

Discuss the fundamental postulates of Edwin Sutherland's "Differential Association Theory" with examples.

EDWIN SUTHERLAND- A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent criminologists of his time, Edwin Sutherland belonged to the Chicago School of Criminology/Sociology. He contributed a lot to the field of criminology and is widely regarded as a pioneer of the field.

His theory 'Differential Association' first appeared in 1939 in his text, Principles of Criminology. The final version of his theory appeared in 1947.

After his death in the 1950s, his associate, Donald Cressey continued work on his theory.

FUNDAMENTAL POSTULATES OF DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION THEORY

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a) Criminal behaviour is learned

Edwin Sutherland contended that as a child learns different skills, similarly criminal behaviour is also learnt and taught.

The famous bank robbery ⁱⁿ St. Louis in the year 1937, was inspired as per the bank robbers by the movie "Heat and Set it off." The robbers learnt various techniques and planned the robbery after watching the films.

b) Learning is a by-product of interaction:

In this he explored the sociological aspects of learning as it was, as he contended, a result of the interactions an individual has with others.

Organized Crime families like the Gambino Crime Family and cultivated a culture of crime within their family. The members were learning and interacting with individuals that were involved in activities like 'extortion, racketeering, prostitution, homicide and so on.'

c) Criminal techniques are learned

Edwin Sutherland found that along with criminal behaviours, techniques are also learnt along with them. Criminal mentors within deviant ^{peers} groups pass on this information

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to members that have joined the group.

The above example also fits members of the Gambino family taught their underlings the tricks of the trade. Another example is of a kid learning to pick locks or pick pockets from someone already involved in this trade.

'Drug mules or traffickers' often undergo training where they learn to evade authorities.

d) Differential Association may vary in the following

Frequency	Duration	Priority	Intensity
Number of times the individual has exposed to deviant ideas.	The time period/duration for which the individual was exposed to deviant ideas	Extent to which people are exposed to deviant learning in early stages of development.	The importance and prestige attributed to the deviant source.

Edwin Sutherland says; the process of learning to commit deviant acts is often influenced by the exposure to the deviant, the time spent with the deviant group and the intensity and

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priority the deviant source has for the individual.

A 'Drug Mule' or a smuggler spends a considerable time with his handlers before they are let in the field. The efficacy of his operations depends on how much they are interacting with each other.

e) Perception of the legal code influence motives and drives

Edwin Sutherland, says that the interaction with other individuals and their thinking of the legal code influences the persons motivations and ambitions. The person might agree or disagree to the individuals perception regarding the law.

In the US, the (banned) drug Marijuana is legal in some states while illegal in some. Same for 'Abortion', some might consider the partaking in this act as lawful in some states while some might consider as admirable in places in where it is illegal.

f) Process of learning criminal behaviour by association with all other criminal and anti criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms involved in any other

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Learning process:-

Criminal behaviour, as suggested by Sutherland, is learnt in the same way as learning all other patterns of behaviour. This is not a form of imitation.

The child who learns to pickpocket or steal or commit small scale larceny is not imitating this behaviour. It learns from his mentor and applies it. Similarly, those involved in carlifting, start small by learning the basics and then commit the crimes themselves.

- g) Criminal behaviour is an expression but is not excused ^{by those} of general needs and values because non-criminal behaviour is also an expression of those same needs and values?

Sutherland argues that a person only adopts a behaviour that tilts towards criminality if they perceive the consequences more favourable to the unfavourable consequences of violating the law.

He also says that criminal behaviour is not motivated by motives to accumulate money, status etc. As there are other non-criminal approaches to achieve them.

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An example, Pablo Escobar could've worked hard and gotten a degree leading to nice job. But it was his perception of the consequences and the way he performed his hedonistic calculus that eventually lead to ~~forming~~ ^{creating} a drug empire.

CONCLUSION

All in all, Sutherland's theory paved the way for groundbreaking work in the field of criminology. His proposition that behaviour (criminal) is learnt from friends, family and other groups in their adolescent and youth; and criminal behaviour is learnt like all human behaviour, changed how people viewed criminal behaviour altogether.