

LEARNING TO BE DEVIANT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY
OF DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION

A Thesis

Presented to

the Chancellor's Scholars Council
of Pembroke State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Completion of
the Chancellor's Scholars Program

by

Sandra K. Holland

December 10, 1984

Cage
AS
36
.N6
P455
1984
nd.4

A special thanks to Dr. Barney K. Pauze'
for all his help and support during my undergraduate studies,

and to

Dr. Frank Schmallegger and Dr. Paul B. Herrick, Jr.
for their help with this thesis.

195546

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....1
Opposing Theories.....3
Differential Association.....9
Criticisms and Denials.....12
Review of the Literature.....15
Research Design.....25
Results of the Study.....28
Conclusions.....54
Appendix 1.....58
Footnotes.....62
Bibliography.....64

INTRODUCTION

Edwin H. Sutherland's theory of Differential Association may be categorized as a learning theory. The basic premise is that criminal behavior is acquired through the learning process, just as is lawful behavior. The socialization process is essentially the same, regardless of whether the messages being transmitted are conformist or deviant. Through interaction with others, people learn attitudes both favorable and unfavorable to law violation. Sutherland claims that a person turns to criminal behavior when there is an excess of attitudes and values favoring law violation.

In theory, Differential Association is one of the most logical explanations of criminal behavior. However, practical application often lessens the significance of seemingly good theories. Hence, I am interested in researching Sutherland's theory to see if it is as thoroughly explanatory as it seems to be. This paper will focus on a subjective test of Differential Association as a theory of criminal involvement.

Sutherland's theory is almost impossible to test in the traditional social scientific manner. It lends itself primarily to a quasi-experimental design. In other words, the researcher must look at criminal behavior after it has taken place; he must reconstruct the reality of the criminal's world. Furthermore, many of the major concepts of Differential Association can not be operationalized with the mathematical precision necessary

to allow any significant type of statistical analysis. Consequently, there is a great deal of subjectivity and impressionism involved.

As a result, this study is purely descriptive; it is qualitative in nature, as opposed to quantitative. In effect, the study is an attempt to examine a sociological phenomenon in terms of the criminal's view of reality.

OPPOSING THEORIES

Deviance may be defined as that which society considers to be abnormal behavior. Statistical deviance is a measure of "what is" while social deviance is concerned with "what should or should not be."¹ However, such definitions are useful only in a relative sense; behavior which is considered deviant in one culture may be common practice in another. There is a great deal of uncertainty among social scientists as to whether anything or anyone is inherently good or bad.

Because of this uncertainty, scientists, psychologists, and sociologists, as well as many others, have tried throughout history to discover what determines a person's behavior. However, concerning deviance, sociologists are even less sure of its origin than of its definition.

Although there must be biological and psychological considerations which affect behavior, we have begun to recognize sociological influences as playing a very important rôle. Some of the most respected contemporary theories in the area of deviant behavior, many of which are social psychological in nature, are Anomie, Labeling, Conflict, Control, and Socialization. Each of these theories deserves more attention than can be allotted here, but a short description of each is necessary to understand the history of theoretical thinking in this field.

The theory of Anomie, proposed by Robert Merton during the late 1930's, describes a breakdown in social structure which

occurs when there is disjunction between the goals of a given society and the legitimate means available to certain groups to achieve them. In other words, many people conform to the goals of society but are simply unable to attain them by legal means. The poor, lower class, and minority groups are most commonly in a disadvantaged position in society. Hence, these groups consistently have the highest crime rates. Merton mentioned several methods of deviant adaptation: innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion.*

The first method of adaptation, innovation, involves accepting societal goals but choosing to achieve them in an illegal, illegitimate or deviant fashion.² For instance, an uneducated lower class man might wish to be as successful as a wealthy physician in his town. His goal is a legitimate one, but it is not likely that he will become that wealthy through legal channels. Hence, he may rob a local bank in hopes of becoming rich. This innovative mode, according to Merton, would encompass most types of money-making criminal activities.

The ritualist, claims Merton, has abandoned the traditional goals of society but continues to abide by the institutional norms. Success is not important to the ritualist, but he still practices the means to success. The classic example of this method of adaptation is the bureaucrat who becomes obsessed with petty rules and procedures, losing sight of the objectives that the rules were designed to achieve. Ritualism is the mildest form of deviance.

*Merton also deals with the category of conformity, but conformity is not relevant to the current discussion.

Retreatism occurs when people abandon both the approved goals of society and the approved means of achieving them. These people usually value the success goal but can not attain it, being either unwilling to use illegitimate means or a failure even after attempting to achieve success by using illegitimate means.³ In other words, retreatism is brought on by repeated failure. Merton feels that this mode of adaptation is the least frequent method; but some examples are the psychotics, vagrants, vagabonds, tramps, chronic drunkards, and drug addicts.

Finally, rebellion occurs when people reject both the approved goals and means and then substitute new, disapproved ones instead. The act of revolution is a good example of this mode.

Explanations of deviance in terms of Anomie tend to oversimplify a very complex problem. First of all, the theory assumes a universality of what constitutes "illegitimate means" that is not the case, because delinquent and criminal acts vary in time and place.⁴ Deviance is a relative phenomenon. Also, Anomie rests on the assumption that deviant behavior is disproportionately more common in the lower class, and it neglects the important role of social control agents in defining who is deviant.

The Labeling point of view on deviance suggests that people are deviant because they are labeled as deviant. This theory makes no attempt to explain why individuals initially engage in deviant behavior. Rather, Labeling is concerned with secondary deviance. How and why are people defined as deviant and how do these people react to such a stigma? The major propositions to

the Labeling theory are as follows:⁵

1. Definitions of behavior as deviant or acceptable are subjective and relativistic.
2. Negative reactions to rule-breaking actions are not automatic.
3. The key process in the investigation of deviance is the labeling of behavior as deviant and the labeling of individuals as deviants by audiences.
4. The labeling of an individual as a deviant—as a socially and morally undesirable character—typically has serious consequences for further deviation.
5. A deviant label, once applied, is typically extremely difficult to shed.
6. The application of a deviant label to a particular rule breaker is not a random process but is strongly influenced by contingencies.
7. Self-labeling, as does the process of being labeled by significant or powerful others, has powerful consequences for further deviance.

Although Labeling has received a great amount of attention, many sociologists deny that it is a theory at all. Labeling does not explain deviance, only the reaction to it. A second criticism of the Labeling perspective is that punishment often deters further deviant behavior rather than encouraging such behavior. Among the many other criticisms of the theory is that it is possible to have certain forms of deviant behavior prior to, or in the absence of, labeling; a deviant career can develop without labeling ever having taken place.

The Conflict theory of deviance is concerned with the distribution of economic, political, and social power. Certain

groups have the power to make rules and laws but, in doing so, these groups often fail to recognize and consider the needs of others. Different groups in society have different interests which are not always compatible. Thus, the groups with the most power will create rules or laws which will guarantee that their interests will be served. Most crime, according to the Conflict theory, represents behavior that conflicts with the interests of those who have the power to make the rules.

As with the other theories, Conflict theory has several shortcomings. It does little to explain why or how people commit crimes or become deviant. It predicts trends or rates for groups under certain conditions but fails to explain which individuals will be involved. The theory does more to explain the formation and enforcement of certain rules and laws.⁶ Furthermore, the theory ignores the socialization process, as well as other forms of conflict. More creditability would be seen in this approach if deviance and crime were assumed to stem from much broader conflicts based, for example, on religion sex, age, occupation, race and ethnicity, and those attempting to regulate morality or to protect the environment.⁷ The theory is overly restricted to the relation of social class and economic power interests to rules regulating deviance and crime.

Another theory of deviance, the Control theory, emphasizes socialization to conformity and prevention of deviance. Social control is said to create a bond between the individual and society and to motivate him to conform. According to Travis W.

Hirschi, there are four components which prevent a person from becoming deviant: 1)attachment, which refers to the extent to which the person is bound to his group through the socialization process; 2)commitment, which describes the degree to which the person develops a "stake" in conforming behavior so that acts of deviance jeopardize other, more valued, conditions and activities (concern for one's reputation for example); 3)involvement, which refers to physical activity of a nondeviant nature; and 4)belief, which refers to a person's allegiance to the dominant value system of his group. The absence of one or more of these components may lead to deviant behavior.⁸

The Control theory has been used to explain delinquency and youth crimes but holds very little merit in explaining other forms of deviance. The theory is far too simplistic in design and application. The heart of the problem is that the definition of conformity is very unclear.

DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION

A well known socialization theory, and the basis for this thesis, is Sutherland's theory of Differential Association. This theory was developed in 1939 to account for criminal behavior but may be applied to other forms of deviant behavior as well. The basic assumption is that deviant behavior is learned through association, just as is conformity. In other words, the socialization process is essentially the same, regardless of whether the messages being transmitted are conformist or deviant.⁹

Sutherland summarized the theory of Differential Association in nine basic propositions. These propositions, as printed in Sutherland and Cressey's Criminology, are as follows (an explanation of each is added).¹⁰

1. Criminal behavior is learned.

Deviance is not inherited; nor is it the result of low intelligence, brain damage, and so on.¹¹ There are no genetic, metabolic, or anatomical defects involved. Sutherland argues that one learns criminal behavior in the same way he learns to speak English or brush his teeth.

2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.
3. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate, personal groups. At most, communications such as the mass media of television, magazines, and newspapers play only a secondary role in the learning of deviance.
4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple; and (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes.

Usually, this process involves face-to-face communication between people who are close to one another. People are not persuaded to engage in criminal activity as a result of reading a book or a newspaper, seeing a movie, or watching television. Criminal knowledge, skills, sentiments, values, traditions, and motives are all passed down as a result of interpersonal communication.¹²

5. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of norms as favorable or unfavorable (Sutherland defines "definitions" as attitudes and values).

In this proposition, Sutherland acknowledges the existence of conflicting norms. Individuals may learn reasons for both adhering to and violating a given rule. For instance, one may learn that stealing is wrong, unless the stolen goods are insured and nobody really gets hurt.

6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess* of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law.

Understanding this proposition is absolutely vital to understanding the entire theory. One's behavior is affected by contradictory learning experiences. The predominance of definitions favorable to deviance leads to deviant behavior. Likewise, a person learns to be nondeviant because of his having been exposed to an excess of definitions as unfavorable to law violation.

7. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.

Frequency refers to how often one is exposed to the association; duration refers to the period of time one is exposed to the association; priority refers to the time in one's life when exposed to the association; and intensity refers to the prestige of the source of the behavior pattern.¹³ Priority is especially important in the sense that law-abiding behavior developed early in childhood may persist throughout life. Also, delinquent behavior developed early in childhood may persist throughout life. Intensity includes the emotional reactions related to the associations.¹⁴ For example, the closer and more intimate the friends and relatives that endorse criminal behavior, the more likely one will be to break the law.

8. The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anticriminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning.

*"Excess" is a key term which can not be mathematically operationalized. Hence, determining its presence is left to the discretion of the individual sociologist.

This simply means that the learning of criminal behavior is not limited to imitation. One may learn through association without imitating his associates.

9. While criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values, since noncriminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values.

Many scholars have attempted to explain criminal behavior by general drives, needs, and values. However, these attempts have been practically useless since they explain lawful behavior as well as unlawful behavior. For instance, thieves usually steal to obtain money. However, honest laborers work to obtain money as well. Needs and values do not differentiate criminal from noncriminal behavior.

To summarize, the theory of Differential Association states that one learns criminal behavior in a process of symbolic interaction with others, mainly those who are close to him, who present him with both criminal and anticriminal patterns, techniques, motivations, attitudes, and values toward the legal norms.¹⁵ The balance of these criminal and anticriminal definitions determines whether one will conform or deviate from the laws of a given society. This balance is based on the frequency, duration, priority, and intensity with which one is exposed to lawful or criminal definitions. In essence, the theory claims that one learns to be deviant or to be law-abiding.

CRITICISMS AND DENIALS

Before going on, it is important to review some of the criticisms of Differential Association. Donald R. Cressey has spent a great deal of time reviewing all of the mistaken notions, criticisms, attempted revisions, and empirical tests of the theory.¹⁶ He and Sutherland have discredited most of the criticisms and maintain that the theory is a valid one.

Cressey notes that there are at least five major problems in interpretation which have been made in criticizing Differential Association. First of all, many claim that the theory is invalid because not everyone who has contact with criminals becomes criminal. These people fail to consider that the theory is concerned with the balance between these criminal contacts and anticriminal contacts. There are influences both favorable and unfavorable to law violation. These critics also fail to note the importance of the point in life at which one makes criminal contacts.

Second, some have interpreted Differential Association as referring only to association with criminals (persons). However, the theory was meant to refer to association with patterns of behavior, attitudes, and values, rather than with criminals themselves. For instance, one may learn both criminal and anticriminal motives and behavior patterns from a given individual.

The version of the theory published in 1939 pertained to "systematic" criminal behavior. Hence, many critics viewed the

theory as being limited to certain types of chronic offenses. These critics have failed to note that the theory has been revised and the word "systematic" has been deleted. Sutherland explained that he believed that all but the "very trivial" criminal acts were systematic. Nevertheless, there was a lot of controversy as to the definition of "systematic;" and the term proved to be impractical. Consequently, it was dropped from the theory.

Fourth, many say that the theory is defective because it does not explain why people have the associations they do. The critics claim that Sutherland does not identify the sources of definitions favorable or unfavorable to delinquency and crime. The theory was never intended to explain variations in opportunities for criminal associations. Determining why people have certain associations is a highly relevant research problem, but it is not addressed by Differential Association theory.

Finally, countless critics have rejected the theory on the grounds that it is biased or prejudiced toward certain types of criminal behaviors; that Sutherland can not explain all kinds of criminal behavior. The theory simply makes an attempt to find a relationship between known facts. Existing facts were not shaped to fit the theory—the theory was developed to fit the facts as they exist.

Not all criticisms of the theory have been in the nature of misinterpretations. The criticism that exceptions to the theory may be found is an acceptable one. It is a valid criticism of the empirical or practical limitations of the theory, but

these exceptions must be singled out through research. Another criticism is that the theory fails to take into account personality or psychological variables. This assertion is absolutely true. However, such variables are important in all aspects of life and can not be singled out as being related solely to criminality.

Out of all the criticisms regarding Differential Association, there are two that continue to hinder the explanatory value of the theory. First, it is difficult to define or operationalize certain terms of the theory to allow empirical testing, particularly the concept of an "excess of definitions." Second, the theory fails to explain what the learning process is or what "all the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning" are¹⁷ There have been several reformulations of the theory which attempt to eliminate these two problems.*

*For a reader interested in investigating these reformulations, see Ronald L. Akers' Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A major criticism of Differential Association is that the theory is very difficult to test. It is true that there is no experimental design to accurately test the effects of differential association on individual behavior. However, quite a few sociologists have studied the subject extensively and have made some very interesting findings. This section will include a chronological history of much of the research in this field.

Donald R. Cressey (1954) spent a great deal of time studying compulsive crimes in the context of Differential Association. Psychologists have argued throughout the years that in compulsive crimes, such as shoplifting and arson, the actor does know right from wrong but he engages in certain behaviors because he is prompted from a force within. Hence, they claim that compulsive crimes are an exception to Sutherland's theory. Cressey, on the other hand, puts compulsive criminality in a sociological context. He claims that compulsive behavior is "motivated" behavior, just as are all criminal acts. The developmental processes are the same as in other criminal acts and, consequently, compulsive acts are not an exception to the Differential Association theory.

James F. Short, Jr. (1957, 1958, 1960) published a series of studies concerning Differential Association and juvenile delinquency. These studies are the foundation of a great deal of research in this area.

In 1957, Short tested the theory by attempting to measure three things: (1) the frequency, duration, priority, and intensity

of interaction with delinquent peers; (2) the degree of exposure to crime and delinquency in the community; and (3) association with adult criminals. In his research, Short used state training schools and was concerned primarily with the delinquents' best friends. He developed a "delinquency scale" which showed a direct correlation between delinquent behavior and delinquent associates. Frequency and intensity appeared to be the foremost factors in influencing behavior.

In 1958, Short compared the juveniles in his first study with a group of high school students. The intensity variable seemed to have the greatest relationship with delinquency. Priority, on the other hand, had the lowest correlation to delinquency. In controlling for age, the comparison seemed to indicate that association with delinquent friends was especially important to the behavior of boys over fifteen years old, whether they were in training schools or not.

Short, in 1960, focused on the variable of intensity. He studied both males and females who were seriously involved in delinquent behavior. He was most interested in finding out whether or not their best friends were "delinquency-producing." Hence, he gave questionnaires to juniors in high school and asked them to indicate statements which would apply to those who had been their best friends. Short's findings were consistent with his other studies; there was a very high correlation between delinquent friends and delinquent behavior.

Short concluded from his studies that the theory of Differential

Association is a promising source of hypotheses regarding delinquent behavior and that it warrants continued and extended empirical, as well as theoretical, analysis.¹⁸

In 1960, Daniel Glaser published two articles concerning Differential Association and criminological prediction. He tested the theories of Differential Association, Multiple Causation, Social Alienation, and Behavior Control for their validity in the prediction of criminal behavior and delinquency. Differential Association, Glaser concluded, is far superior to the alternative theories. However, Glaser went on to say that a theory of differential anticipation would be even more adequate. What is important is an individual's expectations. He claimed the focus of prediction should be on the actor's anticipation of the results of criminal or anti-criminal behavior—in other words, his expectations of reward or punishment. One's behavior is generally altered by such expectations.

Harwin L. Voss (1964) conducted a study very similar to the one by Short in 1957. He utilized a sample of seventh grade students, giving them anonymous questionnaires. The primary emphasis was on interaction or association with friends who had been in trouble with the law. Generally speaking, the conclusions of the Voss and Short investigations were in agreement. However, Voss found that the variable of "duration" was most important in influencing delinquency whereas Short found that "frequency" and "intensity" were most important. The differences in the two studies were few. Voss concluded that, on the basis of his research, adolescents who

associate extensively with delinquent friends report more delinquent behavior than those whose contacts with delinquent peers is minimal.¹⁹

Albert Reiss and Albert Rhodes conducted a somewhat different experiment in 1964. They hypothesized that boys in close association with one another should show similar patterns of delinquency. The researchers focused on high school boys in close friendship groups. They believed that all or none of the group should exhibit delinquent behavior. The results of the study, however, showed otherwise. Only one or two members of a given group participated in deviant or delinquent behavior. Reiss and Rhodes concluded from their research that differential association is not a necessary and sufficient condition to delinquency. Although these results seem to provide evidence against Differential Association theory, a closer look will prove otherwise. The theory's emphasis has always been on learning definitions as favorable or unfavorable to law violations. Hence, association is not of vital importance without the learning of criminal values and attitudes resulting from this association. In other words, Reiss and Rhodes misinterpreted the theory by looking at certain propositions out of context. Their research neither supports nor discredits the theory of Differential Association.

In 1968, Victor Matthews conducted a study among a group of high school students (boys) in the mid-west. He utilized two instruments, a personal data sheet and a delinquency scale similar to the one used by Short. The emphasis was on the degree of delinquency involvement by an individual as compared to that of his peers. Matthews found that uniformity in behavior was

greatest between best friends. He concluded that the greater the degree of identification between individuals, the greater will be the degree of uniformity of their self-reported behaviors.²⁰ Again, the theory of Differential Association was supported.

Around 1970, John R. Stratton set out to test the idea that attitudes favoring law violation will be positively associated with criminal reference group orientation.²¹ The sample utilized in the investigation was made up of 351 youthful offenders incarcerated in a federal correctional institution in Kentucky. Stratton used self-report questionnaires, asking questions concerning attitudes, institutional adjustment, expectations for the future, and background characteristics. He was looking at (1) criminal identification, the extent to which the respondents perceived themselves as similar to other criminals; (2) associational preference, the degree to which the respondents preferred to associate with other law breakers; and (3) inmate loyalty, the respondents' willingness to trust, share with, or sacrifice for his fellow inmates. Stratton concluded that his hypothesis was supported for criminal identification and associational preference, but inmate loyalty is virtually unrelated to attitudes favoring law violation.

Although Stratton's results seem to support Differential Association theory, the test is lacking somewhat in external validity. It is not necessarily generalizable since the study was limited to an inmate population. Often, behavior within prison societies is very different from that which takes place in the outside world. Hence, one can not determine if behavior within these inmate reference groups is characteristic of behavior

in other criminal reference groups.

Also around 1970, Robert L. Burgess and Ronald L. Akers attempted to update or modernize Sutherland's theory by applying the principles of modern behavior theory. Essentially, their work represents a reinforcement theory of criminal behavior. The revised propositions are as follows.

1. Criminal behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning.
2. Criminal behavior is learned both in nonsocial situations that are reinforcing or discriminative and through that social interaction in which the behavior of other persons is reinforcing or discriminative for criminal behavior.
3. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs in those groups which comprise the individual's major source of reinforcements.
4. The learning of criminal behavior, including specific techniques, attitudes, and avoidance procedures is a function of the effective and available reinforcers, and the existing reinforcement contingencies.
5. The specific class of behaviors which are learned and their frequency of occurrence are a function of the reinforcers which are effective and available, and the rules or norms by which these reinforcers are applied.
6. Criminal behavior is a function of norms which are discriminative for criminal behavior, the learning of which takes place when such behavior is more highly reinforced than noncriminal behavior.
7. The strength of criminal behavior is a direct function of the amount, frequency, and probability of its reinforcement.

The revised theory has little practical application other than to modify or clarify Sutherland's propositions. The general theme is the same; a person learns criminal behavior because of an

excess of attitudes or values favoring law violation over those not favoring law violation.

Reed Adams (1973) agreed that reinforcement is important in explaining criminal behavior. However, he claims that a distinction must be made between the acquisition and the maintenance of behavior. Sutherland was concerned primarily with the acquisition. Once behavior is emitted and reinforced, argues Adams, association becomes irrelevant and the reinforcement effect takes over. Thus, the behavior is maintained.

Philip E. Lampe (1978) argues that it is socialization, or the lack of, which determines behavior. He claims that the criminal is neither born nor made but that there is no question that some learning is involved in crime.²² As a part of socialization, values and attitudes must be incorporated. This incorporation is part of the learning process. Again, this study further supports the idea that conformity or deviance is learned.

In 1979, Frank Schmalleger argued that the career or habitual criminal lives in a world very different from the rest of society. He learns the rules and values of a criminal subculture and is virtually uncaring as to what conformists think about him. Schmalleger claims that criminality is an attitude toward life that, more often than not, begins in youth, generally in the preteen or early teen years.²³ Early crimes are generally committed under peer pressure, further supporting the concept of Differential Association. As the criminal has more contact with the criminal justice system, he learns manipulative skills

and to look at the world in a different way; this finding supports Sutherland's proposition concerning the learning of attitudes and techniques. Differential Association is further supported by the concept of prison as a "graduate school of crime." It is in prison that criminals come into close contact with one another and that they are further socialized into the criminal world. Again, socialization is exhibited as a part of the learning process; criminal behavior is learned.

David Smothers (1979) explained that the learning pattern of criminal behavior is exhibited in Chicago gang life. He speaks of the education of a gangster and claims that the learning pattern comes from the older guys to the younger guys.²⁴ They learn the attitudes and values of the gang, as well as the techniques necessary to carry out gang behavior.

In 1980, Patrick A. Langdon and Lawrence A. Greenfield studied a nationwide sample of career criminals in state prisons throughout the country. They were interested in family backgrounds. Out of 11,397 offenders, 26.3% of the inmates came from families that included at least one family member with an incarceration record. Of those whose criminal career started during adolescence and continued through at least middle age, nearly 50% had such a family background. These inmates were definitely exposed to an excess of definitions favorable to law violation. Criminal association was inevitable for these inmates. This study suggests that criminal behavior, especially habitual, was learned through association with deviant family members.

Another study which suggests family influences is the Juvenile Offender Survey Project. This study was conducted by psychologist, a social worker, and an educator. The team spent two years studying a sample of 100 violent offenders or repeat offenders, as well as their families. The survey showed that there was an overwhelming tendency toward violence in the homes of juvenile offenders. The children are physically punished, the parents strike each other, and the children assault their parents. The children learn to be violent and this violence leads to criminal behavior. Andrew Kaplan, leader of the research team, claims that children acquire moral judgment from those around them. They have seen that it is virtually impossible to succeed in socially acceptable ways, and that obeying the law gets them nowhere. Hence, the children turn to criminal acts as a way of succeeding.

Barbara Somerville (1981) goes even further. She claims that our entire culture is a violent one, which promotes and teaches violence. Somerville says that Americans do not learn appropriate and successful ways of dealing with stress, frustration, and anxiety. Hence, many have learned to accept violence as a means of conflict resolution. In another 1981 article, Somerville emphasizes parental influence as having a tremendous effect on violent behavior. She points out that violence at home is closely associated with deviance and criminal behavior.

Others who have shown the relationship between violence at home and criminal behavior are James Q. Wilson (1983), Nicole Yorkin (1983), District Judge James Leh and Vicki Agee, Director of the Closed Adolescent Treatment Center (1984), and Thomas J. Reese

(1984). Each of these people have pointed out the correlation between violent parents and deviant or criminal behavior.

As already mentioned, the theory of Differential Association is very difficult to test. Most of the research in this area tends to support the theory but does not actually test it. For instance, nearly all of the authors operationalize differential association as being association with people rather than association with definitions, as mentioned in Sutherland's theory.

Another problem with these studies is that each of them concentrates either on friends or family. None of them take both into consideration. In other words, all of the authors look at particular aspects of association, but fail to look at the whole picture.

Finally, there is a problem with sampling. A reader can not be sure how the samples were chosen. We can not be sure whether the samples were randomly selected, or wheter they were representative samples. Consequently, there is a significant question of external validity.

RESEARCH DESIGN

- A. Hypothesis—There is a positive relationship between deviant association and career type criminal activity. Negatively, there is an inverse relationship between nondeviant association and career type criminal activity.
- B. Definitions—"Deviant association" is understood as exposure to those who have been convicted of a criminal offense or who encouraged the subject to engage in criminal behavior. "Career type criminal activity" is defined as having been convicted of three or more criminal offenses.
- C. Sample—The sample consists of 20 randomly selected career criminals who are presently under the supervision of the North Carolina Department of Corrections. The sample includes persons of both genders and from three different races. False names will be used to protect the identities of these individuals.
- D. Research Site—The research site consists of a North Carolina prison unit, as well as adult probation/parole offices in two counties. I was asked not to expose the exact location of the prison or the names of the counties involved. It should suffice to say that all three sites are located in rural North Carolina.
- E. Methodology—The difference between qualitative and quantitative sociology may be seen in terms of the method used to describe the world. Quantitative sociologists assign numbers to

qualitative observations. In effect, they produce data by counting and measuring things. On the other hand, qualitative sociologists report observations in the natural language. They seldom assign numbers to their observations. This difference is due to the fact that qualitative sociologists are more concerned with gaining access to the reality of others (the criminal in this case) than with developing sociology into a full-fledged science.²⁵ It appears that qualitative methods are best for understanding the reality of others.

Although traditional quantitative sociology is very helpful in many ways, there are many aspects of people's lives that can not be duplicated experimentally or easily observed in a direct way. For instance, neither one's lifetime associations nor the planning and commission of criminal acts can be duplicated or observed in an empirical manner. Thus, to gain access to such phenomena, sociologists often resort to an analysis of personal accounts. In this type of study, the sociologist must rely on his intuitions, interpretations, and impressions, as well as those of the respondent, to understand reality from the respondent's point of view. In this study, it is necessary to reconstruct the reality of a social scene as it existed for the criminal in previous years. This reconstruction takes place through individual case studies and interviews.

Because many of the terms in the Differential Association theory can not be operationalized with the mathematical

precision necessary to allow significant statistical analysis, there is a great deal of subjectivity involved. For instance, Sutherland relies heavily on the notion of an "excess of definitions" favorable to law violation. There is no way to actually measure and weigh attitudes and values. Hence, it is often left up to the researcher to make inferences and draw conclusions about the presence of such definitions.

F. Questionnaire—During the interviews, the participants were asked questions, both structured and unstructured, related to the individual propositions of Sutherland's theory. Specifically, the questions were centered around the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth propositions. The first and eighth propositions, dealing with the learning process, do not lend themselves to testing. Please see Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In presenting the results of the study, I will give a short description of each individual case study. As previously mentioned, the actual names of the participants will not be revealed in the analysis. Each individual description will concentrate on association with both criminal and noncriminal individuals and their ideas, the degree of, and reasons for, acceptance by the subject, and the learning of techniques, motives, and attitudes from these associates.

For the purpose of consistency and organization, the cases will be divided into three separate categories. The first group consists of those individuals who were obviously exposed to an excess of criminal definitions. These definitions came from both family and friends. The term "family" refers only to the parents and siblings of the subject. The second group consists of those who were exposed to law-abiding families, but to others who encouraged criminal behavior. The third group consists of those who had very little or no exposure to criminal definitions. A summary will follow each of the three sections.

Group 1

Subject #1 Sue is a 25 year old female who is presently serving a three year term on probation for the criminal offenses of forgery and uttering (checks). She has been convicted of three prior counts

of forgery and uttering, as well as several counts of vandalism and breaking and entering.

The subject and her husband live with her mother and two brothers. The father left home when Sue was very young, and she has very little memory of him. The mother works two jobs, and Sue very seldom sees her.

Sue spent most of her time with her brothers, who she described as "always getting into trouble." A check of their criminal records revealed several convictions. The oldest brother has been convicted of robbery, breaking, entering, and larceny, and possession of marijuana. The younger brother has been convicted of vandalism and possession of marijuana. Four of these five convictions occurred before Sue's first criminal offense.

Sue's association with her brothers was extremely favorable to law violation. She explained that they constantly encouraged her to disobey the law. "They always said the law was for rich people and that it won't fair," claimed Sue. "They said we had to do it 'cause it was the only way to get the stuff we needed." Sue explained that she was more influenced by her brothers than anybody else in her life.

The people Sue mentioned as having encouraged her to obey the law were her mother and her school teachers. As already mentioned, Sue did not spend much time with her mother. The mother worked two jobs and slept most of the time she was at home. As for school, Sue spent very little time studying and made very poor grades. She completed the ninth grade and never returned to school. Sue claimed that she accepted some of the conformists' ideas but added, "They just don't understand how rough it can be."

Sue learned both the techniques and motives of criminal behavior. She learned "how to get away with" criminal acts by talking to people (namely her brothers), and by "watching" the place or object of her act. Her motives included the assumption that the law was unfair and that it was for rich people. She rationalized that criminal involvement is the only way some people can live and that society is unfair. Sue claimed that people who commit crime after crime should feel guilty "unless they had a good reason." Sue's case is a clear example of exposure to an excess of criminal definitions.

Subject #2 Sam is a 34 year old probationer who has been convicted of several counts of forgery and uttering, worthless checks, larceny, and a prison escape. Sam was, as are all people, exposed to definitions both favorable and unfavorable to law violation. Again, those favorable to criminal behavior seem to outweigh those unfavorable to such behavior.

In this case, both family and friends played a role in providing criminal examples. Sam's father is presently serving time in prison for a murder conviction, and two of Sam's brothers have been convicted of armed robbery. Between the ages of 13 and 20, Sam spent most of his time with a group of boys from school. The things they "did for fun" included such things as drag racing, drinking, fighting, and even breaking and entering. Sam's friends "didn't mind doing anything," as he phrased it. They often talked about crimes and how they could "get away" with criminal acts. Sam claims that he often accepted their

ideas and went along because he "didn't want to be odd or different."

According to Sam, his father was the person who had the most influence on his life. He described the father as a hard worker who taught him to respect the law. However, he also described the father as extremely violent and, as previously mentioned, the man is presently in a correctional institution for a homicide he committed. The father's actions seem to contradict his words. The mother, according to Sam, encouraged him to obey the law. He claims that he sometimes accepted his mother's ideas but that his father and friends had far more influence.

The techniques of criminal behavior, according to Sam, can be learned through other people. For instance, Sam claims that he learned to be "slicker" about committing criminal acts while he was in prison, through interaction with other inmates. As far as motives, rationalizations, and attitudes are concerned, Sam's emphasis is on material goods and money. His family grew up on a farm and Sam complains that they "never got anywhere or accomplished anything" through legal means. Furthermore, getting desired goods through criminal behavior is much easier and faster than through legal channels. Besides, Sam never thought he would get caught.

The subject's statements and actions contradict each other. He claims that he respects the law, just as his father did, and that he realizes that laws are necessary. Nevertheless, Sam continues to ignore legal channels and to exhibit criminal behavior. This contradiction is representative of a major problem of interviewing criminals. They tend to try to "con" the interviewer and often have even convinced themselves of their benevolence.

Subject #3 Jane is a 28 year old parolee who has been convicted of common law robbery, driving under the influence, and assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill and inflicting serious bodily injury. Jane is a very slow learner; she quit school on the third grade level, after eight years of special education.

Apparently, Jane's family life was very unstable. She has a brother and a sister who have both been in prison. Jane explained that she was virtually on her own, that her family never really taught her anything about crime and the law. She mentioned that her stepfather did encourage her to obey the law but that she never paid him very much attention or thought much about what he said.

The person who had the most influence on Jane, and with whom she spent most of her time, was a stepsister. This girl was never in trouble with the law but "talked her (Jane) into a lot" of deviant acts. The stepsister was always "out for herself" and was not overly concerned with Jane's feelings or needs. Jane claims that she never learned anything about crime or the law from her stepsister.

AS far as criminal techniques are concerned, Jane explained that "you pick up little hints from the people you hang around with." There seems to be no real motive for Jane's behavior and her only rationalization is that she was intoxicated at the time of every offense. She indicated a conformist attitude towards the law at the time of the study but says she "never really thought about it" prior to her convictions. Jane's behavior, on the other hand, is indicative of her attitude in previous years. Perhaps

this contradiction is due to Jane's limited ability to understand and communicate.

Subject #4 John is a 24 year old parolee. He has been convicted of breaking, entering, and larceny, vandalism, possession of marijuana, and motor vehicle theft.

John was constantly exposed to criminal definitions while growing up. His mother was convicted of several counts of forgery and uttering; his brother of larceny and armed robbery; another brother of possession of marijuana and vandalism; and his sister of shoplifting. John described his family as always fighting and getting into trouble. The only thing he learned about the law from his family was how to "get around it." Yet, he claims that his family had the greatest influence on him while growing up.

John had a couple of friends with whom he grew up. They too, however, "hung around" with John's brothers. When asked what the boys did for fun, John listed playing basketball, smoking pot, "cruising women and raising hell." He claims they talked a great deal about criminal acts and how to "get away" with these acts. The main thing he learned about crime was "not to get caught."

John's mother encouraged him to obey the law, but he chose not to accept her ideas. Her actions contradicted her words so John never took her seriously. School played a role in such encouragement as well, but John claims he hated school. Apparently, the subject gave little priority to those who encouraged him to obey the law.

195546

Technique is important, according to John. For instance, if one is planning to rob a store, he needs to "know where everything is, and how to go about it, so he can do it fast." Such techniques may be learned by "casing the place" and talking to people.

John's motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes are indicative of much of the criminal subculture. He is full of resentment and malice towards American society, which he believes to be unfair. Crime is a way of life for John. He prefers to continue along his deviant path because it is "more exciting, more challenging, easier, and faster" than the more accepted ways of life.

Subject #5 Jean is a 21 year old parolee who has been convicted of prostitution, soliciting, assault with a deadly weapon, and possession of cocaine. Jean left home at the age of 16 to live with her older sister, who has been convicted of prostitution and larceny. This sister "showed her the ropes" of prostitution and street life. Prostitution became a way of life.

Jean claims that no one ever really encouraged her to obey the law, be a good citizen, etc. Speaking about her parents, Jean claims, "They were too wrapped up in their own little world to worry about me." Her sister, she says, cared for her and had the greatest influence.

Jean feels that some laws are necessary but that prostitution laws are an invasion of privacy. She believes that prostitution is an easy way to make money and that no one is hurt by such

behavior. Furthermore, she claims that the man whom she assaulted deserved everything he got.

Technique is not really important, according to Jean. "It's easy; you just do it." One can learn by talking to people. Money and status are the primary motives for deviant behavior and Jean rationalizes that there is nothing wrong with prostitution.

Subject #6 Jack is a 49 year old parolee who was last convicted for the first degree murder of his wife. Prior to this conviction, Jack was sentenced for cruelty to animals, assault and battery, and assault with a deadly weapon. He is full of hate and resentment and is not sorry for the crimes he has committed.

Jack's parents died in an accident when he was 14 years old and he was reared by his older brother, who he described as "mean." Jack's parents, while he was young, encouraged him to be a good citizen and to obey the law. However, the brother constantly encouraged Jack to disobey the law.

The people he "hung around" with were older, his brother's friends. They liked to "raise hell, fight, and drink." These people saw absolutely nothing wrong with violence or any other criminal behavior and encouraged Jack to "go for it!"

Jack lacks confidence in the American legal system. He believes it is unfair and that everybody must take care of themselves. Furthermore, Jack claims that everybody is involved in criminal behavior; "It's something everybody does." When asked whether people who commit crime after crime should feel guilty,

Jack answered, "No; they just got caught." The motives, he claims, are money, status, a good time, or "just for the hell of it." He rationalizes that the woman he murdered, his wife, deserved to be punished.

Jack's case is a prime example of an excess of definitions favorable to law violation. From the age of 14, he was surrounded by people who encouraged him to be deviant. Having quit school after the ninth grade, Jack had very little involvement with any conformist institutions. Thus, he learned only criminal attitudes and values.

Subject #7 Nancy is a 22 year old probationer who has been convicted of forgery and uttering, larceny, and three counts of shoplifting. By looking at the criminal records of Nancy's family, anyone can see that she has been exposed to criminal definitions throughout her life.

Nancy's father has been convicted of several counts of driving under the influence and has lost his license permanently. One brother has been convicted of motor vehicle theft, breaking and entering, and armed robbery. Another brother is presently serving a prison term for rape and assault with a deadly weapon. Nancy's older sister has been sentenced for writing worthless checks, forgery and uttering, and shoplifting. A third brother has been convicted of driving under the influence, public drunkenness and disturbing the peace. Nancy has one older sister and one younger brother who have no criminal records. Nancy says that her family had more influence on her than anyone else in her life.

Nancy spent most of her time with her family and a couple of friends. They talked a great deal about committing crimes. Speaking about her brothers, Nancy claims, "They showed me that it was easy to get by with and you could get what you needed fast. We always tried to avoid the police."

Nancy claims that her parents and school teachers encouraged her to obey the law but that she never accepted or internalized their ideas. There was a lot of violence between the parents; the father is an alcoholic. "How can you believe and respect parents like that?" asks Nancy. She claims that she often did certain things simply to spite her parents. As for school, Nancy never liked it. She says she studied very little but make average grades. The fact that Nancy never considered school to be very important is evident in the fact that she dropped out after the 11th grade.

Nancy has very little faith in American society. She believes that many existing laws are unfair and that people are treated differentially according to wealth. When asked about reasons for the crimes she committed, Nancy rationalized that prices are too high and that she could see no other way to get the things she needed. Motives included easy money, a good time, and status. "My brothers always made a big deal out of it when I stole something," claims Nancy.

This probationer feels that criminal techniques are very important. Such things as store hours, the general location of a certain item, and how to disguise yourself are especially significant. These things can be learned by "walking around the store or whatever, watching the place for a while, and talking to people."

Summary All seven of the people in this group have been exposed to an overwhelming excess of criminal definitions. Practically all of their associates were deviant and the respondents received very little encouragement to obey the law. There is no doubt that, in each of these cases, criminal definitions outweigh law-abiding ones. Each of these individuals has been socialized into a criminal subculture, having adopted the attitudes and values of those to whom he has been exposed.

Group 2

Subject #8 Joe is a 32 year old man who is presently serving a split sentence (prison and probation) for three counts of the sale and delivery of cocaine. He has also been convicted of embezzlement, check forgery, and possession of cocaine.

Joe was reared in a small town and is the son of prominent parents. He was always taught to respect the law. Neither Joe's parents, nor his brother have ever been convicted of any criminal offense.

However, money was a very important factor in Joe's upbringing. He learned, from his father, that success is extremely important, no matter how it is obtained. His father often "worked around the law" in his business endeavors, etc. Such acts "aren't really crimes," claims Joe.

At the age of 12, Joe started "hanging around" with a boy who was a few years older than he. This friend often encouraged him

to disobey the law, and Joe often accepted these ideas because he did not want to be seen as a "chicken." "I looked up to him," explained Joe. When asked what he and his friend did for fun, Joe listed skipping school, smoking pot, vandalizing property, and stealing or shoplifting. "He taught me how to get away with things like that," claimed Joe. The friend did not believe in violence but "little things didn't matter."

As far as learning the techniques of criminal behavior, Joe said "you hear people talk." Furthermore, his friend actually taught him. Apparently, success and money were the primary motives for Joe. He explained that it is quicker and easier to get these things through criminal behavior rather than through legal channels.

In this case, the subject mentioned the institutions of family, school, and church as having encouraged him to obey the law. Apparently, Joe accepted the goals of these institutions but chose illegitimate means to obtain them. Perhaps this decision is the product of personality, but was this very different from what Joe learned from his father, the man who had the most influence on his life?

Subject #9 Bill is a 21 year old parolee. He has been convicted of arson, motor vehicle theft, vandalism, and breaking and entering, arson being the most recent. Unlike most of the subjects already discussed, Bill's family is not particularly deviant. His sister has one shoplifting conviction, but his brother and mother have no criminal record. The father has not lived in the home since Bill's birth.

Bill claims that his mother encouraged him to obey the law, to be a good citizen, etc. However, he and his mother did not have an intimate relationship. He claims that his mother worked all the time and that she never understood him. Thus, Bill chose not to accept her ideas and values. School was another factor of encouragement which Bill chose to ignore. He made very poor grades in school and decided to quit after the tenth grade.

Bill's friends, on the other hand, encouraged him to participate in criminal activity. He began associating with these friends at the age of 12 and claims they had more influence on him than anyone else in his life. Crime, according to them, was something that was fun. They enjoyed "getting away with things." Bill says that he and his friends often talked about crime and how to "get away with it." Furthermore, they usually followed through with these plans.

When asked about technique, Bill said, "You have to be slick; you have to know exactly when to do it and how to go about it." To learn, "you start with little things and get bigger. You help somebody else a couple of times and you learn how." In effect, techniques are developed through practice.

Bill has no confidence in American society and believes that existing laws are useless and unfair. Crime, in general, "is wrong for the most part" and habitual criminals should feel guilty unless they had a good reason for their behavior. "The people I hurt deserved it," explained Bill. "Revenge, good times, and fast money" are the things that Bill considers to be motives for criminal behavior.

Subject #10 Tom is presently serving a prison term for second degree murder. Other convictions include breaking and entering and driving under the influence.

Generally speaking, it seems that Tom was reared in a very upstanding, law-abiding family. The parents constantly encouraged Tom to obey the law, stay out of trouble, etc. He says he knew they were right and accepted their ideas. Because of his parents, Tom made very good grades in school and got his high school diploma. Two of his brothers have been convicted of possession of marijuana, but these convictions occurred during Tom's prison term. Thus, they could not have affected Tom's behavior in any way. Nevertheless, it is likely that the brothers were using marijuana prior to Tom's convictions.

Tom spent most of his time, about eight hours a day, with a cousin, fishing, swimming, riding bikes, etc. This cousin was never in any legal trouble as far as Tom knows. However, there were friends who tried to convince Tom to participate in criminal behavior. He sometimes went along when he was drinking, but knew they were wrong.

The one person to whom Tom looked up, and who had the greatest influence on him, was a favorite uncle. This uncle was very special to Tom. However, "he wasn't what I thought he was," explains Tom. The uncle was convicted of two separate murder charges before Tom's first conviction. The man killed himself when his nephew was still a teenager.

According to Tom, a criminal can never perfect his technique. To "pull a job, you've got to know a whole lot about the place

and the system, and the odds are still against you." One can learn such techniques by hearing people talk, "but it's not as easy as it sounds," explains Tom.

This subject claims that his acts were due to the influence of alcohol and the heat of passion. Again, the problem of the subject's limited understanding made it very difficult to put his statements into theoretical context. Other primary motives for criminal behavior, according to Tom, are money and thrills. A few individuals get involved for the sake of status. "When you make a big lick and get away with it, it's important that certain people know about it."

It appears that "intensity" is the most important single factor influencing Tom's behavior. There does not seem to be an excess of deviant associates involved. However, from his point of view, the one associate having the most influence is a convicted murderer.

Subject #11 Rick is a 28 year old probationer who has been convicted of three counts of driving under the influence, possession of marijuana, careless and reckless driving, public drunkenness, and breaking and entering. Rick is a high school graduate of average intelligence.

Rick and his two older brothers were reared by very strict parents. One of Rick's brothers was convicted of driving under the influence but there were no other criminal convictions. Both parents and teachers encouraged Rick to obey the law, but he refused to accept their ideas. Apparently, he felt like an outcast

at home and at school. Rick claims that everybody looked down on him.

Rick chose to accept the values and adopt the behavior patterns of his friends, who he described as "wild." "They accepted me for what I was and didn't try to change me," explained Rick. Participating in illegal behavior, they believed, was fun; it was a challenge. According to Rick, other things the boys did for "fun" included "racing, smoking pot, drinking, playing ball, raising hell, and getting back at people we hated."

Technique is not important according to Rick. "You just get your nerve and do it." Motives include money, status, and good times. Rick claims that society is unfair and that everybody does not fit in. He says that one must fight for what he believes to be best for him; "You can't just lay there and let people run all over you." When asked if people who commit crime after crime should feel a sense of guilt, Rick answered, "Not unless they hurt other people."

Subject #12 Don is a 60 year old man who is presently serving a prison term for a homicide conviction. He has also been convicted of burglary and larceny. Don was reared on a farm by a very "moral" family. They always taught him that crime is wrong and that he should respect and obey the law. Don claims that he accepted their ideas.

When he was a teenager, Don had friends who encouraged him to break the law. He says these friends knew it was wrong but they just wanted to see if they could "get by with it." Don was

in the company of these friends when he committed the burglary but says he knew it was wrong.

Don claims that prison is a "school for crime." One can learn to be a better criminal simply by talking to friends and other people. Motives and rationalizations include money, status, laziness, bad company, and extenuating circumstances.

Don has a very healthy attitude towards the law. He believes that laws are essential for the "protection of home, family, and property." Nevertheless, he says "you must fight for what is best for you. Some things just aren't right. They're morally wrong." Don claims that 98% of those in prison are not sorry for their acts and have no respect for the laws of American society.

Subject #13 Danny is a 29 year old prisoner who has been convicted of trafficking by possession (more than five tons of marijuana) and several counts of larceny. He is a fairly intelligent individual who works in the prison library.

Danny's family is a law-abiding, Christian family. The parents taught Danny and his three brothers that there is no justifiable crime and that the law is always right. One of Danny's brothers was arrested for public drunkenness but there is no evidence of any other criminal behavior. Danny said he never had any reason to doubt the ideas and teachings of his family. Thus, he accepted their attitudes and values. Danny was also involved in church and boy scouts, from which he learned very similar values.

While growing up, Danny spent time with several different people. Many of these people were heavily involved in drugs while

others were "always getting into something." The fact that Danny's last offense was drug related is evidence that he must have accepted some of these ideas. Danny claims that he and his friends often plotted criminal acts but they never put any of their plans into action.

In school, Danny was exposed to a lot of violence. The public schools were being integrated during his high school years and there was a great deal of conflict. Consequently, Danny quit school after the tenth grade. He obtained his Graduate Equivalency Diploma in later years.

Danny does not feel that technique is overly important. He believes that most people commit crimes on impulse, that the acts are not usually planned. Motives include money, status, and thrill. Other factors underlying criminal activity, according to Danny, are low standards of living, lack of motivation, greed, and the fact that criminality appears to be so easy.

Danny realizes that laws are important but claims that law enforcement and the court system is unfair. He says that plea bargaining should be completely eliminated from the criminal justice system. There is, Danny believes, a lot of discrimination because of wealth and race. He claims that everyone should fight for what is best for them, but not in a violent manner.

Subject #14 Tina is a 23 year old probationer who has recently been convicted of the sale and delivery of marijuana. She has also been convicted of possession of marijuana, and the sale and delivery of cocaine.

Tina is an only child. Her parents are law-abiding citizens who have always taught her to obey the law. Tina claims that she accepted her parents ideas, except those which are drug related. "They were just going by what they heard," claims Tina.

Since she was in the sixth grade, Tina has spent most of her time with her cousin and a few friends. The things they did for fun included "skipping school, smoking pot, and listening to rock and roll." This type of association is probably not as serious as association with many other types of behaviors but, in this case, such deviant exposure seriously affected the young girl. Drugs played a major role in the lives of these young people. The cousin, who "liked to have fun and party a lot," is the person whom Tina believes to have had the most influence on her life.

To commit a criminal act, Tina claims, "you need a lot of nerve and you need to know how to do it. I've heard people talk about it." However, Tina has only been involved with drug related offenses and says she does not know a great deal about other types of deviant behavior.

Tina's attitude towards the law is one of resentment. She believes that existing laws are unfair and that law enforcement officials are "against young people." Furthermore, she feels that drug use should not be a matter of law and does not feel badly about the crimes she has committed. However, she believes that other types of crimes are wrong. The primary motives of most crimes, according to Tina, are money, status, and fun.

It is apparent that Tina has been exposed to an excess of definitions favorable to one particular kind of criminal behavior,

drug usage. She has learned the attitudes and values of her friends and cousin. In effect, Tina has been socialized into a subculture which is centered around the use of drugs.

Subject #15 George is a 34 year old probationer who has recently been convicted of maintaining a dwelling for the sale and delivery of marijuana. The subject has also been convicted of the possession of both marijuana and cocaine, the sale and delivery of marijuana, shoplifting, and vandalism. George's wife is presently serving a split sentence for three counts of the sale and delivery of marijuana.

Apparently, George was reared in a very law-abiding family. There is no record of any criminal offense by any family member, other than George. He says that his family encouraged him to obey the law, be a good citizen, and so on, as he was growing up. Nevertheless, he refused to accept their ideas. "They were always fussing and putting me down," claims George. "I wanted to get back at them." George claims that his friends, a group of about six boys, had the greatest influence on his life. He describes these friends as "hell raisers who liked to skip school and party all the time." They encouraged George to disobey the law and he says he accepted their ideas because it was fun and it was "a good way to get back at his family."

George learned both techniques and motives for criminal behavior. He claims that the techniques include such general things as "store hours, who's working, and how to go about it." These things can be learned, he says, by talking to other people.

A great deal can also be learned by watching television. Motives include such things as "fast money, status, and fun."

George's attitudes and feelings about crime and the law have changed a great deal since his drug convictions. He now realizes that criminal behavior is wrong and that laws are very necessary. George feels badly about the things he has done and wishes he had never gotten involved with the "wrong crowd." He believes that, after being convicted, one is frowned upon and treated differently in society. Even though society is not always fair, claims George, one is better off going along than fighting back. "If you fight, you pay for the rest of you life."

Summary There is no doubt that criminal definitions were present in the lives of these eight individuals. Each was reared in a family that, for the most part, exhibited and encouraged law-abiding behavior. If we attempt to weigh the definitions in terms of numbers, we may not necessarily determine that there was an excess of criminal definitions. However, it may be more important to look closely at what the subject believes to have influenced his behavior. If it can be determined that, from the criminal's point of view, deviant associations outweighed positive family experiences, then Sutherland's theory can at least be partially confirmed. This notion will be discussed in the conclusion.

Group 3

Subject #16 Bob is a 28 year old third term probationer. He has been convicted of several counts of driving under the influence,

assault, breaking, entering, and larceny, several counts of passing worthless checks, injury to real estate, and countless traffic violations. It is impossible to determine how many other criminal acts the subject committed for which he was not convicted.

Bob's family life was a very "normal" one. He was reared in a Christian home with eight other children. They were always taught to obey the law and that crime is wrong. The father died when Bob was only 14 years old and, despite his mother's concern, Bob left home shortly afterwards. Before leaving home, Bob was actively involved in school, church, and boy scouts. When asked whether or not he accepted the attitudes and values of these agencies and his family, Bob answered, "I considered them but you have a mind of your own." His actions are certainly indicative of his failure to accept the teachings of these people and institutions.

Bob's friends were apparently very law-abiding as well. He mentioned sports, swimming, camping, and biking as some of their favorite activities. Bob says he had a few "associates" who encouraged him to disobey the law but says he never accepted their ideas because he knew better.

Bob claims he knows very little about criminal technique or how to learn it. Nevertheless, he listed money, status, personal problems, temper, and alcohol as possible motives or excuses for illegal behavior. Bob says that he has a lot of respect for the law and realizes that crime is wrong. The subject even stated that he would like to be a police officer. Despite everything Bob said, anyone could see that he has a very poor attitude and is full of resentment concerning his probation.

There is absolutely no evidence that Bob was faced with an excess of definitions favorable to law violation. One may have to look to another theory, possibly a psychological one, to explain criminal behavior in this case.

Subject #17 Mary is a 20 year old probationer who has been convicted of shoplifting, larceny, and forgery. She was encouraged by everybody she knew to obey the law, be a good citizen, etc. There is no evidence that overwhelming criminal definitions were present in her life.

Mary spent a great deal of time with her parents and brother. They always encouraged her to respect the law and to stay out of trouble. The mother, who had the most influence, was very religious and Mary was very active in church as well. She made average grades in school but quit after the 11th grade to get married.

There were a few friends who encouraged Mary to become involved in illicit activities but she refused to accept their ideas.. "I knew it was wrong," claims Mary. Apparently, these friends influenced her very little.

To commit a criminal act, claims Mary, one needs to know a great deal about the object of his intentions. For instance, if one was planning to rob a store, he would need to know the store's hours, how many employees are working at a particular time, and so forth. Such knowledge may be gained by watching the place and talking to people.

Mary's attitude towards crime and the law is a conformist one. She knows that criminal activity is wrong and should be avoided.

Like most people however, Mary feels that money plays an important role in the differential treatment of individuals in society. The motives Mary sited as influencing criminal behavior are money, status, and unemployment.

Subject #18 Mark is a 32 year old prisoner who has been convicted of several counts of breaking and entering and burglary. He, along with 11 sibilings, was reared in a very religious, law-abiding family atmosphere. He was taught that obeying the law is very important and that he should stay away from crime. Other people and institutions which conveyed the same attitudes were his grandmother, school, church, and boy scouts. Mark claims that he accepted these ideas and values.

While growing up, Mark spent practically all of his time alone or with his family. He claims that he never "hung around" with anybody and that the thought of becoming involved in illegal activities never crossed his mind. His criminal activity started in later years.

Technique, according to Mark, is not important. Crime is simply "the easy way out." People who are lazy and do not want to work end up turning to crime as a "shortcut." The primary motive, Mark believes, is money.

Mark realizes that laws are necessary for the survival of American society. He believes that anyone who breaks the law should be punished and says he does not feel sorry for himself. An excess of criminal definitions is not evident in this case.

Subject #19 Jim is a 23 year old prisoner who is serving time in prison for armed robbery. He has also been convicted of possession of marijuana and has been involved with other drugs.

Jim was reared in a very law-abiding family. In fact, his father, who Jim says had the greatest influence on him, is a retired chief of police. Jim was always taught to obey the law and to stay away from crime.

Jim's friends were also very law-abiding. The boys enjoyed playing football, riding motorcycles, and fishing. Occasionally, claims Jim, they engaged in conversation about the commission of criminal acts but they were never serious. "My friends couldn't believe it when they heard," said Jim. He was also involved in church, boy scouts, and the Jaycees.

Anyone could commit a criminal act according to Jim. One can learn just by talking to friends, and prison is a great place to learn. Money and status are important motives. It is easier and faster to get goods through illegal channels than through legal ones.

Jim believes that the American judicial system is unfair, that differential treatment is apparent. Nevertheless, he realizes that laws are absolutely necessary and that anyone who breaks these laws should be punished.

Subject #20 Dave is a 25 year old probationer who has been convicted of child abuse, assault and battery, driving under the influence, and carrying a concealed weapon. Again, there is absolutely no

evidence to indicate an excess of definitions favorable to law violation.

Dave was reared in a hard working, caring farm family, along with five sisters. One of these sisters has been convicted of forgery but there is no record of any other criminal activity. The children were always taught to respect and obey the law and stay out of trouble.

Generally speaking, Dave had only law-abiding friends. They enjoyed playing ball, fishing, watching television, and riding bikes. There was only one friend who Dave remembers having encouraged him to commit an illegal act. Dave claims he did not take part and did not accept his friend's deviant ideas.

Dave has a very healthy and "normal" attitude towards law and crime. He believes that laws are necessary and that crime is wrong. Anger, as well as the desire for money and status, Dave feels, are usually the underlying drives of criminal behavior. He blames his acts on alcohol use and a bad temper.

Summary There is absolutely no evidence to indicate that these five subjects were exposed to an excess of criminal definitions. In fact, the law-abiding definitions were more prevalent than the criminal ones by an overwhelming margin. As in the lives of all people, some definitions favoring law violation were present. However, these definitions were reported as having very little influence on the lives of these criminal respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

Sutherland's sixth proposition is the heart of his Differential Association theory. He claims that a person becomes deviant because of an excess of definitions favorable to law violation. My research, in part, supports this notion, as well as the other propositions of Sutherland's theory. However, there are exceptions which must be noted and explained.

During our lifetimes, we are all exposed to definitions both favorable and unfavorable to law violation. Most of these definitions are learned within intimate personal groups. Favorable and unfavorable definitions are very difficult to measure and compare, but deviant associates can be easily identified through qualitative case studies.

Of the 20 participants involved in this study, seven were intimately involved with both family members and friends who encouraged criminal behavior. Consequently, there is little doubt that criminal definitions played an overwhelming role in the lives of these individuals. Their perception of the world involves a criminal reality. These seven cases appear to support Sutherland's theory exactly as it exists.

On the other hand, a great deal of emphasis must be placed on the criminal's perception of his exposure to definitions if the behavior of those in the second group is to be explained. It is not necessarily true that an excess of attitudes and values favoring law violation was present in the lives of these individuals. Hence, we must take into consideration the respondents' feelings, ideas, and impressions about those to whom he has been exposed.

As Sutherland claims, associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. This variation helps to explain which ideas, attitudes, and values one will accept, and which ones will be rejected. This study indicates that the criminal's perception of intensity is the most important factor influencing the acceptance or denial of criminal and law-abiding definitions. Intensity has to do with the prestige of the source of a criminal or anti-criminal pattern and with the emotional reactions involved.

We must turn to the criminal's view of the world to discover such feelings. In the eight cases in this second group, each individual chose to ignore or reject the attitudes and values of law-abiding associates and to accept those of deviant associates. There were very specific reasons in each case. These reasons may not be grouped together; they can be analyzed only in terms of each criminal's perception of his world. For instance, in case #11, Rick's family and teachers encouraged him to obey the law, but he refused to accept their ideas. He claims that everyone at home and at school looked down on him and that he felt like an outcast. On the other hand, he chose to accept the ideas of his friends because they accepted him the way he was and didn't try to change him. In effect, the criminal perceived an excess of favorable criminal definitions because of the intensity of his associations.

The results of this study seem to deny the importance of frequency, duration, and priority. Most people are exposed to family members more often, for a longer period of time, and earlier in life than to anyone else. Nevertheless, all of the subjects in this group chose to reject the attitudes and values of their families,

and to accept those of other people.

The criminal behavior of the subjects in this second group can be explained by Sutherland's theory only if criminal perception is integrated into the theory. The sixth proposition should be changed to read, "A person becomes delinquent because he perceives that there is an excess of definitions favorable to law violation over definitions unfavorable to law violation." However, as the theory presently exists, these eight cases do not seem to substantiate Differential Association.

The last group of respondents includes five criminals who, apparently, were not exposed to an excess of criminal definitions. Relatively speaking, there were very few definitions favoring law violation in the lives of these individuals. Sutherland's theory, in no way, accounts for the behavior of these people. Hence, I must conclude that Differential Association theory alone does not explain the origin of all criminal behavior.

It is evident that the individuals in my study learned both criminal drives and motives and criminal techniques. The typical responses to questions about drives and motives include such things as money, status, and entertainment. Approximately 75% of the subjects adopted the motives, drives, and values of those who encouraged them to disobey the law. Fourteen of the 20 participants knew exactly where to learn criminal techniques. Most of them said the best way to learn is by talking to other people. Other responses include watching the object of criminal intentions, practicing, watching television, and being in prison.

All of the participants apparently realize that money, status, and so on can be gained through legal channels. Thus, they have internalized rationalizations for their behavior. Typical rationalizations include, "It's easier and faster, I was drunk, I got in with the wrong crowd, and He deserved it." Again, the individuals were socialized to accept these rationalizations.

Differential Association has come to be widely accepted by sociologists in the field of criminal justice, and there is a fair amount of evidence to support the theory. The results of my study have convinced me that Differential Association, with the concept of criminal perception added, is a very accurate and practical way of looking at most career criminal behavior. However, I do not believe that sociologists will ever be able to depend exclusively on Differential Association to explain this phenomenon. There is still some question as to why certain individuals choose to identify with those who encourage them to disobey the law as opposed to those who encourage them to obey the law. Also, the learning process needs further investigation if this theoretical approach is to be given greater merit.

APPENDIX 1

Name:

Age:

Offense:

Prior record:

Family:

Family's Prior record:

School:

What grade did you complete?

What kind of grades did you make in school?

Did you spend a lot of time studying?

Point #3

Who or what do you think had the greatest influence on you as you were growing up?

Describe that person or thing?

What kinds of attitudes or feelings did you learn about the law from this person or thing?

About crime?

Point #4

If I wanted to "pull a job"-say rob a safe or a Short Stop-do you think I could do it?

Is there anything special I might need to know?

How could I learn those things?

Do you feel badly about what you've done?

Do you think people who commit crime after crime should feel a sense of guilt?

Why or why not?

Why do you think most people turn to crime?

What do they get out of it?

How do you feel about crime in general?

Is crime the "number one problem in America" that you hear it called so often?

Point #5

What is your attitude toward the law? (Is it made to be broken?)

Don't we need laws so that we can all live together in society?

Would you say that other people you know who have committed crimes feel the way you do?

Did you feel that way before being convicted and punished?

Who did you know when you were growing up who agreed with you?

Do you see yourself as a conformist? Why or why not?

How do you feel about the way our society is run? Is everyone given a "fair shake"?

Are you better off going along with the norms of society or fighting for what you believe to be best for you? Why or why not?

Point #6

Did you know people who encouraged you to obey the law, be a good citizen, and so on, as you were growing up? If so, who were they? (Mother, school, church, boy scouts)

Did you accept these ideas? Why or why not?

Did you know people who encouraged you to disobey the law as you were growing up? If so, who were they?

Did you accept these ideas? Why or why not?

Point #7

Who did you hang around with most as you were growing up?

Who had the most influence on you, would you say?

How did they feel about crime?

At what age did you start hanging around with this person or group?

What did you and your friend(s) do for fun?

Did you ever talk about crime and how you could "get away" with something?

Point #9

Do you think some people commit crimes for money?

Do you think some people commit crimes for status? How do they get status from crime?

Can't you get money and status from legal activities?

Then why don't those who commit crimes work in or through "the system" rather than outside of it?

Is there anything else you can tell me about why you committed the crimes you did or why you think others commit crimes?

Is there anything else at all you would like to tell me?

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Marshall B. Clinard and Robert F. Meier, Sociology of Deviant Behavior, 5th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), pp. 13-14.
- 2 Erich Goode, Deviant Behavior, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1984), p. 25.
- 3 Goode, p. 26.
- 4 Clinard and Meier, p. 70.
- 5 Goode, pp. 33-35.
- 6 Clinard and Meier, pp. 84-85.
- 7 Clinard and Meier, p. 85.
- 8 Clinard and Meier, p. 89.
- 9 Earl R. Babbie, Sociology: An Introduction, 2nd ed. (California: Wadsworth, 1980), p. 175.
- 10 Edwin H. Sutherland and Donald R. Cressey, Criminology, 10th ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1978), pp. 80-82.
- 11 Clinard and Meier, p. 91.
- 12 Goode, p. 28.
- 13 Clinard and Meier, p. 91.
- 14 Edwin H. Sutherland, On Analyzing Crime (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p.10.
- 15 Ronald L. Akers, Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach (California: Wadsworth, 1973), p. 39.
- 16 Akers, p. 39.
- 17 Akers, p. 40.
- 18 James F. Short, Jr., "Differential Association with Delinquent Friends and Delinquent Behavior," Pacific Sociological Review, Spring 1958, p. 25, col. 2.
- 19 Harwin L. Voss, "Differential Association and Reported Delinquent Behavior: A Replication," Social Problems, 1964, p. 85, col. 2.

20

Victor Matthews, "Differential Identification: An Empirical Note," Social Problems, 1968, p. 383, col. 1.

21

John R. Stratton, "Differential Identification and Attitudes Toward the Law," Social Forces, 1970, p. 259, col. 2.

22

Philip E. Lampe, "Criminogenesis: Is the Criminal Born or Made?" The Humanist, September/October 1978, p. 15, col. 2.

23

Frank Schmallegger, "World of the Career Criminal," Human Nature, March 1979, p. 52, col. 2.

24

David Smothers, "Killing Just for 'Glory'," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 1979, p. 12, cols. 2-3.

25

Howard Schwartz and Jerry Jacobs, Qualitative Sociology: A Method to Madness. (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 4.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Reed. "Differential Association and Learning Principles Revisited." Social Problems. Spring 1973.
- Akers, Ronald L. Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach. California: Wadsworth, 1973.
- Babbie, Earl R. Sociology: An Introduction. California: Wadsworth, 1980.
- Burgess, Robert L., and Ronald L. Akers. "A Differential Association-Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior." Social Forces. 1970.
- Clinard, Marshall B., and Robert F. Meier. Sociology of Deviant Behavior, 5th ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979.
- Cohen, Albert, Alfred Lindesmith, and Karl Schessler, eds. The Sutherland Papers. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956.
- Cressey, Donald R. "The Differential Association Theory and Compulsive Crimes." Journal. 1954.
- Glaser, Daniel. "Differential Association and Criminological Prediction." Social Problems. 1960.
- Glaser, Daniel. "The Differential Association Theory of Crime." Studies in Social Process. 1960.
- Goode, Erich. Deviant Behavior, 2nd ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1984.
- Grossman, Cathy Lynn. "The Delinquent Mind: How It Differs From Ours." Miami Herald. August 1980.
- Guffey, S.J. "Teenage Violence." Wilson Daily Times. March 7, 1984.
- Lampe, Philip E. "Criminogenesis: Is the Criminal Born or Made?" The Humanist. September/October 1978. pp. 12-15.
- Langan, Patrick A., and Lawrence A. Greenfield. "Career Patterns in Crime." Special Report. June, 1983.
- Matthews, Victor. "Differential Identification: An Empirical Note." Social Problems. 1968.
- Pauze', Barney K. "Differential Association: An Empirical Test." Unpublished Paper, Pembroke State University.

- Pauze', Barney K. "Differential Association and Rehabilitation of Offenders: An Empirical Test." Unpublished Paper, Pembroke State University.
- Pauze', Barney K. "Differential Association; Past, Present, Future." Unpublished Paper, Pembroke State University.
- Reese, Thomas J. "Demythologizing Crime." America. March 1984. pp. 213-215.
- Robertson, Ian. Sociology, 2nd ed. New York: Worth, 1977.
- Samenow, Stanton E. "Society Doesn't Cause Crime." Words. 1984.
- Schaefer, Richard T. Sociology. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983.
- Schmallegger, Frank. "World of the Career Criminal." Human Nature. March 1979.
- Schwartz, Howard, and Jerry Jacobs. Qualitative Sociology: A Method to Madness. New York: The Free Press, 1979.
- Short, James F., Jr. "Differential Association and Delinquency." Social Problems. 1957.
- Short, James F., Jr. "Differential Association as a Hypothesis: Problems of Empirical Testing." Social Problems. 1960.
- Short, James F., Jr. "Differential Association With Delinquent Friends and Delinquent Behavior." Pacific Sociological Review. 1958. pp. 20-25.
- Smothers, David. "Killing Just for 'Glory'." St. Louis Post-Dispatch. August, 1979.
- Somerville, Barbara. "Parental Influence Vital as Children Develop Behavior." Palm Beach Post. January 1981.
- Somerville, Barbara. "Violence In America." Palm Beach Post. January, 1981.
- Stratton, John R. "Differential Identification and Attitudes Toward the Law." Social Forces. 1970.
- Sutherland, Edwin H. On Analyzing Crime. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.
- Sutherland, Edwin H., and Donald R. Cressey. Criminology, 10th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1978.
- Voss, Harwin L. "Differential Association and Reported Delinquent Behavior: A Replication." Social Problems. 1964.

Wilson, James Q. "Thinking About Crime." The Atlantic Monthly.
September 1983. pp. 72-88.

Yorlin, Nicole. "Experts Search for Reasons why Juveniles Have
Become so Violent." Miami Herald. 1983.