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Ishaan Deepak Joshi

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YOUTH DELINQUENCY, CRIME AND SUTHERLAND'S PERSPECTIVE OF DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION

Ishaan Deepak Joshi¹

ABSTRACT

This study work employs a qualitative methodology to gather data on the subject of juvenile delinquency, specifically focusing on the differential association theory, which is widely recognised as a significant kind of social learning theory. The researcher posited a hypothesis suggesting a potential association between parental deviance and criminal behaviour, as well as between association with deviant peers and criminal behaviour. This study reveals that there is a notable similarity in the impact of groups of deviant peers and deviant parents during the period of adolescence. Both of the peer groups as well as parents play significant roles in the lives of teenagers. Additionally, the researcher's findings indicate that delinquency is influenced by factors such as being in slum areas, having a fragile personality, and experiencing poverty.

KEYWORDS

Delinquency, Social Networks, Deviant Groups, Peer Affiliations, Differential Association, Neighbourhoods, Juvenile, Criminality

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency is well recognised as a complex subject within the realms of the justice system and sociological studies. Researchers from several disciplines have been endeavouring to ascertain the underlying cause of the issue, examining its potential societal, physical, and psychological dimensions. This study investigates the impact of deviant parental and peer associations on adolescents aged 12

¹ NALSAR University of Law and MIT-WPU Faculty of Law.

to 17 years. This study aims to investigate the potential existence of a robust association between delinquency and the extent of involvement with deviant networks of peers and parents. The study aims to determine the extent to which parental involvement contributes to the reduction of adolescent criminality.

II. IMPACT AND APPLICATION OF SUTHERLAND'S PERSPECTIVE

Differential association theory is influenced by several social and intellectual factors. The initial social effect on Sutherland's perspective was when researchers from the Chicago school affirmed the notion that crimes are more closely associated with sociological factors rather than physiological or psychological variables. Sutherland's observations of the divergent responses of individuals during the Great Depression influenced his perspective, leading him to propose that criminal acts and behaviours are outcomes of situational opportunities and value systems, rather than being attributed to intellectual deficiencies.

Furthermore, the ban and criminalization of illicit substance use have implications for Sutherland's analysis of criminal behaviour. It is noteworthy that persons who previously engaged in behaviour that was not considered illegal may potentially be labelled as criminals only due to the enactment of a law. Subsequently, Sutherland conceived the notion of legal codes, wherein the assessment of criminal conduct is contingent upon societal compliance with established legal norms.² The greatest intellectual influence on Sutherland's criminological theory was from the scholars affiliated with the Chicago school, particularly the impact of symbolic interactions materials.

In addition to being influenced by symbolic interactionism, Sutherland's theoretical framework was also shaped by environmental and cultural transfer hypothesis, as well as culture conflict philosophy. The

² Williams, F. P., & McShane, M. D. (2013). *Criminological Theory* (6th ed.). Pearson

establishment of culture conflict as an orienting method for criminology was accomplished by Sutherland & Sellin in an approach that was scientific. Sutherland's research also encompassed the scrutiny of statistical information as well as subject histories, demonstrating his utilisation of the life history technique when gathering histories of cases from imprisoned immigrants and conducting an array of inquiries and interactions with a professional thief, commencing around 1930. Furthermore, Sutherland shown a keen interest in the subject of immigration and the elevated crime rates inside the central region of the city of Chicago. Moreover, the initial use of the concept of differential association occurred when Sutherland explicated the manner in which thieves engage in associations with one another, so establishing their own distinct values and culture. The primary objective behind the formulation of this terminology was to construct a theoretical framework grounded on robust scientific principles. Sutherland's perspective was shaped by the critical analysis of criminology presented by Jerome Michael & Mortimer J. Adler in the year 1933. The Sutherland hypothesis had three revisions, with the most recent iteration being in 1947.

In addition to our previous assertion, it is noteworthy that Sutherland's primary concern revolved around the phenomenon of crime rates and the factors contributing to individuals engaging in criminal behaviour. Sutherland's comprehensive analysis encompassed both the cultural conflict approach, which elucidates the disparities in crime rates across different societies, and the symbolic interactional approach, which sheds light on the mechanisms through which individuals adopt criminal tendencies. In this particular context, Sutherland developed a theoretical framework aimed at elucidating both the underlying factors contributing to individual criminal conduct and the observed disparities in crime rates among different social groups. The individual was required to consider the notion that illegal conduct may not inherently diverge from normal

conduct, the significance of values in shaping behaviour, and the varying propensities for criminal activity among certain regions and individuals.³

Furthermore, the differential association theory, which will be the primary subject of this study, emerges as one of the most notable manifestations of social learning theory. The acquisition of delinquent behaviour is a result of learning. The process of learning is a direct result of engaging in interactions. Therefore, delinquency is contingent upon the involvement of others other than the delinquent, since it is influenced by the process of socialisation. The process of acquiring knowledge takes place inside small, close-knit communities. The acquisition of criminal methods involves a process of learning.

The impact and driving forces behind the perception of legal codes. The response to social norms and legislation varies throughout society, and youngsters frequently encounter individuals who have divergent perspectives on the efficacy of adhering to the legal framework. Certain children may publicly express admiration for those who openly detest or disregard the law or its underlying principles. Children encounter a phenomenon known as cultural conflict, as described by Sutherland, when they are confronted with divergent and conflicting perspectives on matters of morality and ethics. The idea of differential association is grounded in the tension between social attitudes and cultural norms.

The concept of differential association encompasses variations in the time frame, rate, importance, and magnitude of social interactions. The extent to which an individual acquires the inclination to comply with or defy the law is contingent upon the calibre of their social interactions. Phenomena characterised by long-lasting durations tend to exert a more significant impact compared to those with shorter durations. In a similar vein, it may be seen that regular and consistent interactions have a more

³ Sigel, L. J., & Welsh, B. C. (2012). *Juvenile Delinquency: Theory, Practice, and Law* (12th ed.). Cengage Learning

pronounced impact compared to infrequent and sporadic interactions. Sutherland's definition of "priority" was not explicitly stated; nonetheless, scholars such as Cressey have inferred that it refers to the chronological stage at which children are initially exposed to concepts and terminology related to criminal behaviour.

Ultimately, intensity is commonly understood as the significance and status ascribed to the people or organisations whose definitions are acquired. The impact exerted by immediate family members such as a parent or a close confidant has significantly greater significance compared to the influence of others who are more socially removed.

Moreover, the primary concept to be examined in this research pertains to the correlation between deviant and juvenile peer networks and affiliations, including parents, friends, and romantic partners, and the likelihood of engaging in antisocial behaviour.

Furthermore, the use of differential association theory has been considered most suitable for examining the hypothesis posited in this research study. This assertion is supported by two primary justifications: its testability and its foundation in empirical data. The notion of differential association theory is readily comprehensible and amenable to empirical investigation. A sound hypothesis is characterised by its logical structure, reliance on available evidence, and substantiation via later study. It is important to differentiate empirical data from personal ideology, including religious beliefs, political leanings, and statements made by authoritative figures. Furthermore, a robust theoretical framework enables us to comprehensively comprehend and elucidate the many aspects of the prevailing environmental circumstances. Instead, he opted to employ the phrases differential social organisation or differential group disorganisation. This enabled him to effectively adapt his knowledge gathering and application to a broader spectrum of American society.

Moreover, the theory that has been chosen is considered the most suitable for examining the topic picked by the researcher. This is mostly due to the fact that it is the sole theory that elucidates criminal behaviour through the lens of social interaction, rather than attributing it to biological or psychological factors. The concepts suggested by this theory are straightforward and readily comprehensible. Sutherland presented a more streamlined and cohesive perspective on the aetiology of criminal behaviour and juvenile delinquency. However, his theories were firmly supported by the available data.

III. ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION RESEARCH LITERATURE

A study conducted examined the association between peer delinquency and drug use in relation to the transition between several behavioural states, including abstinence, delinquent behaviour, use of substances, and co-occurring problem behaviour. The research revealed that the influence of social networks on criminal conduct is unique to some areas, particularly when individuals go from refraining from any problematic behaviour to engaging in a single problematic behaviour. However, the influence of peer groups is more broad in relation to the process of reducing or ceasing problematic behaviour. The present study investigated the stated hypothesis by the administration of a survey, which was utilised to gather data from a sample of pupils ranging from twelve to sixteen years of age. The research also discovered that once adolescents get engaged in either juvenile delinquent behaviors or consumption of drugs, they exhibit increased susceptibility to concurrent criminal behaviour when exposed to peers who partake in similar illegal activities. Ultimately, when an individual initiates engagement in unlawful activities inside social circles, there is a strong probability that

such illegal behaviour will persist.⁴

A separate research endeavour examines the impact of peer groups on adolescents in conjunction with little parental supervision. The study suggests that peer groups exert a growing influence on teenage behaviours, particularly in instances when parental monitoring is lacking. The study employed quantitative approaches to ascertain that a connection with deviant peers constitutes a noteworthy risk factor for engaging in alcohol use, drug use, and delinquency. This association remains substantial even after controlling for socio-demographic, individual, and parental characteristics.⁵

This study examines the potential impact of poverty, neighbourhood characteristics, pressure from parents, controlled behaviour, and familial bad behaviour on child behaviour. The analysis utilises data obtained via the Fragile Families Research, including examples, assessments, and journalistic sources. The study employed the frameworks of social regulation and the theory of differential association. The research investigated the decision-making processes of individuals and the impact of the surrounding environment. The study posited a hypothesis that posits a clear correlation between being in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, experiencing familial stress, and the manifestation of undesirable behaviours in children. The research centred on the bad behaviour shown by youngsters, as studies on juvenile delinquency have demonstrated that early poor conduct in children is associated with a heightened likelihood of engaging in criminal activities throughout adolescence.

The study also posited a correlation between bad behaviour and familial

⁴ Monahan, K. C., Rhew, I. C., Hawkins, J. D., & Brown, E. C. (2014). Adolescent Pathways to Co-Occurring Problem Behavior: The Effects of Peer Delinquency and Peer Substance Use. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 24, 630-645.

⁵ Barnes, G. M., Hoffman, J. H., Welte, J. W., Farrell, M. P., & Dintcheff, B. A. (2006). Effects of Parental Monitoring and Peer Deviance on Substance Use and Delinquency. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 68, 1084-1104.

and neighbourhood characteristics, including family cohesion and socioeconomic disadvantage. The study revealed that in addition to the influence of unfavourable parental behaviour, there is also an impact from the neighbourhood and environmental factors. The study revealed a correlation between the characteristics of the neighbourhood and increased levels of parental stress and bad behaviour. These relationships suggest that there is a positive correlation between the quality of a neighbourhood and the likelihood of a family experiencing social pressure and engaging in negative behaviour.

A further research shown that the affiliation with delinquent peer groups has the potential to influence the overall consistency of a person's self-control. Furthermore, the decision of an individual to participate in criminal activities is contingent upon their degree of self-control. Moreover, persons exhibiting low levels of self-control tend to gravitate towards social interactions with those who possess similar traits, characterised by a weak personality and a propensity for engaging in criminal behaviour with relative ease. The study posited that the stability of self-control may be impacted by the association with delinquent peers. The data utilised in this study was obtained through the implementation of a longitudinal sample. The data was collected throughout the period spanning from 1998 to 2006.⁶ The study ultimately determined that there exists a correlation between delinquent peers and the extent of self-control, particularly among those with low levels of self-control.

A research was conducted to examine the impact of broken families and the level of connection to parents and peers on delinquency rates across various racial groups. This investigation was guided by the theoretical frameworks of differential association as well as control models. The present study posited a hypothesis regarding the direct impact of

⁶ Church, W. T., Jagers, J. W., & Taylor, J. K. (2012). Neighborhood, Poverty, and Negative Behavior: An Examination of Differential Association and Social Control Theory. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 1035-1041

residing in distressed neighbourhoods, experiencing broken familial environments, and lacking parental supervision on delinquency among individuals of Black and Non-Black racial backgrounds. Furthermore, it was postulated that this influence would be more pronounced among Black individuals compared to their Non-Black counterparts. Additionally, it was suggested that variables such as age would have a substantial effect on delinquency as they serve as significant sources of defining delinquent behaviour.

Through the use of quantitative approaches, the study discovered that those who associate with offenders and experience a dearth of parental supervision have a significant influence on the conceptualizations of delinquency. The impact of disadvantaged neighbourhoods is more pronounced for those residing in dysfunctional households characterised by inadequate supervision.⁷ Moreover, those who are older and come from a fractured family or a socioeconomically disadvantaged community may experience an elevated likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviours. This phenomenon is observed in individuals with poor attachment to their parents and peer groups, as it leads to an increase in the association with criminal companions and a decrease in conformist views.

A research examining the phenomenon of differential relationship between gang as well as lone offending investigates the impact of delinquent peers' behaviours and attitudes on overall, group-based, and individual acts of theft, vandalism, and violence. The present study investigated the significance of a group's attitudes and behaviours alone in the presence of friends. The study collected data from a sample of children aged eleven to seventeen in order to investigate the impact of differential affiliation on crime, both when committed individually and

⁷ Jennings, W. G., Higgins, G. E., Akers, R. L., Khey, D. N., & Dobrow, J. (2013). Examining the Influence of Delinquent Peer Association on the Stability of Self-Control in Late Childhood and Early Adolescence: Toward an Integrated Theoretical Model. *Deviant Behavior*, 34, 407-422.

when committed in a group. The research discovered that the attitudes and behaviours of friends have an impact on offending, which goes beyond their influence on the attitudes of the individuals being studied.⁸ The attitudes and behaviours of both friends were found to have a substantial impact on engaging in solo offending, even after adjusting for one's own attitudes. In conclusion, the study indicates that there are notable implications of friends' affects on individual propensities, particularly in relation to the acquisition of criminal behaviour through social transmission.

The subsequent investigation explored the correlation between peers engaged in delinquent activities and the manifestation of delinquent behaviour. The study postulated that the occurrence of delinquency may be attributed to the influence of delinquent peers, and that the affiliation with delinquent peers is a consequence of prior delinquent behaviour. Furthermore, the study suggests that having a connection with delinquent contemporaries heightens the probability of engaging in future criminal behaviour. The study utilised information gathered by the National Youth Survey & employed a cross-lagged panel model to assess the relationship between delinquent peer relationships and delinquent behaviour. Longitudinal data was collected from an accurate representation of teenagers, including a diverse demographic. The findings of the study revealed a robust link between the delinquent peer affiliations and engagement in delinquent behaviour.

The research further discovered that the behaviour of individuals engaged in delinquency significantly influences the relationship among their peers involved in delinquency. Furthermore, the impact of delinquency on individuals who engage in delinquent behaviour is more significant than the influence of individuals who engage in delinquent

⁸ Matsueda, R. L., & Heimer, K. (1987). Race, Family Structure, and Delinquency: A Test of Differential Association and Social Control Theories. *American Sociological Review*, 52, 826-840

behaviour on the occurrence of delinquency.⁹ The findings indicate a reciprocal relationship between affiliation with delinquent peers and engagement in delinquent behaviour. However, it is noteworthy that the impact of juvenile criminality on peer relationships is more substantial compared to the influence of peer affiliations on delinquency.¹⁰

The last research employed the concepts of social control as well as differential association frameworks to examine the occurrence of felony offences among individuals of both genders. This study utilised a sample of delinquents from both genders, selected from the city centre, in order to investigate both general criminal behaviour and involvement in specific types of crimes. The study also examines the impact of parental and peer attachment on criminal behaviour. The data utilised in this study was obtained through the administration of self-report surveys to individuals within the age range of seventeen to eighteen years. The research revealed that adolescents who maintain a robust bond with their parents exhibit lower levels of criminal engagement. Furthermore, the impact of criminal involvement on both genders was shown to be comparable.¹¹ However, it was observed that males face an increased likelihood of engaging in criminal activities when they associate with delinquent friends.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the preliminary investigation conducted beforehand to the qualitative review, the researcher may assert that a robust correlation exists between the variables in question. During adolescence, peer groups exert a substantial impact on individuals, particularly those with

⁹ Hochstetler, A., Copes, H., & DeLisi, M. (2002). Differential Association in Group and Solo Offending. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 30, 559-566.

¹⁰ Matsueda, R. L., & Anderson, K. (1998). The Dynamics of Delinquent Peers and Delinquent Behavior. *Criminology*, 36, 269-308

¹¹ Alarid, L. F., Burton, V. S., & Cullen, F. T. (2000). Gender and Crime among Felony Offenders: Assessing the Generality of Social Control and Differential Association Theories. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 37, 171-199

little self-control and vulnerable personalities. Put simply, the influence of deviant peer groups on adolescents will be mitigated if they possess a robust support network and exhibit elevated levels of self-assurance. In contrast, the study claimed that individuals who engage in criminal behaviour within deviant peer networks are likely to exhibit opinions and perspectives that might have been shaped by external influences, as opposed to those who commit crimes independently.

Moreover, those who engage in criminal activities with their peers possess an increased probability of perpetrating these crimes independently. A study conducted revealed a robust association between the presence of delinquent peers and engagement in delinquent behaviour. The study revealed that the impact of delinquency on peer association is more significant than the influence of peer association on delinquency.

It is noteworthy that the complexities of any given issue cannot be adequately described by a single factor, nor can they be effectively resolved by a singular treatment approach. This parallel between the intricacies of the research topic and the multifaceted nature of real-world problems is of considerable importance. This study reveals that there is a notable similarity in the impact of criminal peer networks and delinquent parents during the period of adolescence. Both social networks and families play significant roles in the lives of adolescents.

Therefore, it is imperative for any proposed solution to explicitly account for these two crucial elements. In addition to the influence of deviant social circles and parental factors, the study also revealed that delinquency is significantly influenced by adverse neighbourhood conditions, vulnerable personality traits, and socioeconomic disadvantage. In order to address this issue, it makes sense to initiate the analysis by examining key components such as the family and the school, which are significant variables in the processes of socialisation

and education. Furthermore, the recommendations of the study will be derived from the empirical evidence obtained via the investigation. There exist several strategies for mitigating or averting instances of adolescent delinquency.

When considering the issue of adolescent delinquency, it is important to acknowledge the significant role that parents play in its prevention. First and foremost, it is imperative for parents to acknowledge that they bear the responsibility for their children and possess the inherent right to safeguard them. It is important for parents to exercise control over their children by inquiring about their social circle and their typical activities outside of the household. Additionally, it is essential for parents to cultivate a pleasant and open-minded demeanour towards their children, providing them with ample attention and demonstrating a genuine understanding of their needs and perspectives.

Conversely, parents who exhibit aberrant behaviour should actively pursue assistance in order to effectively fulfil their position as positive exemplars for their kids. In addition to the tasks fulfilled by parents, older siblings also play a significant and beneficial influence. The researcher posits that the impact of deviant peer networks is more pronounced in disadvantaged neighbourhoods characterised by poverty. Consequently, the researcher intends to focus on individuals residing in impoverished areas, namely those residing in slums, who face financial constraints that prevent them from accessing after-school programmes or extracurricular activities.

According to existing research, it is recommended that adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds be granted complimentary access to extracurricular activities. The community could consider the implementation of summer programmes, provision of assistance for small-scale initiatives, and promotion of volunteerism among teens. In conclusion, it is imperative for citizens to unite in order to safeguard our

families and mitigate instances of youth criminality.