

1.1.20

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

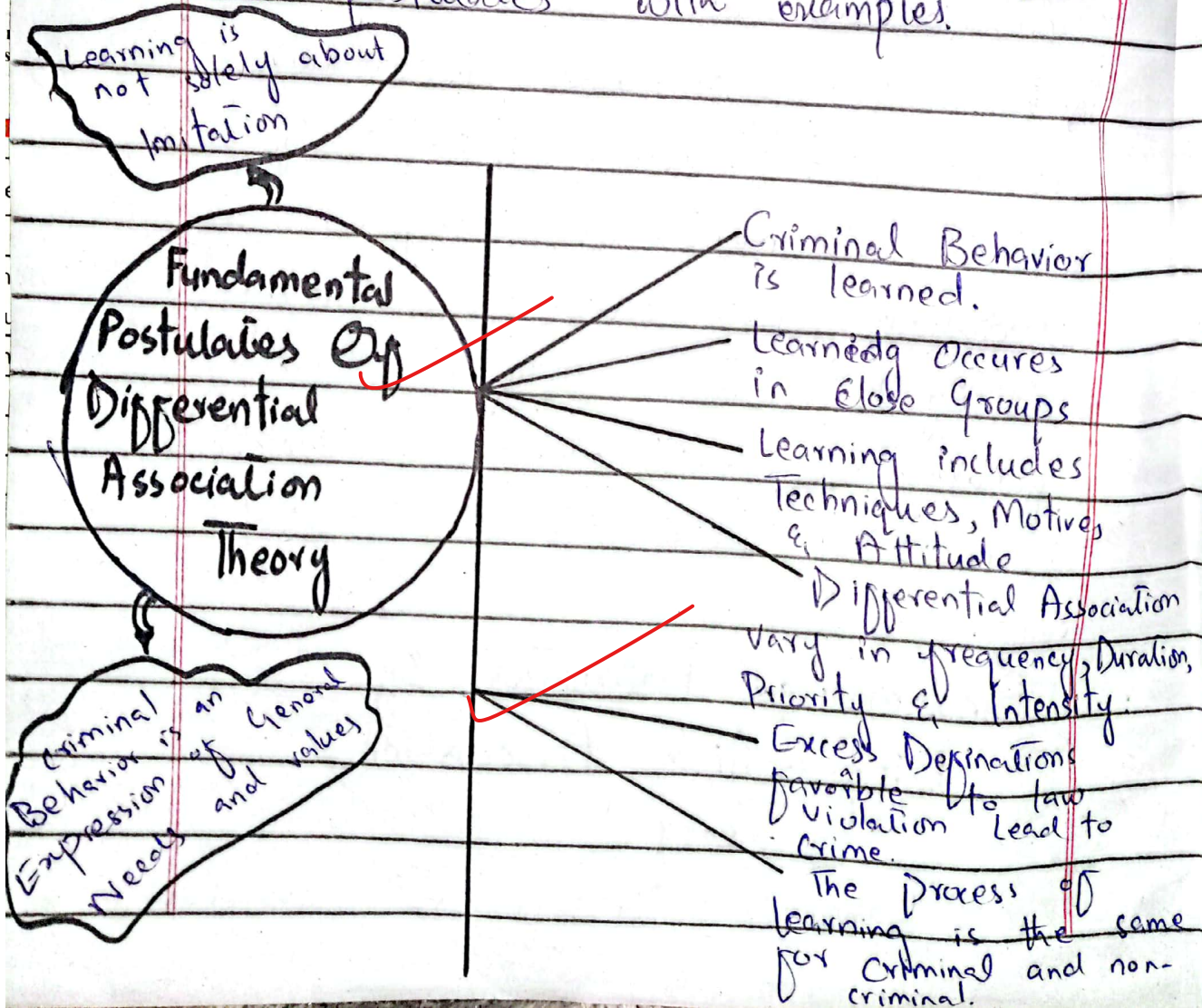
1. Introduction:-

Differential Association Theory, formulated by Edwin H. Sutherland in 1939, is a sociological explanation for criminal behavior. It posits that crime is a learned behavior, influenced by social interactions and communication. Sutherland argued that individuals are not inherently criminal but are shaped by their environments, particularly their associations with others. This theory challenged earlier biological and psychological explanations of crime, emphasizing the role of societal factors.

## Fundamental Postulates of Differential Association Theory

Sutherland's Differential Association

Theory is built on several key postulates that explain how criminal behavior is learned through social interactions. These postulates outline the processes, influences, and conditions under which individuals adopt criminal behavior, emphasizing the role of close relationships and exposure to favorable definitions of crime. Below is an explanation of these postulates with examples.



## 1.1 Criminal Behavior is Learned:-

Sutherland proposed that individuals learn criminal behavior in the same way they learn other social behaviors. This learning occurs through interaction and communication with others rather than inherent traits.

### Examples:-

For instance a teenager who grows up in a neighborhood where gang culture is prevalent might adopt criminal behaviors through daily interactions with gang members.

## 2.2 Learning Occurs in Close Groups:-

The theory emphasizes the importance of intimate personal groups, such as family, friends, and peers, in the transmission of criminal behavior.

### Examples:

A child raised in a family where theft is normalized may internalize such behaviors as acceptable and learn the techniques and motives associated with theft.

### 2.3 Learning Includes Techniques, Motives and Attitudes:-

Criminal behavior involves the acquisition of skills, strategies, and justifications for illegal actions. This learning shapes the individual's perspective on law and morality.

#### Example:

A novice hacker learns techniques for bypassing cybersecurity measures and adopts the mindset that hacking is a form of rebellion against authority.

### 2.4 Differential Associations Vary In Frequency, Duration, Priority, And Intensity:-

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The extent to which an individual is influenced by criminal associations depends on factors such as how often they interact with these influences, the importance of these relationships, and their early exposure.

### Example:

A person who spends significant time with a group of shoplifters is more likely to adopt their behaviors than someone with casual or infrequent contact.

## 2.5 Excess Definitions Favorable to Law Violation Lead to Crime:-

When individuals are exposed to more attitudes supporting law-breaking than those condemning it, they are more likely to engage in criminal behavior.

### Examples:-

In a workplace where

employees routinely justify embezzlement as a way to counter perceived corporate exploitation, a new employee might adopt similar practices

## 2.6 The Process Of Learning Is Same For Criminals & Non-Criminals:-

Sutherland argued that learning to commit crimes is no different from learning socially acceptable behaviors, it involves interaction, communication, and reinforcement.

### Example:-

A person learns the steps to break into a car from a peer in the same way they might learn to play a musical instrument.

## 2.7 Learning Is Not Solely About Imitation:-

While imitation plays a role, the decision to engage in criminal behavior depends on the perceived

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benefits, justifications, and consequences communicated through social groups.

Examples:-

An individual may not automatically copy a friend who commits fraud but might adopt similar behavior if persuaded about its low risk and high rewards.

2.8 Criminal Behavior is an Expression of General Needs and Values:-

Criminal actions are often motivated by the same desires (e.g. financial gain, social acceptance) that drive lawful behavior. What differentiates them is the method learned to fulfill these desires.

Examples:-

Both a street vendor and a pickpocket aim to earn money but the pickpocket's method reflects criminal learning.

## Conclusion:-

Sutherland's Differential Association Theory underscores the social nature of criminal behavior, providing a framework to understand how environments and relationships shape individual's actions. By highlighting the role of learned behaviors, it shifts the role of learned behaviors, it shifts the focus from individual pathology to societal influences, offering valuable insights into crime prevention through social and educational interventions.

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