Chapter Outline: Social Process Theories (Ch. 7)

I. Socialization and Crime
   A. Social Process Theories
      1. Criminality is a function of individual socialization.
      2. People are influenced by interactions with various organizations, institutions, and processes of society such as education, employment, and family life and peer relations.
      3. All people have the potential to become delinquents or criminals.
   
   B. Family Relations
      1. Youth from homes with conflict and tension are more likely to become criminal.
      2. Lack of love can lead to criminality.
      3. Children with strong, positive role models are less likely to become criminal.
      4. Parental efficacy – supportive parents who effectively control their children are more likely to raise children who refrain from delinquency.

   5. Child Abuse and Crime
      a. Link between child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and crime
         i. Children subjected to even minimal amounts of physical punishment may be more likely to use violence in personal interactions.
         ii. The effect of abuse on delinquency has been observed in other cultures.

   C. Educational Experience
      1. Children who do poorly in school, lack educational motivation, and feel alienated are more likely to engage in criminality.
      2. Schools label problem youth, which contributes to criminality.
         a. The “track system” perpetuates stigmatization.
      3. More than 10% of Americans aged 16-24 have left school early; national graduation rate of 68%.
         a. Communities in Schools network is designed to reduce the number of dropouts.
      4. Many crimes occur on school grounds.
         a. Estimates of 1.5 million violent incidents in public elementary and secondary schools each year
D. Peer Relations
1. Peer groups influence decision making and behavior choices.
2. Cliques – small groups of friends who share activities and confidences
3. Crowds – loosely organized groups of children who share interests and activities
4. Adolescents feel pressure to conform to group values.
5. Peer rejection/peer acceptance
   a. Peer rejection may increase and sustain antisocial behaviors.
   b. Associating with prosocial friends and coworkers can lure adolescents away from delinquent peer networks.
6. Peers and criminality
   a. Delinquent friends may cause law-abiding youth to get into trouble.
   b. Deviant peers sustain and amplify delinquent careers.
   c. Antisocial friends help youths maintain delinquent careers and obstruct the aging-out process.
   d. Troubled kids choose delinquent peers out of necessity.

E. Institutional Involvement and Belief
1. Studies show that religious attendance helps one eschew crime and anti-social behavior.

F. The Effects of Socialization on Crime
1. Anyone with a positive self-image; learned moral values; support of their parents, peers, teachers, and neighbors can resist inducement to crime
2. Social process approach – an individual’s socialization determines the likelihood of criminality.
   a. Social learning theory - crime is a learned behavior.
   b. Social control theory - everyone has the potential to become a criminal, but most are controlled by the bond to society.
   c. Social reaction theory - people become criminal when significant members of society label them as such and they accept those labels as a personal identity.
II. Social Learning Theory
A. Crime is a product of learning the norms, values, and behaviors associated with criminal activity.

B. Differential Association Theory
1. Edwin H. Sutherland’s 1939 *Principles of Criminality*
2. Principles of Differential Association:
   a. Criminal behavior is learned.
   b. Learning is a by-product of interaction.
   c. Learning occurs within intimate groups.
   d. Criminal techniques are learned.
   e. Perceptions of legal code influence motives and drives.
   f. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.
   g. The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anticriminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms involved in any other learning process.
   h. Criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, but it is not excused by those general needs and values because noncriminal behavior is also an expression of those same needs and values.

3. Testing differential association theory
   a. Research generally indicates a correlation between having deviant friends, holding deviant attitudes, and committing deviant acts.
   b. Differential association seems especially relevant in trying to explain the onset of substance abuse and a career in the drug trade.
   c. May be used to explain gender difference in the crime rate

4. Analysis of Differential Association Theory
   a. Cultural deviance critique - differential association is invalid because it suggests that criminals are people “properly” socialized into a deviant subculture.
   b. Fails to explain why one exposed to delinquency succumbs and another does not
   c. It is possible that the internalization of deviant attitudes follows, rather than precedes, criminality.
C. Differential Reinforcement Theory
   1. Akers and Burgess (1966); a version of social learning that employs both differential association concepts with elements of psychological learning theory
   2. Also known as direct conditioning - occurs when behavior is reinforced either by being rewarded or punished while interacting with others.
   3. When behavior is punished, this is known as negative reinforcement.
   4. Testing Differential Reinforcement
      a. Those who believed they would be rewarded for deviance by those they respect were the ones most likely to engage in deviance.
      b. The learning-deviant behavior link is not static.

D. Neutralization Theory
   1. Matza and Sykes
   2. Views the process of becoming a criminal as a learning experience in which potential delinquents and criminals master techniques that enable them to counterbalance or neutralize conventional values and drift back and forth between illegitimate and conventional behavior.
   3. Subterranean values – are morally tinged influences that have become entrenched in the culture but are publicly condemned.
   4. Drift - the movement from one extreme of behavior to another
   5. Model based on these observations:
      a. Criminals sometimes voice a sense of guilt over their illegal acts.
      b. Offenders frequently respect and admire honest, law-abiding persons.
      c. Criminals draw a line between those whom they can victimize and those whom they cannot.
      d. Criminals are not immune to the demands of conformity.
   6. Techniques of neutralization – are a set of justifications for law-violating behavior.
      a. Denial of responsibility
      b. Denial of injury
      c. Denial of victim
      d. Condemnation of the condemners
      e. Appeal to higher loyalties
7. Testing Neutralization Theory
   a. Inconclusive evidence
   b. Most adolescents generally disapprove of deviant behaviors.
   c. Neutralizations do in fact enable youths to engage in socially disproved of behavior.
   d. Recent evidence shows that people do drift in and out of antisocial behavior.
   e. Is a major contribution to the literature of crime and delinquency because it explains aging-out and nonchronic delinquency.

E. Are Learning Theories Valid?
   1. Criticisms and strengths
      a. Little evident to substantiate that people learn the technique that enable them to become criminals before they actually commit criminal acts
      b. Fail to adequately explain spontaneous and wanton acts of violence
      c. Are not limited to explanation of a single facet of antisocial activity
      d. May be used to explain criminality across all class structures, including white-collar offenders
III. Social Control Theory

A. Maintains that all people have the potential to violate the law and that modern society presents many opportunities for illegal activity. People obey the law because behavior and passions are being controlled by internal and external forces.
   1. Some have self-control manifested through a strong moral sense.
   2. Others develop a commitment to conformity - adhered to because of a real, present, and logical reason to obey the rules of society.

B. Self-Concept and Crime
   1. Containment Theory - proposed by Walter Reckless
      a. A strong self-image insulates a youth from the pressures and pulls of criminogenic influences in the environment.
   2. Self-Enhancement Theory - proposed by Howard Kaplan
      a. Adolescents structure their behavior to enhance their self-image and to minimize negative self-attitudes.

C. Hirschi’s Social Bond Theory
   1. Travis Hirschi’s (1969) *Causes of Delinquency*
   2. Links the onset of criminality to the weakening of the ties that bind people to society
   3. Elements of the social bond:
      a. Attachment - a person’s sensitivity to and interest in others
      b. Commitment - the time, energy, and effort expended in conventional lines of action such as getting an education and saving money for the future
      c. Involvement - when individuals are involved in school, recreation and family they are insulated from the lure of criminal behavior.
      d. Belief - those who live in the same social setting often share common moral beliefs.
   4. Testing Social Bond Theory – Hirschi’s research corroborated by numerous studies that indicate:
      a. Youth strongly attached to family, friends, and school are less likely to get involved in a deviant peer group and, consequently, less likely to engage in criminal activity.
      b. Holding positive beliefs (i.e., religious beliefs) is inversely related to criminality.
      c. Youth who are committed to school and educational achievement are less likely to become delinquent.
      d. Youth involved in conventional leisure activities, such as supervised social activities, are less likely to engage in delinquency.
5. Opposing views – Some findings question the following social bond elements:
   a. Friendship – some delinquents may be “lone wolves.”
   b. Not all elements of the bond are equal.
   c. Deviant peers and parents – social attachments may nurture antisocial behavior.
   d. Social bond theory is restricted in scope.
   e. Social bonds seem to change over time.
   f. Agnew claims that Hirschi miscalculated the direction of the relationship between criminality and a weakened social bond.
IV. Social Reaction Theory

A. Commonly called Labeling Theory
B. Explains how criminal careers form based on destructive social interactions and encounters.
C. Roots found in symbolic interaction theory - people communicate via symbols (gestures, signs, words, or images that represent something else).

D. Crime and Labeling Theory
   1. Crime and deviance are defined by the social audience’s reaction to people and their behavior and the subsequent effects of that reaction; they are not defined by the moral content of the illegal act itself.
      a. Crime and criminals are labels.

E. Differential Enforcement
   1. The law is differentially applied, benefiting those who hold economic and social power and penalizing the powerless.
      a. Police more likely to arrest lower-class, minority males.
      b. Minorities and the poor are more likely to be prosecuted and to receive harsher sentences.

F. Becoming Labeled
   1. The less personal power and fewer resources a person has the greater the chance he or she will become labeled.

G. Consequences of Labeling
   1. Creation of stigma – one labeled deviant becomes a social outcast who may be prevented from enjoying higher education, well-paying jobs, and other social benefits.
   2. Such alienation leads to a low self-image.
   3. Differential social control
      a. The process of labeling may produce a re-evaluation of the self, which reflects actual or perceived appraisals made by others.
      b. Reflective role-taking - informal and institutional social control processes may temper or enhance the “labels” one sees reflected of themselves by others.
   4. Joining deviant cliques - when children are labeled as deviant, they may join similarly outcast delinquent peers.
   5. Retrospective reading - process that occurs when the past of the labeled person is reviewed and reevaluated to fit his or her current status, i.e., an “ex-con.”
   6. Dramatization of evil – labels become the basis of personal identity.
H. Primary and Secondary Deviance
1. Edwin Lemert

2. Primary deviance - involves norm violations or crimes that have very little influence on the actor and can be quickly forgotten.

3. Secondary deviance - occurs when a deviant event comes to the attention of significant others or social control agents who apply a negative label.
   a. Deviance amplification effect - offenders feel isolated from the mainstream of society and become firmly locked within their deviant role.

I. Research on Social Reaction Theory
1. Who gets labeled?
   a. The poor and powerless are victimized by the law and justice system; labels are not equally distributed across class and racial lines.
   b. Contextual discrimination - refers to judicial practices in some jurisdictions of imposing harsher sentences on African Americans when they victimize whites and not other African Americans.

2. The effects of labeling - empirical evidence that negative labels actually have a dramatic influence on the self-image of offenders.

3. Labeling and criminal careers - evidence that labeling plays an important role in persistent offending.

J. Is Labeling Theory Valid?
1. Some found little to support the theory.

2. Labeling Reexamined - others found supporting evidence of the theory.
   a. Labeling theory identifies the role played by social control agents in the process of crime causation.
   b. Labeling theory recognizes that criminality is not a disease or pathological behavior.
   c. Labeling theory distinguishes between criminal acts and criminal careers and shows that these concepts are interrelated and treated differently.
V. Evaluating Social Process Theories
   A. The three branches are compatible because they suggest that criminal behavior is part of the socialization process.

VI. Public Policy Implications of Social Process Theory
   A. Major influence on social policy-making since 1950s.
   B. Resulting programs include:
      1. Head Start programs.
      2. Diversion programs - designed to remove both juvenile and adult offenders from the normal channels of the criminal justice process by placing them in programs designed for rehabilitation.
      3. Restitution - an offender is asked to either repay the victim of the crime for any loss incurred, or to do some useful work in the community in lieu of receiving a court-ordered sentence.