggregate rates of crime. Such institutions can control crime by serving as conduits for anticriminal definitions, by hampering the dissemination of procriminal patterns, and by providing conventional opportunities while desiccating criminal opportunities (Sutherland and Cressey, 1978). An important line of research would examine dynamic changes in differential social organization (including changes in these institutional contexts) on aggregate rates of crime. It would also examine the dynamic influence of the social organization of objective opportunities, as developed in the routine activities approach (Cohen and Felson, 1979).

Although Sutherland did not specify a theory of social structure in differential association, he did discuss the importance of components of social structure, such as social class, for structuring group organizations and learning processes. Moreover, Sutherland (1947, pp. 69-75) presented a complex analysis of the origins of normative conflict, argu-

ing that industrialization and the emergence of capitalism debilitated traditional forms of social control and spawned motives for crime. Specifically, with industrialization and the transition from the old feudal order to capitalism, old institutions and controls, such as the church, were weakened. Concomitantly, capitalist competition fostered an individualism and materialism that was easily transformed into criminality. And, finally, the law as an agency of control was weakened by the interests of powerful business, which favored a "hands-off" government and often resorted to white-collar crimes to gain a competitive edge. Cressey later expanded this analysis, drawing explicitly on the writings of Durkheim, Weber, and Merton (Sutherland and Cressey, 1978).

The abstract principles of differential association theory are compatible with other theories of social structure, such as Marxist theories of class structure under capitalism. In fact, differential association theory seems more compatible with a Marxist political economic theory than is social control theory, even though recent writings have attempted to combine the latter two (Colvin and Pauly, 1983; Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis, 1985; Groves and Sampson, 1987). For any Marxian class analysis, the fundamental underlying structure of capitalist society is class conflict between capitalists and workers. Their contradictory class locations give rise to conflicting material interests; thus history is a history of class struggle, of which the state, law, and criminal justice system play a critical role in maintaining the hegemony of capitalist institutions. Such rudimentary assumptions are consistent with the underlying model of normative conflict assumed by differential association—economic classes struggling to realize their interests, with the powerful capitalist class securing the state to promote its class interests. The seeds of political consciousness in the working class, which are revealed at times by embryonic acts of protest, strikes, and violence, consist of competing interpretations and definitions of conventional norms and laws. Social control theory, in contrast, assumes a consensual moral order, in which competing definitions, beliefs, and motives are either nonexistent or impotent to explain behavior. Even Colvin and Pauly (1983), who claim to consider variation in both the strength and content of the social bond, fail to allow for conflicting motives and interests held by the working class.¹⁵ The problem is in the use of the concept of social bond, which eliminates meaning and interests, and instead focuses exclusively on conventional controls.

CONCLUSION

Fifty years ago, Sutherland outlined a series of abstract principles, derived from broader principles of social psychology and sociology, that made sense of the many concrete conditions associated with crime. The explanation was intended to arrive at a universal explanation of crime: While concrete conditions may vary across groups, societies, and history, the abstract mechanisms would remain invariant. It was a bold endeavor, bringing both fame and criticism. Although Sutherland intended his differential association theory to be a "tentative hypothesis," subject to disconfirmation and eventual revision, he viewed his methodology of searching for universal explanations as the essence of good science. I have attempted to demonstrate the strengths and limitations of Sutherland's theory, showing that his general principles and orientation are basically sound, but that his explanation requires much more work. The search for abstract mechanisms, principles, and generalizations is crucial for the advancement of knowledge, revealing behavioral laws, suggesting concrete causal conditions, and implying targets for controlling crime. But we have scarcely scratched the surface; much work remains.

NOTES

1. Cressey (1960) changed Sutherland's term "culture conflict" to "normative conflict" because culture conflict was mistakenly interpreted to refer only to the conflict between the cultures of immigrants and the larger conventional culture (see Cressey, 1968).

2. Following Cressey (1960), I am making a distinction between the differential association "process" and differential association "theory." The former refers solely to the nine propositions describing the process by which a person becomes delinquent. The latter refers to the theory taken as a whole, and thus includes the differential association process, differential social organization, and normative conflict.

3. The differential association hypothesis, then, specifies that criminal behavior will occur when a person's learned ratio of *weighted* definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime exceeds unity. Sutherland (1973d, p. 40) noted that a theory's predictions may become increasingly uncertain as the ratio approaches unity (Orcutt, 1987).

4. Another method of testing differential association theory is consistent with Sutherland's (1973) recommendations for developing knowledge through experimental evaluations of correctional programs. Based on Cressey's (1955) derivations of treatment principles from the theory, these studies test hypotheses not by using statistical controls within causal models, but rather by using randomization within experimental designs. Both Empey and Erickson (1972) and Andrews (1980) evaluated delinquency programs based on differential association and found support for the theory. Glaser (1956) found that the best predictors of parole violation were consistent with differential association theory.

5. Space limitations preclude a comprehensive treatment of Kornhauser's complex and numerous arguments. Here, I will attempt to characterize and address her major criticisms directly concerning differential association theory. Long ago, Cressey provided an excellent summary and response to popular criticisms of differential association theory (Cressey, 1960, 1964; Sutherland and Cressey, 1978).

6. For Sutherland, normative conflict typically refers less to conflict over the moral efficacy of the general class of behaviors outlawed, but rather refers to disagreements over the specific situations to which the laws should apply. Thus there is general consensus that stealing should be outlawed, but disagreement over whether persons should steal to avoid starving (Sutherland 1973, p. 125). Such disagreements, often extensions of legal defenses to crime, constitute definitions favorable to crime (Cressey, 1954; Sykes and Matza, 1957).

7. At one point, Kornhauser (1978, pp. 41-42) backs off from her consensus assumptions and concedes that law serves the powerful more effectively than the powerless. She then tries to argue that such laws concern only white-collar crimes, and not the crimes of juveniles. This is a specious argument, since we are concerned here with fundamental underlying assumptions about social order and criminal law, not a subset of laws. Moreover, it appears that laws pertaining to juveniles reflect class interests and not consensus (Platt, 1969).

8. For example, Sutherland (1947, pp. 69-75) described general social processes leading to normative conflict, such as the demise of primitive undifferentiated societies, the rise of capitalism and a concomitant individualistic ideology, and the development of a competitive economic system. He also identified concrete elements of differential social organization, such as Shaw and McKay's processes of social disorganization and cultural transmission, the formation of delinquent gangs, the organization of professional theft and circus grafting, and the organizational processes at work during war (Sutherland, 1947, 1973c).

9. In criminology, the importance of variance explained has long been exaggerated as the ultimate test of a model's strength. Of more importance are the assumptions underlying the explanatory theory, the tenability of implicit behavioral principles, and the logic of the theory's structure.

10. While several classical studies addressed this issue, such as Sutherland's (1937, 1949) studies of professional theft and corporate crime, Cressey's (1953) study of embezzlement, and the many studies of delinquent gangs and subcultures (Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Short and Strodtbeck, 1965), we have seen fewer examples in recent years.

11. Viewed in this light, our criminal justice system represents one important element of conflict between society, which is represented by the state, and the criminal, who has violated the definitions of appropriate behavior codified in the law. Thus, legal defenses, such as self-defense, insanity, necessity, and mistaken identity, are prototypical definitions favorable to crime, but which are specified in the law. As Cressey (1954) and Sykes and Matza (1957) imply, many definitions favorable to crime used by criminals are extensions or generalizations of these legal defenses to fit their particular situations. Legal guilt or innocence, then, hinges on the legitimacy accorded to these definitions in a court of law. There is, then, an intimate relationship between the processes behind law violation and the processes behind the reaction to law violation.

12. Several studies have explored definitions favorable to crime (verbalizations, rationalizations, techniques of neutralization) in a variety of contexts, including embezzlement (Cressey, 1953), corporate crime (Sutherland 1949, Clinard and Yeager, 1980), professional theft (Sutherland 1937), delinquency (Sykes and Matza, 1957; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1985), violence (Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967), property offenders (Shover, 1983), and rape (Scully and Marolla, 1984).

13. Conceptualized this way, the problem entails two kinds of theories: a developmental theory, such as differential association theory of individual propensity to commit crimes, and a situational theory of the criminal act as it unfolds. This parallels the conceptualization laid out by Hirschi and Gottfredson (1986) in their concepts of criminality (propensity) and criminal events (situations of crime).

14. The formal utility models specified by economists provide a situational explanation of crime, but for two reasons, are probably not very useful for our purposes. First, they simply *assume* a rational choice process at a situational level, and assume that departures from that process wash out in the aggregate. Second, like differential association, they specify an abstract model of rationality, but fail to specify concretely what the utilities are. The problem I have identified is to specify those concrete conditions.

15. That such theories concern juvenile delinquents who are generally not linked directly to class conflict does not eliminate this problem. Clearly, a social psychological model that *allows* for competing interests is needed.

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