

# Differential Association



- Edwin Sutherland (1947) "Principles of Criminology."
  - most influential criminologist of 20th century
    - his theory is foundation for many that followed
  - changes focus from structure to process
  - theory is more social-psychological
- Criticism of structural theories
  - Theories do not explain all crime by all people

# 9 Postulates of D.A. Theory

1. Criminal behavior is learned.
2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.
3. The principle part of learning criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups.
4. Learning criminal behavior includes: (a) techniques of committing crimes and (b) motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes necessary to engage in criminal behavior
5. Motives and drives are learned as definitions of legal codes that are either favorable or unfavorable to law violation

## 9 Postulates--cont'd



6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to law violation.
7. Differential associations vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.
8. The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all the mechanisms involved in any other learning.  
-learning process is no different
9. While criminal behavior may be an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those needs and values, since non-criminal behavior is also an expression of needs and values.

# Subcultural Theories



- Largely spawned by Differential Association
- Subculture:
  - groups for whom norms, values, behaviors are distinct enough to set members off from mainstream culture
- Key thesis:
  - conformity to rules, values, norms of unconventional subcultural groups is interpreted by conventional society as deviant/criminal

# Status Frustration theory

- Albert Cohen (1955)--*Delinquent Boys*
  - Question from Sutherland: What are the origins of “definitions favorable to law violation?”
  - Primarily interested in explaining crimes that are “non-utilitarian, malicious, negativistic”
  - Merton’s influence: people strive for cultural goals
    - adolescents strive for status recognition, especially at school

# Status Frustration--cont'd



- Middle-class teachers tend to evaluate students based on that “middle-class measuring rod”
- Lower-class parents less able to socialize their children in ways that prepare them for middle-class values rewarded in school
  - e.g. poorer communication skills, less commitment to education, less emphasis on delayed gratification, self-reliance, respect for property, good manners, etc.
- Lower-class students at disadvantage in competition over recognition and status

# Cohen's lower-class adaptations



- Corner boys
  - minor delinquency, but not defining characteristic
  - aware of inability to achieve middle-class standards and resigned to lower-class future
- College boys
  - try to overcome structural/class handicaps
  - those with academic promise have best chance
- Delinquent boys
  - reject middle-class values and replace with others--"reaction formation"
  - allows for comparison--middle-class values inferior

# Lower-class Focal Concerns

- Walter Miller (1958) *Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency*
  - focus on different social class lifestyles
  - Focal Concerns: ideas or characteristics important to social class subculture
  - Lower-class focal concerns set standards for young male behaviors that may be viewed as normal to lower classes, but are defined as delinquent by middle and upper classes

# 6 Focal Concerns

## 1. Trouble

- unwanted contact with official agencies
- defined in terms of getting into or staying out of trouble

## 2. Toughness

## 3. Smartness

- street smart

## 4. Excitement

- breaks in monotony of lower-class life

## 5. Fate

- life determined by fortune or luck

## 6. Autonomy

- control over one's life
- reject authority
- Gangs also provide status and belonging

# Subculture of Violence



- Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) "The Subculture of Violence"
  - Basic statement:
    - | there is a subcultural ethos that suggests that in some types of social interaction, a violent and physically aggressive response is expected or required
  - such use of force or violence is generally viewed as reflection of values that stand apart from the dominant, mainstream culture

# Subculture of Violence

## Basic Premises



- A subculture of violence is not totally different from dominant culture
- Those who participate in subculture of violence are NOT necessarily violent all the time
- Violence ethos is most prominent among adolescent to middle-aged males
- Attitudes favorable to violence are learned through process of differential learning and association

# 5 Defining Characteristics of Subculture of Violence



- Norms
  - require use of violence in certain situations
  - counter-norm is non-violence-->ostracism
- Low insult threshold
- Lifestyles: more exposure to opportunities
- Self-concept: exaggerated masculinity
- Violence viewed as problem-solving or control mechanism