Class Activities

# Chapter 10: Social Process and Control Theories of Crime

**Class Activity 1: Elements of Differential Association Theory**

**Define and Apply (Single or Paired Activity)**

**Instructions:** Read the following section in the textbook: “Elements of Differential Association Theory.” Please use the nine specific statements outlined by Sutherland to explain a bank robbery.

1. Criminal behavior is learned.
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.
4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple; (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes.
5. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable.
6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law.
7. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.
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.
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.

**Class Activity 2: Operant Conditioning**

**Case Study**

**Instructions:** Please read the case study carefully and answer the following questions. Please use positive and negative reinforcement to answer the questions.

Denise had been a straight “A” student up until high school. Recently, she has starting hanging out with a new group of teens. Her new friends are not particularly interested in school, and some of them have been in trouble at school. Denise starts to date Eli, who is a member of her new group of friends. One afternoon he tells Denise that he and some of his friends are all going to forge notes from their parents so they can skip school. He invites Denise to come along. He tells her they will be having a party at a friend’s house where they will be drinking some beer and smoking a little pot. She helps the other students forge the notes and they end up at the party. After drinking a few too many beers, Denise goes outside to get some air. Once she gets outside, she begins to vomit. A neighbor hears loud music coming from the house and see Denise getting sick in the yard. The neighbor calls the police. The police arrive.

1. You are the police officer answering the call. How would you handle the situation?
2. You are Denise’s parent. How would you handle the situation?
3. You are the school principal. How would you handle the situation?

**Class Activity 3: Techniques of Neutralization**

**Chart and Application (Single or Paired Activity)**

**Instructions:** Please create a chart that represents Sykes and Matza’s techniques of neutralization. Be sure to give the technique of neutralization and the definition.

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| **Technique of Neutralization** | **Definition** |
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1. You work for Wal-Mart and steal $50.00 from the register. What technique are you likely to use to justify your behavior?
2. You have a fight with your girlfriend/boyfriend. You go to a bar and get drunk. You end up going home with someone and having sex. What technique are you likely to use to justify your behavior?
3. You’re a high school student and you don’t do your homework. What technique are you likely to use to justify your behavior?
4. A police officer pulls you over for speeding in a school zone. You ask the officer, “Should you be out catching ‘real’ criminals?” What technique of neutralization are you using to justify your behavior?
5. You are in a gang and you get caught spray painting a building. The other gang members aren’t caught. The police want you to give up their names. What technique are you likely to use to justify your behavior?

**NOTE: Below is the correct chart for the professor to use.**

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| **Technique of Neutralization** | **Definition** |
| Denial of Responsibility | Individuals may claim that due to forces outside themselves (e.g., uncaring parents, bad friends, or poverty), they are not responsible or accountable for their behavior. Statements such as “it wasn’t my fault” are extremely common among both youth and adult offenders. |
| Denial of Injury | Criminals may evaluate their wrongful behavior in terms of whether anyone was hurt by their behavior. For instance, vandalism may be considered as simply “mischief”; stealing a car may be viewed as “borrowing.” |
| Denial of the Victim | Criminals may perceive themselves as avengers and the victim is the wrongdoer. For instance, vandalism is revenge on an unfair teacher and shoplifting is retaliation against a “crooked” store owner. Another variation is when shoplifters claim that no one is getting hurt because the stores have theft insurance, failing to acknowledge that stores raise their prices to alleviate such losses and higher insurance premiums. |
| Condemnation of the Condemners | Criminals may also shift the focus of attention from their deviant acts to the motives and behavior of those who disapprove of these actions. They may claim the condemners are hypocrites, deviants in disguise, or compelled by personal spite. For instance, one may claim that police are corrupt, teachers show favoritism, and parents “take it out” on their children. |
| Appeal to Higher Loyalties | Criminals may sacrifice the rules of the larger society for the rules of the smaller social groups to which the person belongs, such as a gang or a peer group. They may claim that one must “always help a buddy” or “never squeal on a friend.” |