

# Criminology theories- differential association and strain theory

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



In criminology, theories play an important role especially in understanding the settings, motivations, assets, behaviors and actions of criminals. These theories serve as their guidelines in order to detect and sometimes read the plans of their enemies. Unfortunately, these theories are not one hundred percent accurate, however, learning these aspects are still essential. Differential Association and Strain Theories are most commonly used in the field of criminology. These theories aim to explain the totality and the instinctive or social development of criminal ideation in a person.

The theories mentioned are extremely necessary for authorities to understand and to be familiar with. Criminal Theories - Differential Association Theory vs. Strain Theory Theories in criminology tend to be unclear and lacking in justifiable broadness. The lack of clarity can sometimes end up in apparent inconsistencies, although more attention to the structure of a scientific theory and its requirements might reveal more agreement among theorists than now recognized. In fact, rarely do available theories offer guidance that does not require heroic leaps of conjecture.

Practicality is not a requirement of a valid theory since theories might be void but still of use. However, condition for a theory to be considered certifiable is none other than practicality. Criminology is the scientific study of crime; hence, theories need to have adequate basis in order to prove true and be considered useful. Another denotation of the term Criminology is the study of law making, law breaking and the response to law breaking. This definition of criminology is also a useful way to categorize the theories.

Theories of law breaking are the most common and essential in the field of Criminology. The questions that usually come out is “ why do people commit crime? ” or “ What makes countries more prone to crime than other? ” These theories serve as the guide of practice and a protocol to assist the implementation of law and reading of crimes (Vito, Maahs & Holmes, 2007 p. 14). The research paper aims to describe specific theories and analyze its over-all concept as well as comparisons. The main theories highlighted in this paper are Differential Association Theory and Strain Theory.

These theories are explained and scrutinized in order to obtain various points of essentials and utilize it in order to come up with a critical analysis of the said theories. The following are questions that are considered objectives of this research work. a. What are the theories of Differential Association Theory and Strain Theory? Discuss the concepts embedded in each theory and obtain the important data present. b. What are the comparisons and differentiations of the following theories? What are the important points to be noted in each theory?

The research study does not deal with any under topics except for these theories. By the end of the paper, a conclusion regarding the over-all study is present. Differential Association Theory The Differential Theory has been brought by Edwin Sutherland, and this has been considered as one of the best constitutions in the field of criminology. The evolution of criminology and formation of this theory have started because of this man’s desire to have a new direction in the field of criminology. He has rejected the

biological determinism and the extreme individualism of psychiatry, as well as economic explanations of crime.

The need for money or resources is never a motivating factor for a person to commit a crime. Due to this curious out-searching, he has arrived in the theory of Differential Association Theory. Another term for this theory is the "Social Learning Theory", wherein psycho-cognitive and analytic observations are implemented. Differential association proposes that criminal associations and normative conflict vary across community types; hence, this variation is linked in the rationale for varying crime rates (Hoffman 2003). The concept of this theory states that delinquency is learned just as all other forms of behavior are learned.

It implies that Differential Association Theories are those associated in various factors such as changing community, the individual itself, the environment and family upbringing. These are the things that influence the person's behavioral concept, and if not guided properly, criminal acts may be produced. Sutherland (1947) proposed that crime and delinquency are learned in small-group contexts through the acquisition of a preponderance of messages defining law-violating behavior as acceptable or appropriate. (Dennis & Neff, 2007)

Moreover, this theory emphasizes on the genetic origins of criminal behavior, thus implying biological initiatives in crime control. In contrast to both classical and biological theories, Differential Association Theory poses no obvious threats to the humane treatment of those identified as criminals (Hoffman 2003). The conditions of this theory also suggests that the more

frequent, intense, salient, and enduring a youth's exposure to prodelinquency definitions, the more likely they will be to adopt these definitions and to use them to rationalize or justify engaging in delinquent behavior.

Delinquency stems from a positive identification with law-violating behavior learned in interaction within primary groups, which is an exact opposite of strain-induced negative emotions (Dennis & Neff, 2007). Testing Theory Validity According to the journal of Van Gundy and Rebellon (2006), differential association theory can be used in tracing out the behavior of crime acts in an individual. A test has been conducted in teenagers who are into use of Marijuana. Specifically, among respondents who reported using other illicit drugs in 1980, only 2.8% simultaneously reported that they had abstained from the use of marijuana in the same year.

The researchers gathered these individuals and they obtain an interview as well as drug sample from this group of people. The focus is too assess the origins of criminal behavior guided by the conditions of marijuana usage. According to the respondents who have been reported using drugs other than marijuana, the presence of moral attachments, commitments or involvements are either fragile, low or absent.

It has been noted that these individuals have higher association with substance-using peers than do those who report abstaining from such drugs. These results suggest that variables derived from existing delinquency theory are capable of explaining about fifty percent of the relationship between prior marijuana use and other illicit drug use. In terms of differential

association, the results obtained from the two controlled groups lies differently. The presence of reinforcement agents (peers, drug-using community, etc) and negative events are also being examined if these factors can directly affect the said behavior.

It has been noted that the individuals who have been using other drugs aside from marijuana have intense negative feelings towards family, difficulties and other personal areas of their lives. On the other hand, the other group also manifests negative feelings; however, the difference is the degree and coping towards these causations. In the end of their experiment, the criminal behavior that develops in a person is not brought by economical needs or the problems itself but with the environment present around the client. Strain Theory Strain theory is another proposed subject in this argument.

The theory of Strain suggests that a key motivational factor in delinquency and misconduct is strain, which is some perceived or actual state of discomfort. The strain of pursuing goals within diverse opportunity structures may lead to adaptations such as crime, delinquency, and other deviant behavior (Hoffman 2003). One example in this statement shows when a teenager desires for money, since the things that money can buy--nice clothes, CDs, movies, and so on—and the lack of money causes inability to obtain such wants. This event now produces strain in the part of the teenager.

This strain in turn leads to attempts to resolve the problem through theft (a direct attempt to resolve financial insolvency) or alcohol and drug use (an indirect attempt to deal with the shame of insolvency). Either way, the

theory of strain works by the induction of psychological strain itself (Apel et. Al 2003). Another definition provided by Dennis and Neff (2007) supports the claims of Apel (2003). General strain theory (GST) suggests that delinquency results from a youth's emotional response to negative relationships with others.

The negative relationships embody situations in which a youth fails to obtain a valued goal, loses something of value, or is presented with some type of noxious or aversive stimuli. Thus, a juvenile who is failing in school, or who loses contact with a parent due to abandonment or death, or who experiences some type of victimization can be said to be experiencing strain. The emotion of anger or frustration resulting from the experience of strain, rather than the strain itself, leads the youth to engage in law-violating behavior.

The main point in this statement is the occurrence of strain is not directly the valued point of origin in the case of Stain theory. The reason behind is the power of a person to control or manipulate the situation is still present; however, if in case the person breaks down because of this strain experience, that is the time wherein a person manifests valiant and law-breaking actions. Moreover, different types of delinquency or crime results from different forms of adaptation to anomie-induced strain. Property crimes, such as theft, represented innovative adaptations.

Using alcohol and other drugs, on the other hand, could be thought of as a retreatist mode of adaptation; i. e. , behavior that not only symbolically rejects the institutionalized means to achieve a positive goal, but also rejects

the goal itself (Dennis & Joan, 2007). Strain comes from various origins depending on the case situation of an individual. Not every case of a person entitles him in a single strain response but rather, multi-evident causations. Using alcohol and drugs, for example, can be considered forms of " self-medication," which may provide a sense of relief.

Often than not, financially or resource depressed societies are more likely to be populated by " strained" individuals. In this case, these communities suffer from more blocked opportunity structures. Hence these communities tend to create an atmosphere conducive to anger and frustration, key antecedents to delinquent behavior. Such kind of community breeds crime, as according to the theory, and acts of wrongdoing. Differential Association Theory vs. Strain Theory Differential theory by definition stated above originates from the intrinsic characteristic of a person, influenced by the individual's environment and molding assists.

The criminal behavior is primarily because of influence of those individuals who are also linked in the same act of criminal acts. A person learns to commit crimes little by little until a person commits it without any hesitation. The psychosocial environment greatly suggests such conditioners as the primary causation of crimes. The raise of crime rates are because of the instilled negative thoughts, inappropriate guidance and lack of attachments, commitments or relationships. On the other hand, Strain theory talks about the causation of crimes not directly because of strain but due to failure in tolerating these kinds of stimuli.



They are both result of negative impregnation of environmental pressures that in the end leads the client vulnerable to breakdown. The theory suggests that a person performs acts of delinquency not because of attachments or relationships but rather because of the pressuring strain. The crime rates, according to this theory, justify the increased criminal persona in places wherein financialdepressionor extreme difficulties are present. The last resort of the individuals is nothing but to commit crimes.

In an example given, a person is ready to kill just to get the material possession that the person wants to acquire. We can determine some connections between the two since both of them are etiological conceptualizations of criminal behavior. In the case wherein, a depressed community is surrounding a person, significantly full of drug addicts and negative and influencers, a person still strives to obtain moral life. Let us say that this person has a good job as well as good family relationships. The strain in his job is greatly pressuring his everyday living.

Fortunately, the person can still withstand such condition. However, because of the influence brought by the environment, such as the person's peers, he begins declining his work productivity. Given a situation wherein his brothers are hospitalized and he just got fired from work, he badly needs money. In this case, the person breaks down and resort to theft. The situation calls forth occurrence of the two theories in simultaneous condition. The surrounding environment of the client influences the breeding of negative emotions, which cause the person to have fragile stand in his principles.

The strain theory becomes evident when the strain of losing a job and need for money enters in. In the end of the discussion, the person commits the crime based on influential factors as well as straining. Conclusion In conclusion, of this paper, the answer to the proposed questions in the introduction is properly addressed in the body of the research paper. The significance of such theory in criminology is the substantial or even estimated estimate analysis of the person's criminal behavior origin.

In such cases, the authorities require to learn such principles because this can help understand the motives, intentions and plans of the whole crime actions as well as the criminal itself. However, we should not be limited in these two theories alone since, human beings vary the same as their intentions and modes of focus. These theories are not applicable in other cases, therefore the best thing to do is to understand the whole concept of theory and at the same time train the assessment skills in order to avoid theoretical falsehood.