A Rose by any Other Name: State Criminality and the Limits of Social Learning Theory

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Over the past thirty years, social learning theory has emerged as one of the top criminological theories of the time. Capitalizing on Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory, social learning theory provided the means for a quantitative assessment of Sutherland's propositions. Advanced largely by Ronald Akers, the vast majority of research conducted on social learning theory has been limited to self-report studies of adolescents and college students, largely due to convenience. The limitations of the methods developed to empirically test social learning theory combined with the difficulty of gaining access to people in positions of power, has been the primary impediment to testing the theory's applicability to state and corporate criminality.

In contrast to social learning theory, Sutherland established the relevance of differential association to studying white-collar crimes early on by examining the law violations of corporate executives and CEOs. Yet social learning theory has lost this focus on crimes of the powerful, due in part to methodological restrictions. One suggestion for overcoming this limitation is to begin incorporating qualitative methods and data sources such as autobiographical, biographical and journalistic accounts to more thoroughly investigate the social learning process involved in state and corporate crimes. If a theory claims to be truly comprehensive, as Akers claims social learning theory is, then it must prove itself applicable to all populations, different types of criminal and delinquent behavior as well as more diverse methodologies. If it cannot, then it must be abandoned in favor of more versatile theories of criminal behavior which can adequately account for crimes in the street as well as crimes in the suite.

Differential Association Theory

At a time when psychological and biological theories of crime and delinquency dominated the study of criminology, Sutherland introduced the theory of differential association in the 1939 edition of his popular textbook *Criminology.* Locating the causes of criminality outside of the individual, differential association maintains that criminality is learned, just as any other behavior. Securing criminology as the domain of sociology, Sutherland had laid the groundwork for an exploration of the social factors which contributed to crime.

Laying out the nine principals of differential association which have been left unchanged since the 1947 edition of *Criminology*, Sutherland states that:
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 learning 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 legal codes as favorable or unfavorable.
6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to vio lation of law over definitions unfavorable to violations of law.
7. Differential association may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.
8. The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and an ticriminal 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 ex plained by those general needs and values, since noncriminal behavior is an expres sion of the same needs and values. (Sutherland and Cressey 1978:81-2)

One common criticism of differential association theory is that not everyone who comes in contact with criminals becomes criminal themselves. Overlooking the key terms "excess" and "differential," this contention ignores the dual counteracting forces of definitions both favorable as well as unfavorable to law violation. Resulting from an overabundance of definitions favorable towards law violations compared to unfavorable ones, whether one be-comes criminal or not depends on the patterns of behavior to which one is exposed (Sutherland and Cressey 1978).

Other prominent criticisms of differential association theory point to its failure to adequately define and operationalize "an excess of definitions favorable to law violations over definitions unfavorable to violations of law." However, Sutherland and Cressey make clear that "the same objective definition might be favorable or unfavorable, depending on the rela-tionship between donor and recipient" (1978:90). Furthermore, definitions are not uniformly weighted. Instead, definitions vary in frequency, duration, priority and intensity dependent upon when and in what sequence differential associations take place as well as the prestige of the source of patterning.

A reflection of the positivist orientation of criminology which values quantitative methodology, the most damaging criticism of differential association theory highlights its ina-bility to determine the ratio of learned behavior patterns with any specificity. The impossible task of counting definitions favorable and unfavorable to law violation creates a theory which is 'virtually unfalsifiable.' Additionally, other research such as Cressey's work on embezzlers found that individuals were often unable to determine the persons or agencies from whom they learned their definitions from, not to mention the frequency, intensity and duration of the en-counters. More generally, differential association theory had been charged with oversimplify-ing the process by which criminal behavior is learned (Sutherland and Cressey 1978).

Social Learning Theory

Citing Sutherland's failure to specify the process through which criminal behavior is learned as the primary impediment to empirical testing of differential association, Burgess and Akers (1966) apply principles from B.F. Skinner's behavior theory (otherwise known as Skin-nerian, operant conditioning or reinforcement theory) in an effort to remedy this issue. Behav-ior theory "differs from other learning theories in that it restricts itself to the relations between observable, measurable behavior and observable, measurable conditions" (footnote 132). Thus, an integration of behavior theory and differential association provided the means for empirically testing and measuring how crime is learned.

Most generally, behavior theory argues that operant behavior (the voluntary actions of the individual) and respondent behavior (involuntary reflex behavior) is shaped by stimuli

such as rewards, punishments (positive and negative reinforcers), and the schedule of their distribution. Altering Sutherland's nine principles of differential association, Burgess and Akers lay out their own seven propositions:

> 1. Criminal behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning.
> 2. Criminal behavior is learned both in nonsocial situations that are reinforcing or discriminative and through that social interaction in which the behavior of other per sons is reinforcing or discriminative for criminal behavior.
> 3. The principle part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs in those groups which comprise the individual's major source of reinforcements.
> 4. The learning of criminal behavior, including specific techniques, attitudes, and avoidance procedures, is a function of the effective and available reinforcers, and the existing reinforcement contingencies.
> 5. The specific class of behaviors which are learned and their frequency of occur rence are a function of the reinforcers which are effective and available, and the rules or norms by which these reinforcers are applied.
> 6. Criminal behavior is a function of norms which are discriminative for criminal behavior, the learning of which takes place when such behavior is more highly rein forced than noncriminal behavior.
> 7. The strength of criminal behavior is a direct function of the amount, frequency, and probability of its reinforcement. (Burgess and Akers 1966:146)

Perhaps most reminiscent of differential association, the authors make clear that the learning of criminal behavior occurs in the *group* which is the individual's primary source of reinforcement. Outside of the home, an adolescent's primary peer group may serve this function. Comparatively, an adult's primary peer group outside of the family could potentially be located where the majority of their time is spent; the workplace.

In subsequent revisions of social learning theory, Akers (1977) has included imitation (the act of engaging in behavior after observing that behavior) as part of learning process as well. Additionally, the concept of neutralizations was also further developed from Cressey's earlier references to "verbalizations," "rationalizations," and "vocabularies of adjustment and motives." Akers claims that "these techniques function to make the delinquent acts seemed justified and deflect social and self-disapproval" (1977:52). Thus, an act which at one time may have been seen as deviant is justified to one's self and to others as socially acceptable.

A reflection of its parent discipline psychology, behavior theory most easily lends itself to testing within controlled, experimental environments. As such, most research done on social learning theory has suffered an over reliance on quantitative methodologies and captive, controlled populations. Rendering the concepts of behavior theory applicable outside of the laboratory and into the social world has proved to be an arduous, if not impossible task.

Research on Social Learning Theory

Led by Ronald Akers, social learning theory has persisted as one of the central theories within criminology. Much of the research done on the theory has been limited to drug and alcohol use, most frequently amongst adolescents and young adults, due to their concentrated, and largely captive statuses within schools, colleges, and reformatories. The ways in which social learning variables are operationalized and tested remains fairly predictable and uniform despite the growing history of the theory. Frequently, differential peer association, definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime, differential reinforcement and imitation are used as independent variables and paired with a specific deviant or criminal act as the dependent variable (Akers 1998).

The manner in which social learning variables have been measured also remains quite standardized. Take, for example, differential peer association; "typically, it is measured by number or proportion of friends who are involved in delinquent or deviant behavior, although modalities of association are sometimes measured" (Akers 1998:111). Definitions favorable and unfavorable, on the other hand, are most often gauged by evaluating attitudes, beliefs and neutralizing definitions towards a deviant or criminal act. Moreover, peer and/or parental approval or disapproval as well as parental sanctions, rewards and punishments are frequently used to measure differential reinforcement. Unadventurously, most of the research on social learning theory has closely followed these measures.

Akers (1998:112) boasts of the strength and the magnitude of the relationships between peer association variables and deviance throughout the literature. He even goes as far as saying "virtually every study that includes a peer association variable finds it to be significantly and strongly related to delinquency, alcohol and drug use, and abuse, crime, and other forms of deviant behavior" (116). He further asserts that "other than one's own prior deviant behavior, the best single predictor of the onset of continuance or desistance of criminal and delinquent activity is differential association with conforming or law-violating peers" (116). "This impact of peer association is found so routinely," Akers bolsters, "that it is no overstatement to say that it is among the most fully substantiated and replicated findings in criminological research" (116). However, within the research on social learning theory, little has been done concerning law violations committed by political and economic elites.

Over the years Akers and his colleagues have gathered a great deal of data in order to test social learning theory. With few notable exceptions, the vast majority of the research using social learning theory has examined alcohol, smoking, drug use and other delinquency among adolescents and college students. Moreover, the methodology used to measure social learning has been limited to surveys and self report data. Due to the difficulties of accessing people in positions of power, there has been no research which examines social learning as it relates to law violations committed by political and corporate elites. Within these parameters, the research on social learning theory has consistently demonstrated the strength of differential peer association (the primary variable measuring differential association theory), while showing weak support for differential reinforcement (the key variable distinguishing social learning theory from differential association theory).

The first fully specified model of social learning theory, the Boys Town Study as it came to be known (since it was funded by the Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth), was conducted by Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, and Radosevich (1979) and would prove to be a source of data for years to come. Although their initial hope had been to recruit the sample from incarcerated juveniles, their access had been denied. Instead, the Akers and his team were left to draw their sample from school districts in Iowa and Wisconsin. Drawing from seven school districts, Akers et al. received completed questionnaires from 3,065 students in grades 7-12. The influence of imitation, definitions, differential association, and differential reinforcement variables on alcohol and marijuana use and abuse was examined (Akers 1998). Portraying the normative dimension postulated by Sutherland, the study found that peer norm qualities (proscriptive, prescriptive, permissive, or ambivalent content of its norms) towards alcohol and marijuana use had a stronger impact than both parental and religious norm qualities. In support of Akers' claims, differential peer association, including peer norm qualities, proved to be the strongest predictor of adolescent drug and drinking behavior.

The Iowa Study provided Akers, Lauer, and Krohn with an opportunity to test social learning theory on adolescent smoking behavior. A longitudinal study of secondary school students including two junior high schools (grades 7-9) and one senior high school (grades 10-12) in Muscatine, Iowa (population 23,000) was conducted. In total, there were 2,194 students who participated the first year, 1,068 students who participated in the study for three

consecutive years and 454 students who participated for five years (Akers 1998). Using a similar measurement of differential peer association as the Boys Town Study

> three of the modalities of association were measured by asking, 'How many of your friends smoke?' for friends known the longest time (duration), friends most often together with (frequency), and best friends (intensity). The response categories were none, less than half, more than half, and all or almost all. (Akers 1998:213)

Analysis was done using a LISREL model. In the first year sample, differential association variables including association/imitation and differential peer association had the strongest influence on adolescent smoking. Attempting to account for the influence of smoking in the first year of the study on subsequent smoking behavior, Akers concludes that the model was likely incorrectly specified in the three year sample. In the fifth year sample, the strong effect of differential peer association at time three was found.

Assessing the effects of adolescent smoking over a period of time is difficult, however, due to the sporadic and incidental experimentation with smoking for people within this age range. Even so, Akers (1998:232) contends that

> Peer association was found to be the best predictor. In fact, knowing the smoking behavior of one's best friends in the first year of the study is about as good a predictor of one's smoking behavior in the fourth and fifth years as knowing one's own smoking behavior in the first year.

Thus, differential peer association has demonstrated its relevance to adolescent smoking behavior. Additionally, this data was also used by Akers and Lee (1996), whose analysis yielded similar results.

An exception to the use of adolescents as research subjects, Akers, Cochran and Sellers (1989) apply social learning theory to alcohol use among the elderly. The sample consisted of persons 65 years and older living in two retirement communities (N=216 and 516) and two age integrated (N=352 and 326) communities in Florida and New Jersey. However, the authors do not make clear which communities were located in NJ, though it seems that the both age-integrated communities were located in FL. Although the samples from the age-integrated communities were randomly selected, the retirement community samples were not. If it is in fact the case that both of the retirement communities were also located in NJ, this further limits the generalizability of the results.

Differential association variables inquired about spouses definitions of alcohol consumption, family norms, friend's norms, and differential peer association. In contrast to many of the studies on adolescents, differential reinforcement variables (balance of how drinking positively or negatively affects one's social relationships, balance of perceive positive and negative effects, and perceived costs versus rewards) seemed to be more influential than the differential association variables. Interestingly, those individuals defined as problem drinkers are more likely than the average drinker to hold negative views towards heavy drinking (Akers 1998). In conclusion Akers et al. find that "…among adolescents use of alcohol is somewhat more socially conditioned and tied to peer contexts and reactions than among the elderly, for whom drinking appears to be sustained more by the effects of the alcohol itself" (1989:634). Thus, differential peer association and drinking seems to be less significant amongst elderly populations.

Exploring the relationship between gang membership and delinquency, Winfree, Mays and Vigil-Backstrom (1994) apply social learning theory to incarcerated delinquents in New Mexico. Boys ages 12 to 19 who were adjudicated and incarcerated in two institutions as well as a female institution were included (N=258). However, since the sample size is small

and only includes incarcerated individuals, the results are not generalizable. The authors found that "the most important social learning variable is the proportion of one's best friends who are members of youth gangs, or peer gang members" (242). Thus, differential peer association was significantly larger than the effects of other variables. Regardless of age, gender and ethnicity, Winfree et al. find that differential associations and definitions predict individual delinquency.

Durkin, Wolfe, and Clark (2005) apply social learning theory to college students and binge drinking. Defining binge drinking as consuming five or more drinks in one sitting, the definition itself seems to include a great deal of variability depending on the context. Their sample consisted of 1,459 undergraduate students from four different institutions of higher education (two in the Midwest, one in the Mid-Atlantic region and one in the South). It is not specified, however, what types of institutions of higher education they include. For example, 30.7% of the sample resided with family members which may indicate that at least one of the schools is some type of commuter school. The difference in residency could substantially affect peers influence on drinking depending on the social setting (dorm vs. apartment vs. parents house vs. bar). The difference in institution types could also be correlated with socioeconomic status. The sample drawn was furthermore not randomly selected, and is thus not generalizable to the larger population. The authors found that "as predicted, binge drinkers were more likely than other students to associate with peers who also engage in this behavior. In fact, differential peer associations were the best predictor of binge drinking in the regression equation" (266). Again, differential peer association seems to stand out amongst the social learning variables.

Attempting to apply social learning theory to a new terrain of criminality, Skinner and Fream (1997) examine computer crime amongst college students. A multistage sampling procedure was used to obtain a sample of 581 undergraduate students at a major university in a southern state in order to access students in majors which would likely be more familiar with computers. Violations such as using or distributing pirated software, attempting to access someone else's password or account, altering someone's computer information without their permission or knowledge, or writing or using a program to destroy someone else's computer data, were included as measures of computer crime. Skinner and Fream found that

> the two main social learning variables in this study, differential association and definitions, consistently influence all types of reported computer offenses. Differentially associating with peers who participate in computer crimes is the strongest predictor of piracy and the computer crime index. Definitions associated with adherence to the laws against these acts are significantly and negatively related to all types of computer crime and are the most important predictor of illegal access to browse. (510)

Once again, differential association with peers emerges as a significant variable. Furthermore, definitions unfavorable to computer crime law violations (including the law itself) being the strongest predictor, stresses the importance of recognizing the context in which these definitions are formed.

In "Social Learning and Structural Factors in Adolescent Substance Use" Lee, Akers, and Borg (2004) address a gap in the literature on the impact of social structure on social learning. Conceptualizing social structure as "… an arrangement of sets and schedules of reinforcement contingencies and other behavior variables" (17), the authors continue to neglect many of the more macro/institutional influences on social learning such as political economy, religion and education. Instead, Lee et al. include socioeconomic status, age, gender, family structure and community size as structural variables. They postulate that social

learning mediates the relationship between the structural variables and substance use amongst adolescents. Adding on the structural dimension to the Boys Town study conducted in 1979, the data is twenty-five years old and the lapse of time between collection and analysis likely decreases the relevance of the findings. Unfortunately, most of the relationships between the structural variables and substance use as mediated by social learning variables turned out to relatively weak. Although Lee et al. continuously claim that their hypotheses are confirmed, the relationships are quite week and social learning variables do not mediate a *substantial portion* of the relationship between structural factors and adolescent substance use.

Despite Akers' claims of success for social learning theory, its application has been incredibly limited and its findings consistent in only one area: differential peer association. The core of differential association theory, associations with peers who hold favorable or unfavorable definitions to law violation is consistently the most significant predictor of crime and deviance out of all of the social learning variables. Ironically, this does not demonstrate the strength of social learning theory, but rather differential association theory. Differential reinforcement, which is perhaps the most quintessential concept setting social learning theory apart from differential association, only occasionally yields significant relationships to crime. If support is most consistently found for differential association variables rather than the others, then why does Akers' social learning theory continue to be classified as distinct from Sutherland's differential association theory? As long as research evidence continues to show support for elements of Sutherland's theory rather than Akers', then a return to the principles of differential association is needed.

Social Learning/Differential Association Theory and State Crime

With the exception of his social structure and social learning theory, Akers' conceptualization of social learning theory has narrowly emphasized the relation of the individual to the group over the relevance of the group to the individual. Two sides of the same coin, equivalent attention must be paid to both the micro and the macro forces at work in the social learning process. While differential association is clearly concerned with the processes by which an individual comes to participate in crime, it also draws attention to the social context in which the behavior is learned; an element often neglected in the research on social learning theory.

It is impossible to examine an individual's exposure to definitions favorable or unfavorable to law violations without granting attention to the social situation and differential organization in which the patterns take place. Stressing the necessity of analysis at the group level, Sutherland asserts that

> the important general point is that in a multigroup type of social organization, alternative and inconsistent standards of conduct are possessed by various groups, so that an individual who is a member of one group learns to accept the importance of success, while an individual in another group learns the importance of success and to achieve it by illegal means. (1978:94).

Although the individual may be central to Sutherland's theory, the group context which the person is exposed to weighs heavily on criminality. Thus, criminality cannot be evaluated without assessing the individuals' relationship and interaction with the group.

Demonstrating the significance of social organization, one of Sutherland's earliest applications of the theory seems to illustrate its congruency with an organizational analysis of criminality. Integrating his concept of white-collar crime with differential association, Sutherland's case study of the seventy largest manufacturing, mining, and mercantile corporations

demonstrates the applicability of differential association to organizational crime. He maintains that "white collar crime may be defined as a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation" (1983:7). Stressing the need to study crimes committed by members of the upper socioeconomic class, the concept of white-collar crime drew attention to the interlocking concepts of power and status which was absent in criminological theories and research at the time.

It is unclear, however, why social learning theory did not embrace this orientation as well. Shedding light onto the reluctance of criminologists to follow in Sutherland's footsteps, Friedrichs (2000) explains that

> In part, this relative lack of attention can be attributed to the challenge of gaining access to the politically powerful, their ability to conceal many of their crimes, the complexity and broad scope of the illegalities involved, and some ideological resistance to regarding government officials as criminal. (60)

The problem of accessibility is one of the greatest limitations to studying crimes of the powerful. However, these difficulties are further compacted by the methods developed to empirically test social learning theory. The feasibility of administering a self-report questionnaire to a random sample of corporate executives or government officials involved in criminal activities is unrealistic. Therefore, social learning theory must move beyond its positivist orientation and embrace a more qualitative approach.

Interestingly, Akers' early writings on social learning theory illustrated its potential for studying white collar and political crimes. Violations of law which aim to alter existing public policy or power relations are defined as political crime (Minor 1975 in Akers 1977:238). In addition to those who which to alter the status quo from outside the political system, political crimes "…may also be committed by people in governmental or other official positions in the attempt to defend the status quo or change the system toward the direction they want" (Akers 1977:238).

Akers (1977) only began to scratch the surface by conceptualizing the Watergate scandal during the Nixon administration as a political crime and offering a social learning explanation for it. Citing presidential tape transcripts and congressional testimony as evidence of an organized conspiracy within the White House, Akers acknowledges the potential for other types of data in testing social learning theory. By exploring the potential and actual rewards and costs of participation in the Watergate scandal as well as neutralizing definitions, Akers reconstructs the social context in which the crimes took place. His analysis incorporates structural, organizational and interactional aspects of the scandal, a synthesis absent from his subsequent research.

An Integrated Analysis

One form of white-collar crime, known as state-corporate crime, is the product of illegal or socially injurious actions that result from the common pursuits of one or more institutions of political governance in coordination with one or more institutions of economic production and distribution (Michalowski and Kramer 2006: 21). Providing a theoretical framework in which to unite the interactional, organizational and institutional levels of analyses with catalysts for action (motivation, opportunity and control), Michalowski and Kramer's (2006) integrated theoretical model of state-corporate crime is applicable to a wide variety of white-collar crimes. Recognizing the reciprocal relationship between the interactional, organizational and institutional contexts which influence crime, their model helps to address many of the deficiencies of social learning and differential association theory by conceptually linking

the different levels of analysis. As they illustrate,

> and actions of the individuals who occupy positions in those units are conditioned by the requirements of the positions they hold and the procedures of the organization, on the other. Differential association, by focusing on the social relations that give meaning to individual experience, directs us to examine the symbolic reality derived from social interaction within bounded organizational niches. (2006:24)

The organizational norms, values and standard operating procedures must be learned by individuals who occupy organizational positions. Learning these definitions is essential to effective organizational socialization and must be adopted, at least tentatively, by individuals who wish to succeed. Thus, social learning/differential association theory can help to explain organizational socialization by showing how individuals take on the norms and beliefs of the organization.

After surveying the landscape of state-corporate crime research, Kauzlarich and Matthews (2006) identify a disparity at the interactional level of analysis. Research on state crime, corporate crime and state-corporate crime has tended to most often focus on the organizational and institutional levels of analysis, and has overlooked the significance of the interactional level. Citing the need to design studies for more fully understanding state-corporate crime at this level, they clarify that

> Here we are referring to the ways in which the persons who occupy positions within state and corporate structures conceptualize their relationship to their work and their organization and how those individuals who are hurt by state-corporate crime come to grips with their victimization. (243-4)

To achieve this goal, they propose conducting qualitative interviews. Although this methodology might excellently capture the experience of victims of state-corporate crimes, it is not as well suited to understanding the perpetrators.

An Interactional Analysis of the Bush Administration and the Illegal Invasion and Occupation of Iraq

A perusal of recent state crime and state-corporate crime research readily reveals a repeat offender: the Bush administration. In addition to their many other illegal activities (human rights abuses at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, illegal wiretapping, firing federal prosecuting attorneys, and creating false pretenses for war, amongst others), the Bush administration has been especially criticized for its criminality concerning the war in Iraq. As shown by Kramer and Michalowski (2005), the United States' invasion and occupation of Iraq broke multiple national and international laws. A crime in progress, the illegal invasion and occupation was the end product of differential peer association with criminal co-workers. On a regular basis there continues to be human rights violations (both documented and undocumented) of monumental proportions as a result of the decision to invade Iraq. Although many of these abuses have been well substantiated within the literature (Kramer and Michalowski 2005; Kramer, Michalowski, and Rothe 2005; Whyte 2007; Welch 2009) as well as within the mainstream media, little attention has been paid to the process by which Bush administration officials came to actively or complicity participate in the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq. Through a qualitative social learning/differential association analysis of the deviant interactions between members of the Bush administration, a better understanding of the learning process involved in state criminality will come about.

As noted by Friedrichs (2000), approaching individuals in politically powerful positions about their deviant or criminal behavior is a near impossible task. Just as Akers relied on

samples of juveniles out of convenience, state crime researchers are forced to rely on secondary sources to provide data. Conducting a qualitative interview or administering a self-report questionnaire to top officials within the Bush administration is an unlikely possibility. In order to validate any individual level account of differential peer association within the Bush administration, it is necessary to triangulate multiple sources of data. Drawing on autobiographical, biographical and journalistic accounts of interactions within the administration, it may be possible to get a sense of the definitions favorable and unfavorable to law violation.

Autobiographical accounts of experiences within the administration are the next best source to face-to-face interviews. Even though researchers are unable to ask the questions they want and author bias is a legitimate concern, a myriad of information about personal and organizational interactions is often revealed from a written first-hand account. For example, former National Security Council counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke's autobiography *Against All Enemies* provides a scathing critique of his experience within the Bush administration. In other accounts (see also Clarke's testimony to the 9/11 Commission), Clarke has made clear that loyalty to the administration is an inherent expectation that comes with any White House position; hence his book was not published until after his tenure. Additionally, former Secretary of Treasury Paul O'Neill has also published an account of his experiences titled *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O'Neill* in which he argues that the administration was looking for a way to invade Iraq as early as January 2001. Former CIA director George Tenet also wrote a book titled *At the Center of the Storm* in which he also suggests that administration officials were searching for a reason to go to war with Iraq even before September 11th. Autobiographies such as these can provide an inside look as to how officials became exposed to an excess of definitions favorable to violating national and international law in order to enter Iraq.

Biographical and journalistic descriptions can also shed light onto the interactions of Bush administration officials. Providing a detailed account of Bush's inner circle, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* allows for a consideration of the long-standing relationships between many top administration officials. Another account which might help to explain the influence of Karl Rove on the Bush presidency is *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential* by James Moore and Wayne Slater. These are only a few of the many fruitful sources of information on the inner workings of the Bush administration that can be used to gain a better understanding of the processes by which government officials come to learn criminal behavior.

Documents from government think tanks and other extra-governmental organizations could also contribute to a greater understanding of the ideological definitions used to justify and rationalize policy. The Project for a New American Century (PNAC), for example, is a neoconservative think tank which has provided support for many of the Bush Administration's policies. Believing that American leadership, backed by military predominance, is needed throughout the world, PNAC aims to secure America's global hegemonic position for years to come. PNAC regularly issues briefs, research papers, advocacy journalism, conferences, and seminars to educate government officials and citizens about their perspectives.

In September 2000, PNAC released a report titled *Rebuilding America's Defenses*: *Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century*. Based off of a Defense Policy Guideline of 1992 authored by then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, *Rebuilding America's Defenses* reflects many of the ideological beliefs of prominent neoconservative Bush administration officials including I. Louis "Scooter" Libby and Paul Wolfowitz, who were contributing project participants. Reports such as these can provide a better understanding of the specific definitions used to justify policy and action towards Iraq.

A more traditional source of data for state crime researchers, government documents are a tried and true source of information about the interactions of government officials that

nearly every case study of state criminality relies on. Presidential daily briefings, presidential signing statements, memos, emails (if they have not been deleted), as well as reports and testimonies from congressional investigations are crucial sources for understanding how officials come to learn illegal behavior often through seemingly legal practices.

Unexplored territory by researchers interested in state crime is face-to-face interviews with government officials. Unwilling to cross disciplinary boundaries, many social scientist have yet to explore this point of access to people in positions of political power. Journalists regularly interview and interact with government officials, often leading to groundbreaking stories about government corruption and scandals. If state crime researchers ever hope to be on the forefront of understanding crimes of the politically powerful then they must adopt journalistic methodologies. Adopting these approaches would also help to expose the public to definitions of criminality which include the crimes of the powerful. Until then, social scientific knowledge about the interactions and definitions of the political class will be stymied.

By triangulating many of these sources it will be possible to get a contextual sense of the definitions which were favorable to illegally invading and occupying Iraq. Searching for converging themes and links between officials might help to reveal the frequency, intensity and duration of these definitions favorable to law violations. Rather than focusing on the quantifiable aspects of differential association, a more contextual approach which explains not only the content of definitions, but the process by which they come to be accepted, is necessary.

Conclusion

Emerging from the difficulties of empirically measuring differential association theory, social learning theory has provided valuable contributions to criminology. Allowing for a quantifiable evaluation of the principles of differential association, social learning theory has been most often limitedly applied to convenience samples of adolescents and college students. If social learning theory is to be regarded as capable of explaining all types of criminal behavior, then its relevance must be tested amongst all populations, for different types of crime and deviance.

Thus far, social learning theory has been unable to demonstrate its applicability to crimes of the powerful as well as more traditional crimes. As Akers (1998) makes clear, "This impact of peer association is found so routinely that it is no overstatement to say that it is among the most fully substantiated and replicated findings in criminological research" (116). Much of the research done on social learning theory similarly echoes Akers contention. However, the explanatory power of differential peer association shows immense support for elements of Sutherland's theory, not Akers'. If factors such as peer association and definitions reveal significance where reinforcement and imitation do not, then credence must be given to differential association, not social learning theory. Until more support is demonstrated for variables unique to social learning theory, a return to differential association theory, and the methodology it allows for, is needed.

As Kauzlarich and Matthews (2006) note, there has yet to be much research done at the interactional level of analysis using differential association theory within the hybrid state-corporate crime, as well as within its components state crime and corporate crime. Due to the difficulty in accessing politically powerful people, second hand sources of data are most easily obtainable. Triangulating autobiographical, biographical and journalistic accounts from people in positions of power with documents from governmental and extra-governmental organizations will help to produce a more valid and reliable contextual understanding of the learning contextual understanding of the learning process involved in state and corporate criminality.

Finally, raising issues of power and control within social science research, the over

reliance on vulnerable, captive and controlled populations does not show the strength of our research but rather the limitations of our methods. Moreover, restricting criminological inquires to state defined definitions of law violations facilitate the discipline's dependence on the most vulnerable populations in society to gain a better understanding of criminality. If a theory claims to be truly comprehensive, then it must be able to explain all varieties of crime. We must therefore move beyond convenience samples of adolescents and college students as our objects of inquiry and critically examine the applicability of mainstream criminological theories to all forms of deviance displayed by all populations, regardless of social status.

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