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DEVELOPING THE CRIMINAL SELF: MEAD'S SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND SUTHERLAND'S DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION

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Although the precise impact that Mead had on Sutherland may be somewhat of a mystery, Mead's ideas can be traced within differential association. Through an explicit articulation of Mead's social psychology, it is possible to overcome differential association's inability to connect object definitions with individual behaviors. Important to this connection are Mead's notions of self-as-communication and the development of a generalized other in the genesis of what we call the "criminal self." This criminal self, rooted in language and its relation to others, is articulated in the behavior which brings about those relations. The conceptualization we provide is developed through the exploration of three areas that connect Mead to Sutherland: general notions on the genesis of the self that focuses on play; the acquisition of specific content in that development that focuses on game; and some final distinctions which further reclaim the interactionist roots of the theory.

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As developed in various incarnations by Edwin Sutherland, differential association has served as an important foundational perspective in the history of criminological thought. It supplied the basic foundation for social learning theory (cf. Burgess and Akers 1966; Akers and Jensen 2003) and differential identification theory (cf. Glaser 1956), the interactional roots for subcultural or “cultural transmission” theories (Hester and Eglin 1992, p. 6) and has been the center of recent debates as it is tested against social control theory (cf. Costello and Vowell 1999; Matsueda 1982). Taking these developments even further, more recent work, particularly social learning theory, has attempted to establish a connection between the structural and individual levels of action to develop a more general theory of crime and delinquency (cf. Akers and Jensen 2003; Erickson, Crosnoe, and Dornbusch 2000; Hoffman 2002; Ulmer 2000). We believe that as these efforts continue, it is important that researchers use an understanding of their foundation in differential association which includes its implicit social psychology of the self. To that end, we attempt to illuminate the social psychology of Sutherland’s teacher and contemporary, George Herbert Mead, that is implicit in Sutherland’s work.

Historically, Sutherland’s theory is best viewed as part of the Chicago tradition to which Mead was an important contributor. Specifically, differential association was an attempt to clarify the obvious but underdeveloped notion of crime-as-social-process. In this context, deviance is examined at the individual level and is seen as “embedded, shared, symbolic experience changing over time” (Downes and Rock 1998, p. 80). Subsequent theorists (e.g. Matza 1969; Glaser 1956, 1975) worked to develop and expand upon the theory’s interactionist implications, and we follow their lead here by focusing even more exclusively on Mead’s influence. In the following pages we expose this influence by examining the social psychology implied in Sutherland’s theory, and indicate how it helps researchers conceptualize the development of a *criminal self*.

INTERACTIONIST EXPANSIONS OF DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION

Before beginning, we should note that our attempt to illuminate the Meadian social psychology implied in differential association is not to provide a completely new perspective for exploring criminal and delinquent behavior. Nor are we so bold as to be suggesting major revisions for current theoretical perspectives. Indeed, many before us

have worked diligently to develop a social psychology for differential association (cf. Akers 1968; Cressey 1962; Glaser 1956, 1962). Rather, we are arguing that an illumination of Sutherland's implicit base, and the shift in focus to a *criminal self* that it suggests, can aid in contemporary theoretical developments.

One of the more prominent theories in recent years has been social learning theory which integrated differential association with ideas and processes from Symbolic Interactionism as well as operant learning theory (cf. Akers 1985). Over the years, this perspective has grown to include a focus on four primary processes: imitation, definition, differential association and differential reinforcement (Akers 1985; Akers and Jensen 2003; Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce and Radosevich, 1979). Critical to this theory's development has been attention to the impact of *specific others*: those who are immediately present, those who are virtually present and those who are imagined to be present. Following this perspective, an individual learns their behaviors, definitions and attitudes directly and/or indirectly from sources that are available to them in their social environment.

Unfortunately, this focus on direct and indirect learning from specific others has produced a somewhat truncated view of an individual's developing sense of self. Briefly, the development of the self would seem only to involve the taking of roles through communication with specific others (a self-in-communication), and would not involve the understanding of those roles through the internal conversation of self with abstract others (a self-as-communication). In Meadian terms, self development would be all play and little game. What is specifically missing from the social learning theory is the development of a unified sense of self that understands the interrelations of those roles with roles of the broader community: a *generalized other*.

While missing in social learning theory, the importance of roles and their interrelations was picked up in the theory of differential identification. The theory contended that "a person pursues criminal behavior to the extent that he identifies himself with real or imaginary persons from whose perspective his criminal behavior seems acceptable" (Glaser 1975, p. 202). Notably, this theory specified the symbolic character of differential association, focused on the contextualization of role-taking, and included the point of view of imaginary others. Additionally, the intersubjective quality of role-making "includes the individual's interaction with himself in rationalizing his conduct" (Glaser 1975, pp. 202–203). The perspective, then, implied the use of a generalized other as the roles a person takes are contextualized by the roles taken by others in a situation. The

theory suggested that a criminal must not only understand their own role(s), but also the interconnections of the role(s) with others in a community.

While a focus on these interconnections certainly began to capture the spirit of a generalized other, differential identification did not go far enough in bringing forward Mead's notion of a sense of self. The interpretive backdrop described by Glaser still relied heavily on the immediate environment since "for a given individual, at any given period of time, prior identification and present circumstances will dictate the persons with whom he identifies" (Stratton 1967, p. 257; see also Glaser 1956). While certainly important for understanding the immediate decision making process that may lead to a specific criminal or delinquent act, the theory understood these acts as the result of the immediate, concrete interactions with others in a group rather than as a part of ongoing reflections of self in relation to both the group and the broader community. While indicating the importance of an internal interaction, it still relied on a vision of self-in-communication rather than self-as-communication.

It is not difficult to see how Sutherland's explicit statements led to this focus on immediate associations, significant others and the notion of a self-in-communication. Initially, Sutherland proposed that people learn criminal behaviors from others who engage in similar activities and have specific definitions of legal codes which are exchanged in interactions. However, while these definitions are important elements in learning criminality, we believe that the proper area of focus must be on how these definitions, and other elements, influence the development of a particular form of self: the *criminal self*. It is this self, after all, which makes the connection between others' definitions, the larger community and an individual's behavior.

TEASING OUT THE CRIMINAL SELF

This notion of the "criminal self" is an extension of Mead's (1934) general concept of self. Briefly stated, the self is the experience of both subject and object to ourselves. An individual's articulation of a sense of self is the result of this ability to reflexively consider actions in their relations to the actions of others; to hold an internal conversation that considers the social contexts and the actions in those contexts. The actions an individual chooses, and thus the self they articulate, depend on the role(s) they take in a given situation as well as on a unified sense of self that relies on an abstract sense of the community as a whole. The criminal self, then, is the articulation

of a sense of self that makes use of a role (or set of roles) in a particular situation, that relates to others in that situation (or set of situations) through criminal or deviant behaviors, *and which involves a unified sense of self that, through an internal conversation, takes the attitude of a generalized other developed through previous experiences.*

To develop this perspective of the criminal self, we must expose Sutherland's implicit social psychology. Using Mead, we can formulate an analysis of individuals that examines the genesis of a particular form of self which is dependent on interactions with others and is expressed in behaviors. Specifically, we can begin to conceptualize a theory of how a *criminal self* develops.

Finding Mead's genesis of a self within Sutherland's theory, while not immediately obvious, is fairly straightforward. Certainly, Sutherland does not draw directly on Mead, nor did he give much credit to Mead as an influence. However, the possibility of influence certainly existed. Most notably, Sutherland took at least one class with Mead (Social Psychology in the summer of 1910). Further, he is known to have spent time discussing Mead's ideas with other graduate students (Lewis and Smith 1980; Gaylord and Galliher 1988). More importantly, he studied with those who were directly influenced by Mead (most notably, W. I. Thomas). However, rather than explore the specifics of these historical connections here, we illuminate the analytic roots of Mead's social psychology as they are found buried in differential association.

To make the connection between Mead and Sutherland explicit, we will put each of Sutherland's nine points into relief with the more complex and detailed understandings provided by Mead. To aid in the analysis, we have divided Sutherland's nine points into three areas. First, the "The General Development of a Self" puts Sutherland's ideas on how individuals learn criminal behaviors (ie., through communicative interaction with other, particularly intimate others) in relief with Mead's notions of self development, the conversation of gestures and the importance of play. The second section, "Developing the Content of the Self," begins to integrate Mead's insights on meaning, game and the generalized other into Sutherland's ideas about what is acquired in the learning (behaviors, motives, drives, definitions of legal codes, etc.) and how it is acquired (excesses of definitions acquired through differential associations). Finally, in "Some Final Distinctions" we acknowledge Sutherland's attempt to connect the theory with other learning theories, and indicate the similarity between Sutherland's point that needs and values are important but inadequate for explaining criminal behavior, and Mead's ideas on individuals' attitudes towards objects.

THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF A SELF

Mead and Sutherland have very similar basic assumptions concerning an individual's development in society (see Table 1). In this section, we examine the first three tenets of Sutherland's nine principles. These principles speak to Sutherland's basic premises concerning the development of criminal behavior. However, in order to fully understand their importance, a more detailed conceptualization is required. Mead can augment the statements by providing greater clarity and a more detailed explanation of the principle. These first three principles outline foundational elements in how a criminal self develops.

Principle 1: Learning Behavior

Sutherland's contention, that criminal behavior is learned, counters arguments that individuals can inherit such behavior. Individuals, accordingly, require the presence of others in order to formulate their actions. Importantly, Sutherland indicates that he does not believe individuals are completely self-determined (Sutherland 1956/unpublished fragment). Otherwise, "science is impossible and criminal behavior cannot be explained" (p. 43).

Table 1. Mead and Sutherland: The general development of a self

Principles of differential association (Sutherland 1947)	Mead's social psychology (Mead 1934)
Criminal behavior is learned (p. 6).	Social psychology is especially interested in the effect which the social group has in the determination of the experience and conduct of the individual member (p. 1).
Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication (p. 6).	The field of the operation of gestures is the field within which the rise and development of human intelligence has taken place through the process of the symbolization of experience which gestures—especially vocal gestures—have made possible (p. 14:n).
The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups (p. 6).	The social environment is endowed with meanings in terms of the process of social activity; it is an organization of objective relations which arises in relation to a group of organisms engaged in such activity, in processes of social experience and behavior (p. 130).

Mead's stance provides depth, and a more logical argument, for this position. Indeed, both Mead and Sutherland shared basic assumptions concerning the social influence on human behavior. According to Mead:

“We attempt, that is, to explain the conduct of the individual in terms of the organized conduct of the social group, rather than to account for the organized conduct of the social group in terms of the conduct of the separate individuals belonging to it. For social psychology, the whole (society) is prior to the part (the individual), not the part to the whole; and the part is explained in terms of the whole . . . the social act is not explained by building it up out of stimulus plus response; it must be taken as a dynamic whole.” (Mead 1934, p. 7)

Whereas Sutherland is stressing the learning of behaviors, Mead argues that behaviors are important only as they allow us to analyze the self (i.e., that consciousness of an individual that is both subject and object) as it cooperatively interacts with others. Mead makes the argument that the self arises from what is present in the environment *after* the individual's birth; from what “arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process” (Mead 1934, p. 134).

The logical extension of this argument, then, is what Sutherland specifically states: individuals learn behavior. However, what is more important is that this behavior is not isolated from the individual's sense of self, but is intimately tied to the self a person develops. It is not simply the behavior that is learned and developed, but the very self which is expressed in the behavior. Thus, the object of study in differential association, though labeled as *criminal behavior* by Sutherland, is fundamentally the development of the *criminal self*.

Principle 2: Learning through Communication

Here, Sutherland (1947) stresses the importance of communication. According to Sutherland, communication occurs both verbally and through a “communication of gestures” (p. 6). Termed a “*conversation of gestures*” by Mead, this refers to the exchange of stimuli.

The function of the gesture is to make adjustment possible among the individuals implicated in any given social act with reference to the

object, or objects, with which that act is concerned . . . it calls out in the individual making it the same attitude toward it (or toward its meaning) that it calls out in the other individuals participating with him in the given social act, and thus makes him conscious of their attitude toward it and enables him to adjust his subsequent behavior to theirs in the light of that attitude. (Mead 1934, p. 46)

Simply stated, the conversation of gestures makes two things possible. First, it acts as a stimulation for response from other individuals. Second, it elicits the same response in the first individual as in the desired respondent. This allows for a similarity in the attitude of both individuals towards the same object: it allows understanding. When individuals consciously apply gestures we may label them *significant*, and it is only through significant gestures that “the existence of mind or intelligence is possible” (Mead 1934, p. 47).

Our thinking, then, is the internalization of these gestures and the response they elicit as they take place in our experience. Specifically, according to Mead (1934), our selves come to understand the meaning of things through a threefold matrix consisting of gesture, response and completion of the act. In this process, the meaning, or the relationship of gesture to response, arises (p. 76). Thus, coming to understand the world around us must involve the conversation of gestures between individuals which then creates the meanings of things. It is our grasp of what things mean, including criminal conceptualizations, that fundamental to self development.

So, while our unit of analysis in differential association can be conceived as the self, it is the interactions of individuals which must be our units of observation if we are to understand the meanings that a criminal self (re)creates. Our discussion centers on behaviors. Now connected to a self, however, we can better understand their significance as we examine the specific content of a criminal self. First, however, we must add one further foundational concept: the social context in which individuals learn the criminal self.

Principle 3: Learning from Our Intimate Groups

With the third tenet, Sutherland focuses criminological study on the specific contexts and locations from which a criminal emerges, providing anchor for the rest of the theory. In the principle, Sutherland stresses that people learn criminal behavior when they are immersed in close relations with people who hold “criminal” definitions of reality. Unfortunately, Sutherland (1947) also maintains that what

we may learn from “impersonal agencies of communication... [is]...relatively unimportant in the genesis of criminal behavior” (p. 6). In connecting Mead’s social psychology with this principle, we find both a theoretical support as well as an extension that imputes greater importance on impersonal agencies of communication such as the mass media.

First, and as a base for this principle, Mead argued that the source of the self is to be found in the social interactions of the individual: “[The child] must be social to learn” (Mead 1909, p. 122). Following Mead’s theory, the development of the self occurs throughout an individual’s life and in every experience. In outlining the initial development of a self in children, he stressed the importance that certain elements and objects in an environment have in self development. According to Mead (1934, 1999) the development of a self occurs through two processes that he labeled *play* and *game*. While we will discuss the game and its importance below, the important connection here requires us to consider the process of play. It is play, and the immediate environment, which provides an important link between Sutherland and Mead.

Play is a process in which an individual takes a role: “A child plays at being a mother, at being a teacher, at being a policeman...” (p. 150). This *role* is a set of particular stimuli and responses which answer to a label (Mead 1934). During play, the individual responds to his or her own stimuli and organizes the series of stimuli and responses into a whole, and this whole has a particular label (e.g., mother, teacher, or policeman). To engage in this play, an individual must draw upon the roles, their tools and the attitudes of others towards the roles which are available in the immediate environment. Understanding what roles are present in a setting, then, gives clues to the raw materials available to an individual.

According to Mead, the school is an important site for picking up the tools and roles available in our society. However, “the task of organizing and socializing the self to which these materials and methods belong is left to the home and the industry or profession, to the playground, the street and society in general” (Mead 1909, p. 116). We understand not only what roles are available but also their meaning and organization from those sources of information with which we come into contact. In any instance where a new set of stimuli is presented, whether it is in our immediate physical environment or is displayed to us through some form of media, we may appropriate that set of stimuli and response, and play with them. This begins in the home, but continues in all areas where the individual is presented with social stimuli.

Mead’s argument, then, both supports the general notion that the criminal behavior is learned, and simultaneously imputes greater

importance to the impersonal agencies of communications (e.g., radio, television, movies and books) that Sutherland believed were relatively unimportant. Following Mead, individuals can attend to these forms of communication as sources of information about roles and their tools. As discussed earlier, the meaning of an object arises out of the threefold matrix of gesture, response, and subsequent completion of an act. The initial gesture in an act, the attitude, calls out particular responses. So, when impersonal agencies of communication stand as objects in conversations of gestures (as when individuals discuss what they've seen or heard), the attitude of others towards those object may create a meaning that eliminates the roles they contain from being acquired for play. Simply stated, our group of intimate others may either keep us from utilizing or encourage us to utilize particular roles or tools provided by impersonal agencies of communication through their negative or positive attitudes toward them.

In future decisions about the use of a role or tool, we reference the attitudes of others in an internal conversation between what Mead terms the "I" and the "me" of the self. Although a unified process, Mead's self-as-communication is theoretically expressed as the interplay of these two parts (see Mead 1934, pp. 173–178). The "I" is the creative, spontaneous subject self which acts in each experience. The "me," on the other hand, is the object self that contains information from the experiences of the "I," is drawn on through self reflection as future actions are considered, provides the "I" with information about the necessary social context and is constituted through role-taking. While we may subjectively identify our self as the "I," its presence is known only objectively and historically through the role-taking of the "me." A person's actions, the articulation of their sense of self, are the result of constant communication between the "I" and the "me."

This articulation of self-as-communication does not so much contradict Sutherland's basic statement that we learn from our groups of intimate others and through them make our decisions on how to act. Rather, it gives strength to his argument by allowing for the possibility of learning from multiple sources. While acknowledging the control intimate groups may have over this process, the impersonal agencies of communication may play more than a minor part.

DEVELOPING THE CONTENT OF A SELF

In the previous section we explored the foundational ideas of differential association, and gave them more detailed support using Mead's

social-psychology. In this section we will turn to the specific content that is learned by a self. Sutherland continues, in these middle four principles (see Table 2), to move further away from the self by concentrating on behaviors. Unfortunately, this narrow focus is what leads to the theory’s main problem: it disconnects the criminal self from the criminal behavior. However, by bringing Mead more explicitly into his discussion we can correct for Sutherland’s mistake and give his valuable insights the support they need to be useful for understanding a criminal’s activities.

Principle 4: What We Learn

Sutherland (1947) indicates in the fourth principle that a criminal learns the specific techniques used in the role of the criminal: the skills of the criminal. Additionally the individual learns “the direction of motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes” (p. 6). A consideration

Table 2. Mead and Sutherland: Developing the content of a self

Principles of differential association (Sutherland 1947)	Mead’s social psychology (Mead 1908, 1934)
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 (p. 6).	In an industrial democracy the citizen must sufficiently understand the tools and the processes to comprehend and criticize the tool and its use. (1908, p. 380). [Life] consists in the constant interaction of theory and practice. Theory is called in to tell us how to act, and what we do shows us where the theory was defective (1908, p. 381).
5. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable (p. 6).	The impulse which is directed toward the end itself. . . are the motives. . . The motive can be tested by the end, in terms of whether the end does reinforce the very impulse itself (1934, pp. 383–385).
6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law (p. 6).	The child who plays in a game must be ready to take the attitude of everyone else involved in that game, and. . . these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other (1934, p. 150).
7. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity (p. 7).	Only in so far as he takes the attitudes, of the organized social group to which he belongs, toward the organized. . . activities in which that group as such is engaged, does he develop a complete self (1934, p. 155).

of Mead's self-as-communication does not change this position. The list of elements provided by Sutherland constitute a role, or roles, an individual may assume.

Drawing upon Mead's (1908) discussion of vocational education can provide depth to Sutherland's statement. Mead argues that the training of experts who could both use and critique the machines/tools of their trade was limited to those who could afford it. Those unable to afford this training could do little more than operate their tools, and were forced to rely on elite experts when things went wrong. The worker was kept in place through a lack of knowledge. More importantly, since life is, according to Mead, an "interaction of theory and practice" (p. 371) these workers were severely handicapped as individual selves. A worker must be accomplished in the skill of critique in order to further the growth of the work process. This, in turn, aids in the worker's own growth in expressing a self through the work process.

Thus, the important elements learned in developing a self are both the skills needed to fulfill a role as well as the theory behind the skills that allows for constructive criticism of those skills. Learning, then, must include motivations, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes about the use of skills in order for a full expression of self to occur. To express a criminal self, the individual must learn these elements. However, just as individuals learn these skills from others, they do not put the skills and theories of acts to use in isolation from others. In the next section we explore the relation of actions as they create meanings for the actors.

Principle 5: Creating the Meaning of Relations

In Principle 5, Sutherland links behaviors to definitions of legal codes. According to Sutherland, people learn their motives by taking on the definitions, whether favorable or unfavorable, of legal codes that are in their surrounding environment. However, this is a passive view of how individuals develop and maintain motives and definitions. Specifically, Sutherland disconnects the definitions from any process of self development. The bridge between Mead and Sutherland, which gives depth and agency to Sutherland and direction to Mead, is the notion that the specific actions, motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes of the criminal are all part and parcel to the expression of a criminal self. This self comes into a relation with others, and works to develop motives, and definitions of objects such as legal codes.

We return, briefly, to the threefold matrix of gesture, response and completion of the act provided by Mead (1934). Within this process,

people create the meaning of objects. Specifically, social objects (e.g., legal codes), are defined within that “class of acts which involve the co-operation of more than one individual, and whose object is defined by the act” (p. 7:n7): within social acts. While Sutherland indicates in various instances that criminals hold this or that belief about the law, he fails to make a connection between the creation of the beliefs and the actions of the criminals. For example, Sutherland (1947) indicates that “businessmen feel and express contempt for legislators, bureaucrats, courts, ‘snoopers,’ and other governmental officials and for law, as such” (p. 95). This is consistent with his view that criminals learn the direction of motives from definitions of the law as unfavorable. In this case he is referring to definitions of the law as a hindrance to making profits. However, in the statements preceding this, Sutherland gives an inadvertent glimpse into the way definitions develop.

Leonor F. Loree, chairman of the Kansas City Southern, knowing that his company was about to purchase stock of another railway, went into the market privately and secretly and purchased shares of this stock in advance of his corporation, and then when the price of the stock increased, sold it at the higher price, making a profit of \$150,000... The courts, however, determined that this profit was fraudulent, and ordered Mr. Loree to reimburse the corporation for the violation of his trust. Shortly after this decision became generally known, Mr. Loree was elected president of the New York Chamber of Commerce, perhaps in admiration of his cleverness.

Here, in Sutherland’s example, the stimulus of the social act was the violation of a law that *expressed* a definition of the law as unfavorable through the attitude of conflict with that law. The response of Loree’s peers, electing him president of the NY Chamber of Commerce, *expressed* their similar understanding of the law as unfavorable through the attitude of admiration (reward) for his actions. This social act, now complete, (re)established a common definition of the law as unfavorable. The important elements of this situation are establishing the sharing of a definition in social acts, and sanctioning the actions of individuals (positively or negatively), thereby giving direction to motives. It is not that there were similar definitions from which motives and drives are learned. Since it is the interaction of individuals that is important, and not just the presence of definitions, analysis must turn towards the elements of Mead’s *game* where people put their understandings of the connections of roles to use in developing an understanding of objects such as the legal code.

Principle 6: The Importance of Homogeneity

In entering into a discussion of Principle 6, we come to the crucial problem in Sutherland's theory. The presentation of an individual as passive in Principle 5 contains the roots of the problem, and this leads to a flawed method of analysis in Principle 7. Here in Principle 6 Sutherland states his causal model directly: an excess of definitions in the environment which are unfavorable to the law causes criminal behavior. Simply put, this model dislocates the use of definitions in behavior from a user's sense of self.

Sutherland's general notion, that immersion in a group aides in reproducing the actions and ideas of that group, is sound and has its roots in Mead. However, it would appear in Sutherland's theory that criminal behavior is caused simply by "contact with criminal patterns and also because of isolation from anti-criminal patterns" (Sutherland 1947, p. 6). The model implies a connection between the learned definitions and behavior, but fails to indicate the means through which an individual translates definitions into behavior. More directly, it suggests interactions (through contact), but fails to indicate the importance of these communications in the development of a *criminal self*, a self that is expressed in criminal behavior. The connection of other people's definitions and self expression can be found in Mead's *game*, a metaphor for interactions which lead to a developed sense of self.

The game, according to Mead, is distinct from play. An individual who plays, provides for themselves both the stimulus and response. This allows an individual to explore and begin to understand the connections between and among roles. However, in play the definitions of objects are only those of the individual as they understand the definition of each object as it is used by a particular role. In *the game* the connection of roles, and the sharing of definitions, is forged to a greater degree as the individual must make use of definitions shared among numerous individuals to fulfil the obligations of the role he or she has taken. The individual must guide his or her own actions in a role by attending to the actions of others in related roles; the definition of the shared objects must also be shared. In a game of catch, for example, every step in the action of throwing a ball must be guided by an understanding of what it takes for another person to catch the ball. This includes both their definition of a ball as something to be caught, and their definition of the situation as a game to be continued through, among other things, catching the ball (Mead 1934, p. 159).

In discussing "Culture Areas and Crime," Sutherland (1947, pp. 131–152) provides a number of illustrative examples for the learning of

definitions. Unfortunately, his analysis simply locates criminals/delinquents within cultural areas that allow for contact with criminal definitions and largely ignores the social psychological processes taking place therein. Nonetheless, the roots of Mead's interactional analysis of self are implicitly present even if Sutherland does not examine them or make them explicit. In one instance Sutherland (1947, p. 147) recounts the story of a "man from Boston" who recruits youth into a life of crime for his own economic benefit. From the same source (Drucker and Hexter 1923/1974) we pick up the thread:

[I]n his gang were juvenile offenders of all types and kinds, and in proportion as the flourished and prospered, so his finances increased, as he permitted them to keep but a fraction of their peculations and ill-acquired booty. He was both the head and sole teacher in his laboratory of crime, and had neither friend nor confidant among the many boys and girls upon whose lives he had cast his blight. (p. 77)

In restricting himself to contact, Sutherland does not explore this situation further to show that the man was aiding the development of *criminal selves*. During this interaction the children learn different roles, and organize those roles around the shared definitions of objects. In sharing these definitions with others they develop, within themselves, the same attitudes as others. They use the attitudes towards objects, other people, and towards themselves. There, a self is developed and we can label this self a *criminal self*.

According to Mead (1934), the self is "a certain sort of conduct, a certain type of social process which involves the interaction of different individuals and yet implies individuals engaged in some sort of co-operative activity" (p. 165). Individuals are subjects to themselves when they act towards themselves in the same way they act towards others. They are object in so far as they respond to their own conduct in the same way as others (see Mead 1924–25). As the self arises from actions and responses to others, it can take a specific form (see Mead 1912). In this analysis, the form the individual self takes is a criminal one.

With Sutherland we find that the individual with a *criminal self* comes into contact with others who act criminally. Reciprocal interactions and ongoing communication juxtapose a variety of behavior patterns (i.e., roles and the norms which define them), both criminal and noncriminal in content. Differential association is a fluid process through which the criminal self-as-communication emerges and even transforms. In Sutherland's example above, the Boston man and the

children with whom he interacted were engaged in a process of meaning construction. Criminal selves were constantly defined and redefined over time. In this process actors become subjects to themselves and act criminally. Furthermore, as these same actors reflect on their experiences and actions they constitute themselves as objects in the communication process. This layered interactive, reflexive conception is the *criminal self*: the definition and articulation of one's self as criminal.

Experience with criminal conduct arising from social processes involves the interactions of criminals, implies their cooperation, and defines both objects and individuals in criminal terms. This is the crucial interactional reformulation of Sutherland's sixth principle of differential association. In analyzing the activities of individuals it is, just as Sutherland indicates, important to see how they define things. However, what we need to examine more closely are the ways in which individuals define "others" in a situation, and how this leads to a self-definition. Mead (1934) conceptualized the *other* as an "organization of the attitudes of those involved in the same process" (p. 154). Homogeneity, as implied by Sutherland, is important because definitions of objects and selves arise from the interactions of "those involved in the same process," and heterogeneity in a group might change the definitions. However, individuals in any group do not live in complete isolation from other groups and the larger social structure. Thus researchers must examine their influence as well. In the following section, the analysis must turn towards a generalized other which encompasses the attitudes of the larger community.

Principle 7: Variations in Meaning – Expansion/Contraction of the Self

As described by Sutherland, and further developed through Mead, coming into contact with other individuals who define objects (such as themselves) as criminals or in criminal terms aids in the development of a criminal self. However, such groupings rarely occur in isolation from other groups, and are not unconnected to the wider social world. In Principle 7 Sutherland (1947) attempts to speak to this situation by exploring "modalities of associations:" their frequency, duration, priority, and intensity (p. 7). Through these easily quantified (though perhaps not operationalized) concepts Sutherland can go on to posit the possibility of a predictive formula. "In a precise description of the criminal behavior of a person these modalities would be stated in quantitative form and a mathematical ratio [would] be reached" (p. 7). Sutherland reduces the prediction of a person's behavior as either criminal or non-criminal to an examination

of the differences between the number of criminal versus non-criminal definitions.

In short, a researcher predicts an individual's behavior using elements found "outside" of the individual, and not through an examination of the individual's self. However, it is an individual's experiences and the ways in which the individual defines those experiences which constitute the self. Further, analysis must examine the ability or inability of an individual to expand the self to include an understanding of a larger "generalized other" rather than the narrow, criminal group.

The "generalized other," in Mead (1934), refers to the organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self (p. 154). It may refer to a specific organized community or social group, such as a gang or other criminal group, or may expand to include the whole of society or the world (pp. 200–201). The issue at hand is the ability of the self to connect with larger groupings, expanding the context of its location to include definitions shared by a larger group. Homogeneity and isolation are, again, important aspects. However, what is of even greater importance is something beyond what can be found through a ratio of definitions. "Each individual self-structure reflects, and is constituted by, a different aspect of perspective of this relational pattern, because each reflects this relational pattern from its own unique standpoint" (Mead 1934, p. 201).

Accordingly, the inclusion of definitions from the wider society in the self-process does not solely depend on the number of definitions. Self-as-communication involves understanding complex relations among increasing numbers of roles, reflecting the "whole relational pattern of organized social behavior which that society or community exhibits or is carrying on" (p. 202). This dynamic articulation of role relations acts as a form of social control in self expression.

In the development of the criminal self, the individual's only options of relation are in criminal terms. The inability to relate status in society to other positions except through criminal definitions, reflects a difficulty in taking the role, or attitude, of a generalized other outside of the one presented by the criminal group. Anchoring behavior in the process of self-as-communication renders problematic the simple definitions of the legal code that Sutherland discusses. The process involves all relations and all definitions experienced. Most importantly, however, it involves individuals' varying abilities to take the role of the generalized other. We must all develop this ability to one degree or another (otherwise social life is impossible). However, following from Mead, some have the ability and/or opportunity to take on a larger generalized other, while others cannot expand beyond their immediate group. This ability can then determine the

form of criminal or non-criminal behavior. For example, a corporate criminal may be able to take the attitude of the generalized other in some areas (such as the sanctity of an individual's personal property) and not in others (such as the sanctity of a corporation's property). The key is interactional experience with others, the resulting ability to share understandings, and the incorporation of those perspectives within a generalized other.

So, while the number of contacts is important, it is the quality of the interactions, and the internal process of translating those contacts into behaviors through the self, which makes them important. It is the internal ability of the individual to incorporate the experiences of those contacts into a shared understanding of society's projects and general social processes.

SOME FINAL DISTINCTIONS

Sutherland's final two principles (see Table 3) act as a means of connecting differential association with other learning perspectives. They were stated in fairly ambiguous terms, and serve as an open invitation to: 1) find a theory of learning to use for analysis; and 2) ensure that the theory is based on something other than needs and values.

Principles 8 and 9: Similarities with All Learning and the Place of Needs and Values

Throughout the sections above, we have put forth a model of learning that Mead presented in his numerous classes and professional

Table 3. Mead and Sutherland: some final distinctions

Principles of differential association (Sutherland 1947)	Mead's social psychology (Mead 1934)
The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning (p. 7).	The external act which we do observe is a part of the process which has started within; the values (the future character of the object in so far as it determines your action to it [Mead 1924]) . . . are values through the relationship of the object to the person who has that sort of attitude (Mead 1934, p. 5)
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 (p. 8).	

articles. That Sutherland did not credit Mead with his understanding of the development of the self, or draw explicitly upon that model, is something of a mystery. However, as we pointed out above, the connection of Mead to Sutherland's intellectual development is obvious. Thus, we can look to Mead for the roots of differential association in order to help make it a more persuasive and useful argument. Certainly, other theories may be—in fact have been—used to inform Sutherland's position on criminal learning (e.g., Akers 1985). However, given the connection of Mead to Sutherland's intellectual development, and the similarity in their arguments, our use of Mead would appear to have a high degree of validity. The distinction from Mead is that our exploration concentrates on the genesis of a particular type of self: the criminal self. However, this is a small distinction as it is an application of Mead that retains his fundamental ideas and examines the development of behavior as an expression of an internal process, the self, which develops in interaction with others.

In reference to the ninth tenet, Sutherland posits needs and values as central to individual self-expression. Our articulation of Mead's interactional self-as-communication is consistent with their importance here. However, Sutherland also indicates that examinations of needs and values do not provide an adequate explanation for the expression of the self in criminal terms which are distinct from explanations of behavior that expresses a non-criminal self. “[These explanations] are similar to respiration, which is necessary for any behavior but which does not differentiate criminal from non criminal behavior” (Sutherland 1947, p. 8). For example, drawing on Mead (1924–25, 1934) we find that an individual's attitude towards an object (whether physical or an abstract idea) designates the value of that object. As the first part of any social act, an individual learns this attitude through experience and uses it to formulate actions. Thus, a value is an expression of an internal process. Researchers cannot truncate analyses by focusing exclusively on the external object and ignoring the reflexive self process through which it is created.

CONCLUSION: AFFILIATION AND THE CRIMINAL SELF

As developed by Sutherland, differential association is widely interpreted as a social process theory of crime, firmly rooted in Chicago School interactionism. According to Barak (1998):

What Sutherland desired to reveal about crime as a learned rather than an inherited phenomenon was that the crucial element in

becoming a delinquent or criminal was a matter of learning specific situational meanings or definitions of the behavior in question. For Sutherland, differential association referred to the process of social interaction by which such definitions were acquired (pp. 155–156).

As the most complete and enduring critique of differential association, “differential reinforcement theory” (Burgess and Akers 1966; Akers 1985, 1994, 2003) sought to recast the former’s interactionism into a framework of learning-as-operant-conditioning. This influential reformulation can be seen in the broader context of the questioning of interactionist theories of crime (Akers 1968). Differential reinforcement, then, was meant to render Sutherland’s interactional learning process in testable form. The ensuing debate—a “tale of two theories”—tended to obscure Sutherland’s interactionist legacy. We have attempted to restore this legacy by a careful juxtaposition of Sutherland’s principles with the work of Mead.

The articulation of Sutherland’s interactionism has always been a difficult task. David Matza (1969) offers an intersubjective, naturalistic interpretation of differential association as a process of affiliation . . .

...by which the subject is *converted* to conduct novel for him but already established for others. By providing new meanings for conduct previously regarded as outlandish or inappropriate, affiliation provides the context and process by which the neophyte *may* be ‘turned on’ or ‘out.’ (pp. 101–102; emphasis in original)

Conversion is central to an understanding of the criminal self as layered and indeterminate. As Matza (1969) goes on to say:

Affiliation provided meaning and definition of the situation – that was its human method – but the subject sometimes remained like the tree or the fox without the capacity for choice and sometimes like the insular primitive without alternatives from which to choose; he could not create meaning or shift it or shift himself away from it (p. 107).

Sutherland, in his theory of differential association, focuses our attention on the environment and on who and what is in that environment as an important context for criminal behavior. However, though he indicates the important influence of others on the thinking of an individual, Sutherland fails to establish the connection of others with an individual’s sense of self. Instead he pushes

researchers to examine the presence of certain definitions, and the correlation of these with certain behaviors.

Mead, with his exploration of self development, provides the basis for a more explicitly interactional reading of Sutherland. However, Mead's theory does not concentrate on the development of specific selves since he attempted to outline the general process of self-genesis. When we articulate Mead's self-as-communication with Sutherland's differential association, a more detailed conception of criminal learning emerges. Definitions (i.e., normative constructions), behaviors and, most importantly, the enlarged or constrained self are constantly formulated and reworked in specific contexts. This focus is particularly important as researchers explore such issues as gender difference in choices of criminal/deviant activity (e.g., Jensen 2003).

Further, a focus on the genesis of a self-as-communication that takes particular note of the generalized other has the potential to theoretically anchor current attempts to link micro and macro processes in the study of criminal behavior. For example, Akers' (1998) recent work reframed his social learning theory as Social Structure-Social Learning (SSSL) theory. In this extension, social structural characteristics are added to the social learning model and the argument is made that the learning process mediates the effects of the structure leading to criminal behavior. Unfortunately, while gaining support (cf. Lanza-Kaduce and Capece 2003; Bellair, Roscigno, and Velez 2003), the theory begs the question: precisely what is the impact of the social structural element that leads to the rates of criminal behavior the theory explains?

The answer to this question may lie in more direct attention to the genesis of the self that includes the development of a generalized other. In a given situation, the interactions rely upon concrete roles and relations between the individuals involved, and this portion has been primarily explored in the social learning aspect of the SSSL theory. However, the unified sense of self that a person relies on in order to think in any situation depends on experiences with the wider community (or society) and is dialectically related to it. A community is not possible without the interactions of individuals. However, the self that interacts with others reflects that community: "the attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community" (Mead 1934, p. 154).

As part of the criminal self-as-process, the generalized other is more than an abstract narrative of conformity. Instead, it is "materially expressed and enshrined in the documents of the society and articulated in act and speech in everyday life" (Perinbanayagam 1985, p. 145). As well, the generalized other can signify layers of

meaning in the dynamic of interpretation. Differential association connects the criminal self and society in a “network of contexts and social groupings which take on disparate meanings” for actors (Rock 1979, p. 145).

We have conceptualized the criminal self as a particular type of learning process, relating to other objects through meaningful joint action (Blumer 1969). Further, the criminal self is expressed in the deviant behavior which brings about these relations. More importantly, however, the criminal self is but one expression of an actor’s unified sense of self that depends on taking the attitude of a generalized other. Following Mead (1934), such a generalized other is what allows an individual to think: it allows individuals to make decisions about behaviors based on an internal conversation of gestures that utilizes the organized social attitudes of a social group “without reference to its expression in any particular other individuals” (p. 156).

For applications of this concept to be useful, researchers need to explore the psychological, social psychological, and structural bases of the generalized other in differential association. Then, the concept of a criminal self can potentially aid in the formulation of empirical research projects using the theory, for policy recommendations, and for providing a theoretical foundation in the debates over, and/or integration of, contemporary criminological theories.

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