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Menace II Society: A Social Learning Perspective

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Introduction

Aker's social learning theory is composed of four central concepts: imitation, definitions, differential association, and differential reinforcements (Akers, Sellers, & Jennings, 2017; Vito & Maahs, 2015). Imitation refers to an individual engaging in behavior after they observe similar behaviors in others (Akers et al., 2017; Vito & Maahs, 2015). Definitions refer to an individual's own attitudes and beliefs that they attach to specific behaviors (Akers et al., 2017; Vito & Maahs, 2015). Differential association refers to the notion that individuals are exposed to different people and different attitudes and values throughout their life (Akers et al., 2017; Vito & Maahs, 2015). Lastly, differential reinforcement is the balance of anticipated rewards and/or punishments that are consequences of certain behaviors (Akers et al., 2017; Vito & Maahs, 2015).

The film *Menace II Society* is a drama/thriller based in South Central Los Angeles, California in the 1990s that depicts youth violence in disadvantaged communities. This film follows the delinquent life of the protagonist, Kaydee "Caine" Lawson. Caine is a young African American male who sells drugs, com-

mits robberies, and engages in other criminal behavior. Caine learned his behavior from his father and his best friend O-Dog. Caine receives positive reinforcements from selling drugs, and this enables him to earn a surplus amount of money to buy new apparel and jewelry. Furthermore, social learning theory applies to Caine in *Menace II Society*.

This paper will begin with a brief summary of the evolution of Aker's social learning theory. Then, the paper will explain the theoretical underpinnings of Aker's social learning theory. The purpose of this paper is to apply social learning theory to Caine from the film *Menace II Society*. Aker's social learning theory is comprised of four key concepts, which are imitation, definition, differential association, and differential reinforcement. These key concepts will be applied to Caine and considered why he engaged in deviant behavior. Lastly, this paper will explain how this film depicts youth homicide in the United States, and which policy implication(s) should be considered.

Social Learning Theory
History

Social learning theory has been used to refer to any behavioristic approach in social science. Psychologists such as Albert Bandura and B. F. Skinner (1947) developed social learning theory to explain behavior (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963; Kunkel 1975; Miller & Dollard, 1941; Patterson, 1975; Rotter, 1954). B. F. Skinner (1947) proposed the use of stimulus-response theories to describe language use and development, and he also proposed that all verbal be-

havior was reinforced by operant conditioning. Skinner formed the basis for the redevelopment of behaviorist theories into social learning theories (Skinner, 1947). However, in the field of criminology, social learning theory refers primarily to Ronald L. Akers and his theory of crime and deviance.

Sutherland's Differential Association Theory

Edwin H. Sutherland (1937) is recognized for pioneering sociological studies of white-collar crime and professional theft. Sutherland is well known for formulating the first general sociological theory of crime and delinquency labeled the "differential association theory" (Sutherland, 1937). For over 30 years, Sutherland was the author of a criminology textbook labeled, *Principles of Criminology*, in which he first fully stated his theory. Sutherland published the theory in his 1947 edition of the textbook (Sutherland, 1937). In this theory, he suggested differential association theory as an explanation of individual criminal behavior. He coined the term "differential social disorganization" as the explanation of differences in group and/or societal crime rates (Sutherland, 1947).

Sutherland explained differential association theory briefly in nine points. First, criminal behavior is learned (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Second, criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Third, the principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Fourth, when criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime and (b) the specific motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Fifth, the specific direction of motives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Sixth, a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Seventh, differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Eighth, 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 (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Lastly, although criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values because noncriminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947).

Sutherland (1947) explains that criminal behavior is learned in a process of symbolic interaction with peers, but specifically with intimate groups, which are parents, friends, and family. Although Sutherland stated nine points that established the theory, the sixth point that he discussed identifies the principle of differential association, which is a person who becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law. Sutherland's theory explains criminal behavior by an individual's exposure to their peers' defi-

nitions favorable to criminal behavior, balanced against confronting definitions favorable to criminal behavior (Akers et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1947). Cressey (1960) discussed that although an individual expects that law-abiding definitions are characteristically communicated amongst those who have violated the law, it is possible for individuals to learn law-abiding definitions from those who abide by the law. Additionally, if individuals are exposed to law-violating definitions first, more frequently, for a longer duration, and with greater concentration than law-abiding violations, then the individual is more likely to engage in deviant behavior and violate the law.

Akers Social Learning Theory

In Sutherland's eighth statement of his theory, he explained that all the mechanisms of learning are involved in criminal behavior. Yet, he did not explain which mechanisms of learning are involved in criminal behavior. Burgess and Akers (1966) specified which mechanisms were involved in criminal behavior in their "differential association-reinforcement" theory of criminal behavior. They developed a reformulation that recalled the principles of differential association and restated them in terms of the learning principles of operant and respondent conditioning that were developed by behavioral psychologists. Akers followed up his work with Burgess and developed the social learning theory and applied it to criminal, delinquent, and deviant behavior (Akers et al., 2017).

Akers (1985) stated that social learning theory retains all of the information of differential association processes in Sutherland's theory and integrates it with differential reinforcement and other principles of behavioral acquisition, continuation, and cessation. Still, social learning theory explains criminal and delinquent behavior more meticulously than the original differential association theory (Warr & Stafford, 1991). Burgess and Akers (1966) retained the concepts of differential association and definitions from Sutherland's theory but conceptualized them in more behavioral terms and added concepts from behavioral learning theory. The concepts included conditioning of involuntary, reflex behavior (classical conditioning); environmental and internal stimuli that provide cues or signals for behavior (discriminative stimuli); the rate and ration in which rewards and punishments follow behavior principles (schedules of reinforcement); and other ideologies of behavior modification (Akers et al., 2017; Burgess & Akers, 1966).

Akers (1985) discussed that social learning theory maintains a strong component of the symbolic interactionism found in the concepts of differential association and definitions from Sutherland's theory. Symbolic interactionism is the theory that states that social interaction is the exchange of meaning and symbols. Moreover, individuals have the cognitive capacity to imagine themselves in the roles of others and incorporate those ideas into their conceptions of themselves (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2003). Also, Akers (1985) stated that explicit inclusion of such concepts as imitation, anticipated reinforcement, and self-reinforcement makes social learning theory.

Theoretical Underpinning of Social Learning Theory

Imitation

Social learning theory is comprised of four key components, which are imitation, definitions, differential associations, and differential reinforcement. Imitation refers to the engagement in behavior after observing behaviors of role models (Akers et al., 2017; Sellers, Cochran, & Kathryn, 2005). These role models are significant others whom an individual admires, has a personal relationship, and with whom has directly observed behavior (Akers et al., 2017; Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, & Radosevich, 1979; Sellers et al., 2005). Donnerstein and Linz (1995) stated that the observation of prominent models in primary groups and in the media affects both prosocial and deviant behavior.

Definitions

The second key component of social learning theory is definitions, which refers to an individual's own attitudes or values that they attach to specific deviant/criminal behaviors. These attitudes of an individual may approve, disapprove, or be neutral toward specific behaviors (Akers et al., 2017; Sellers, et al., 2005). Furthermore, there are both general and specific definitions in social learning theory. General definitions include religious, moral, and other conventional values, norms, and beliefs that are favorable to compliant behavior and unfavorable to committing deviant/criminal behavior. Specific definitions orient to particular acts or series of acts (Akers et al., 2017). In addition, an individual may view that laws against part-one offenses should be obeyed but then see nothing wrong with smoking marijuana and justifies that it is alright to violate laws against possession of marijuana.

The greater an individual holds attitudes toward specific acts, then the less likely the individual will engage in the behavior and vice versa. Akers, Sellers, and Jennings (2017) discuss explicitly positive, negative, and neutral definitions of criminal behavior. Conventional beliefs about criminal behavior are called negative behaviors. Positive definitions are beliefs or attitudes that make specific behaviors morally desirable. Lastly, neutralizing definitions favor the order of crime by excusing it. Neutralizing definitions are viewed as unwanted, but it's justified (Akers et al., 2017; Cochran, Maskaly, Jones, & Sellers, 2017).

Differential Association

Differential association is the process in which individuals are exposed to definitions favorable and unfavorable to deviant behavior (Akers et al., 1979; Akers et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2017; Sellers et al., 2005). Differential association includes both interactional and normative dimensions. Interactional dimensions are the direct association and interaction with peers who engage in certain kinds of behavior as well as the indirect association and identification with more distant reference groups. Normative dimensions refer to patterns of norms and values that an individual is exposed to through these associations (Akers et al., 2017; Clark, 1972; Cochran et al., 2017).

The impact of certain exposures may vary according to the frequency, duration, intensity, and prior-

ity of the differential associations in which individuals have with others (Sellers et al., 2005). Specific groups that an individual is in differential association with typically provide essential social contexts in which all concepts of social learning operate. These groups expose definitions and present models to imitate criminal or conforming behavior to individuals in differential association (Akers et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2017). Similarly, primary groups of friends and family are the most important influences for differential association. Warr (2002) states that neighbors, churches, school teachers, physicians, the law and authority figures, and other groups in the community have fluctuating effects on an individual's tendency to engage in delinquent behavior.

Differential Reinforcement

Differential reinforcement refers to the balance between anticipated and/or actual rewards and punishments that are the consequences of certain behaviors (Akers et al., 2017). As well, an individual's commitment to engage in deviant behavior will depend on past, present, and future rewards and punishments of their behavior. The likelihood that an offender will engage in deviant behavior depends on whether or not they receive positive or negative reinforcements. Positive reinforcement occurs when one's deviant behavior will be committed or repeated is based on the rewarding outcomes of the behavior. For instance, earning money, eating food, or gaining a pleasant feeling from engaging in deviant behavior is considered positive reinforcement (Akers et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2017; Sellers et al., 2005). In contrast, negative reinforcement is the likelihood a certain action will be conducted when the

individual can avoid unpleasant events (Akers et al., 2017).

Punishment may also be positive, in which unpleasant consequences are related to a behavior or negative, in which a pleasant consequence or reward is removed (Akers et al., 2017). The greater the amount of reinforcement an individual receives for their behavior, the more frequently the behavior is reinforced, and the higher the probability that the behavior will be reinforced determines the likelihood the offense will be committed or repeated (Akers et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2017).

Reinforcers and punishers can be social and nonsocial. Social reinforcement refers to the peer, family, or other social context in which the actions take place. One's learned moral attitudes and other social variables affect how much one experiences the intrinsic effects of substance use or committing certain acts as pleasurable and enjoyable or as frightening and unpleasant (Akers et al., 2017). Nonsocial reinforcement refers to unconditioned physiological and physical stimuli (Akers et al., 2017). In addition, self-reinforcement refers to the individual exercising self-control, reinforcing, or punishing one's own behavior by taking the role of others (Akers et al., 2017).

The Social Learning Process

All of the social learning concepts explained are part of a fundamental process that is operative in each individual's learning history and in the immediate situation in which an opportunity for crime may occur (Ak-

ers et al., 2017). Akers (1985) stated that social learning is a process with reciprocal and feedback effects. Individuals go through a process in which the balance of learned definitions, imitation of deviant models, and the anticipated or actual balance of reinforcement produces the preliminary deviant behavior. After the first commission of deviant behavior occurs, actual social and non-social reinforcers and punishers affect whether or not the deviant behavior will be repeated, and how frequently it will be repeated (Akers, 1985; Akers et al., 2017). Akers claimed that behaviors and definitions of behaviors are affected by the consequences of the initial deviant behavior. In addition, whether deviant behavior will be committed in a situation that grants opportunity will depend on the individual's learning history and set of reinforcement possibilities in that situation (Akers et al., 2017).

Menace II Society

Menace II Society debuted in 1993. This film is a gritty, violent, hood drama-thriller that takes place in south central Los Angeles, California. The film follows the life of the protagonist Kaydee "Caine" Lawson and his immediate friends. Caine is a small-time drug dealer who was raised by his religious grandparents because his mother had died from an overdose, and his father was murdered in a drug deal. Caine lives a deviant lifestyle, and the friends with whom he associates influence his behavior. Towards the end of the film, Caine attempts to opt out of his lifestyle, but opting out isn't as easy as he thought it would be. The film depicts brutal urban violence and underlying messages about poor, African Americans in disorganized communities.

Social Learning Perspective of *Menace II Society*

Caine

Caine is the protagonist of the film *Menace II Society*. In this film, Caine is a drug dealer and a gang leader. Throughout his life, he has been influenced by gang members, drug dealers, pimps, and other deviants. According to social learning theory, behavior is learned from activities that one becomes accustomed to at an early age. Since Caine was an adolescent, he wanted to be like his father. His father was a drug dealer, drug and alcohol user, pimp, and a criminal. In the beginning scenes of the film, Caine was an adolescent and was observing the behavior of his father and his mother. The father always had friends over the house where they played card games, gambled, consumed alcohol and illicit drugs, and possessed firearms. The mother was addicted to heroin and constantly consumed heroin in front of Caine on multiple occasions. Moreover, Caine is an example of a young male growing up in a high-risk community where youth violence and gang involvement are nearly inevitable. The film demonstrates how young men become involved in violent and deviant behavior, even when there are positive peers in their life.

Imitation

As mentioned earlier, imitation refers to the engagement in behavior after observing behaviors of role models (Akers et al., 2017; Sellers, Cochran, & Kathryn, 2005). These role models are significant others who an individual admires, has a personal relationship, and who has directly observed behavior (Akers et al., 2017; Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, Radosevich, 1979;

Sellers et al., 2005). Caine observed behaviors of his father, who was his role model. Caine began to imitate his father's behavior, and as an adolescent was holding guns and tasting alcohol. Likewise, Caine witnessed his father shoot and kill a friend for talking "shit" to him during a game of cards. He began to imitate the deviant behaviors of his father at an early age. However, once his father was incarcerated and his mother overdosed, the only people to whom he could turn were his grandparents and O-Dog. His grandparents attempted to keep Caine away from the streets, but he lived in the streets his whole life, and it was difficult to guide him out of that lifestyle.

Once Caine turned to the streets he became best friends with O-Dog. O-Dog taught Caine how to cook crack cocaine, rob, and engage in deviant behavior. O-Dog became his role model. There is a scene in the movie where O-Dog goes into a convenience store to purchase liquor. O-Dog and the clerk get into a verbal altercation, and then he becomes violent and kills both store owners. Caine witnessed his role model shoot and kill two store owners over a verbal altercation. Still, Caine was desensitized to this behavior because he had witnessed his father kill somebody over a card game when he was an adolescent. Furthermore, Caine imitated O-Dog and became violent and deviant. Later in the film Caine shoots and kills somebody as well.

Definitions

Definitions refer to the attitudes and values individuals hold concerning the principles of the law and the wrongfulness of certain deviant behaviors (Akers

et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2017; Sellers et al., 2005). Caine endorsed norms and values that were sufficient in generating deviant behavior. Since Caine was an adolescent, his attitudes and values of deviant behavior have been skewed. Selling drugs, cooking crack cocaine, robbery, and other acts of deviant behavior are positive definitions for Caine. These are beliefs and attitudes that make deviant behavior morally acceptable. Caine holds the belief that cooking and selling crack cocaine and robbery are ways to make money and to survive.

In the film, Caine's cousin is shot and killed during a drive by. Caine does not think to go to law enforcement in attempt for them to find and arrest the offender. Yet, he and his friend O-Dog go out one night searching for the two gang members who killed Caine's cousin. This is Caine's first encounter with shooting somebody, but it wasn't his first time witnessing somebody get shot. Caine believed that killing the person who shot his cousin was justifiable. Caine believed that this action was justifiable because he learned to solve his problems through O-Dog and the streets. Excusing or justifying the commission of a crime is known as a neutralizing definition (Akers et al., 2017). Caine's definitions favorable to crime developed through imitation and differential reinforcement. Caine's belief that killing his cousin's murderer was justified because he has seen his father and O-Dog engage in that behavior before.

Differential Association

Differential association is the process through which

individuals are exposed to definitions favorable and unfavorable to deviant behavior (Akers et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2017). Also, differential association has both interactional and normative dimensions. Since Caine was an adolescent, he had direct associations and interactions with others who engaged in deviant behavior. Caine was exposed to violence, drug dealing, gambling, and other deviant acts from his primary caregivers. He developed attitudes that were favorable to deviant behavior because that was the only behavior to which he was exposed. Even friends of his parents offered Caine to hold their firearms, taste their malt liquor, and encouraged him to use profanity. Still, when Caine's mother died from an overdose and his father was incarcerated, then his grandparents took custody of him.

Caine's grandparents tried to influence him away from the deviant lifestyle in which he was involved. Caine's grandfather was a very religious man and held attitudes and values that were unfavorable of deviant behavior. There is a scene in the film where the grandfather sits Caine and O-Dog down on the living room couch and discusses how they need to change their lifestyle. He mentions that he hears the deviant behavior in which the two are engaging, and that it can only lead to two results: incarceration or death. Caine narrates that all of these talks his grandfather gives him "go in one ear and out the other". At the end of the scene, the grandfather asks Caine "if he wants to live or die?" Caine replies "I don't know". Caine starts to reconsider the lifestyle in which he was involved and seeks to opt out of it throughout the movie.

Caine's friend, Sharif Butler, and his father attempt to convince Caine to join them on a trip to Kansas City to get away from their neighborhood and start a new lifestyle. Mr. Butler explains to Caine that staying in that neighborhood would only cause harm, and he would end up dead or in jail. The trip to Kansas City would be a fresh start and would allow him to live a rewarding and successful life without the involvement of violence, drugs, and other deviant actions. Caine's discussion with Mr. Butler began to influence him to want to leave the neighborhood. This was the first time someone had told Caine about surviving for good and not just surviving on the streets.

In addition, Ronnie, the woman for whom Caine looked out since the father of the son went to jail, had also influenced Caine to pack up all of his stuff and leave with her. Ronnie visited Caine at the hospital and told him that she cared about him and wanted him to move to Atlanta. Caine believes that no matter where he moves, he will be involved in the same behavior. He has been exposed to so much deviant behavior in his life that there is no alternative for him because the deviant lifestyle is his comfort zone. Furthermore, Caine's life wasn't lacking positive influences. There were several positive influences in his life, including his grandfather, Mr. Butler, Sharif, and Ronnie. Still, his direct associations and interactions with O-Dog, his father, and other street gang members influenced his behavior.

Differential Reinforcement

Differential reinforcement refers to the balance between anticipated and/or actual rewards and

punishments that are the consequences of certain behaviors (Akers et al., 2017). Caine received positive reinforcement from robbing and selling crack cocaine. He made surplus amounts of money, bought a new car, new apparel, and jewelry. Caine and O-Dog were the big-name drug dealers in the neighborhood, and they didn't have much competition with other sellers. According to Caine's attitudes and values about deviant behavior, the rewards of selling drugs outweighed the anticipated punishments because Caine did not fear prison or death. Caine continued to sell crack cocaine, rob, and engage in other deviant behavior because he was receiving constant positive reinforcement (money, clothes, jewelry, women, etc.), with no punishments (arrests, convictions, incarceration, etc.), until the end of the film.

Caine does encounter a few punishments towards the end of the movie. Caine's grandparents had kicked him out of the house because they were disgusted with his behavior and couldn't cope with him any longer. Also, he had been beaten by police officers and had to be taken to a hospital. At the hospital, Caine realized that he needed to leave with Ronnie and move to Atlanta to start a new life. The ending scene of the film is the death of Caine. Caine is packing up his van for travel, and he is ready to leave for Atlanta. Unfortunately, Caine is killed in a drive-by shooting while loading the van.

Keep in mind that all the concepts of the social learning theory that were applied to Caine can be applied to any juvenile or young adult in society who has been involved in any deviant or criminal behavior. Moreover, this film brings light to the concerning rate of youth homicides in the United States. Although the film was made in the early 1990s, it demonstrates the lifestyle of juvenile delinquency in socially disorganized and disadvantaged communities. The themes associated with this film that represent society are youth violence and gang violence. Many cities in the United States have high youth homicide rates such as Chicago, Baltimore, Los Angeles, and more. For this manuscript, Boston's youth homicide rates will be explored, and policy implications that decreased youth homicide rates will be discussed.

Youth Homicide in the United States

Homicide rates in the United States have significantly declined since the early 1990s (Braga, 2003). Youth homicide rates, and incidents involving firearms increased considerably (Braga, 2003). Between the years 1984 and 1994, juvenile homicide victimizations that were committed with handguns increased by 418 percent. In addition, juvenile homicide victimizations committed with firearms other than handguns increased by 125 percent (Fox, 1996). All increases in youth homicide included the use of a firearm (Cook & Laub, 1998).

Cook and Laub (1998) stated that for many cities, the bulk of this significant increase in youth homicide occurred in the late 1980s to early 1990s. For instance, in Boston, youth homicide increased from 22 victims in 1987 to 73 victims in 1990. Youth homicide remained high after the peak of the homicide epidemic.

In addition, Boston averaged nearly 44 homicides per year between 1991 and 1995. Still, like other cities experienced sudden downfalls in youth homicides during the late 1990s (Braga, 2003). In Boston, the amount of youth homicides decreased to 26 in 1996 and dropped to 15 youth homicides in 1997.

Focused Deterrence Strategies and Policy

The low level of youth homicides in Boston continued through 1998, 1999, and 2000. In 2001, a problem-oriented policing intervention, which tightly focused criminal attention to chronically offending gang-involved youth, was significantly associated with reduction in youth gun involved violence (Braga, 2003). A concern to society is why cities with high youth homicide rates haven't implemented focused deterrence strategies to decrease youth homicide rates.

Focused deterrence strategies strive to change an offender's behavior by understanding certain underlying violence-producing dynamics and conditions that sustain habitual violent gun injury problems. These strategies are implemented through law enforcement, community mobilization, and social service actions (Kennedy, 1997, 2008). Moreover, focused deterrence strategies seek to influence the criminal behavior of offenders through the application of both law enforcement and social service resources to assist offenders to engage in desirable behavior. Focused deterrence strategies are framed as problem-oriented exercises, with which specific recurring offenses or crime problems are analyzed, and responses to the analysis of the crime problems are modified to local environments and oper-

ational capacities (Braga & Weisburd, 2015).

"Operation Ceasefire"

The Boston Police Department (BPD) implemented a focused deterrence strategy named "Operation Ceasefire" in the mid-1990s. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Boston experienced a significant increase in youth, gun-involved violence. "Operation Ceasefire" consisted of criminal justice, social service, and community-based agencies, which diagnosed the youth, gun-violence problem and implemented strategies to reduce youth homicide in Boston (Kennedy, Piehl, & Braga, 1996).

This focused deterrent strategy was designed to reduce and prevent gun violence by reaching out directly to gangs, telling gangs explicitly that violence would not be tolerated, and supporting that message by pulling every legal lever when violence occurred (Kennedy, 1997). Braga and Weisburd (2015) claimed that law enforcement agencies could disrupt street drug activity, focus police attention on low-level street crimes such as trespassing and public drinking, serve outstanding warrants, cultivate confidential informants for medium- and long-term investigations of gang activities, deliver strict probation and parole enforcement, seize drug proceeds and other assets, ensure stiffer plea bargains and sterner prosecutorial attention, request stronger bail terms, and bring potentially severe federal investigative and prosecutorial attention to gang-related drug and gun activity. Concurrently, outreach workers, probation and parole officers, churches, and other community groups offered services and other forms of help

to gang members (Kennedy, 1997; Kennedy, Piehl, & Braga, 1996). These groups also delivered the message that violence would not be tolerated and was unacceptable.

For "Operation Ceasefire" to be effective and successful, it had to deliver a credible deterrent message to Boston gangs. Law enforcement strictly targeted gangs that were in violent behavior, rather than expanding their resources on those gangs who were not engaging in violent behavior. A key component of this strategy was conveying a direct and explicit "retail deterrence" message to a small, targeted audience and communicating which behaviors provoke a response, and what that response would be (Kennedy, 1997, 2008). Overall, "Operation Ceasefire" was an effective deterrent strategy for reducing violence, firearm offenses, and youth homicide (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001; Corsaro, Brunson, & McGarrell, 2013). Since the first focused deterrence strategy was implemented in Boston, there have been several replicated strategies in United States cities such as Baltimore, Maryland; Cincinnati, Ohio; High Point, North Carolina; Lowell, Massachusetts; and many more (Corsaro, Brunson, & McGarrell 2013). These focused deterrent strategies should be implemented nationwide. However, funding becomes a major concern. Chicago's homicide rates have skyrocketed again after their "Operation Ceasefire" was no longer implemented due to funding (Corsaro et al., 2013). Focused deterrent strategies are effective, but there needs to be sufficient funding for these programs to be effective.

Conclusion

Social learning theory interprets that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur through observations or direct instruction (Cochran et al. 2017). Social learning theory encompasses four key elements, which are imitation, definitions, differential association, and differential reinforcement. Imitation refers to an individual engaging in behavior after observing similar behaviors in which others engage. Definitions refer to certain attitudes and beliefs that an individual attaches to specific behaviors. Differential association refers to the concept that individuals are exposed to different attitudes, values, and people throughout their life. In addition, differential reinforcement is the balance between predicted rewards and/or punishments that are consequences of particular behaviors.

The history of social learning theory was explored. Edwin H. Sutherland is the common-known pioneer for the first general sociological theory of crime and delinquency. His theory was first published in 1947 and was labeled the "differential association theory". This theory suggested an explanation of individual criminal behavior. Sutherland stated nine key points of his differential association theory but did not describe all of the mechanisms of learning that were involved with engaging in criminal behavior. Burgess and Akers (1966) specified those mechanics of learning in their theory of criminal behavior termed "differential association reinforcement". Akers (1985) stated that social learning theory retains all of the information of differential association processes from Sutherland's theory

and integrates it with differential reinforcement and other principles of behavioral acquisition, continuation, and cessation.

The film *Menace II Society* was debuted in 1993 and portrays urban youth violence in the United States. The film is a drama/thriller that takes place in south central Los Angeles, California in the 1990s. The protagonist of the film is Kaydee "Caine" Lawson. Caine is a young African American man who sells drugs, commits robberies, and engages in other deviant behavior. Caine learned most of his behavior from his father who was a drug dealer. Once his mother died from a drug overdose, and his father was murdered over a drug deal, Caine's grandparents took custody of him. Still, Caine lived a deviant lifestyle, and his role model was his best friend O-Dog who was gritty, violent, and killed people for fun.

This paper applied Aker's social learning theory to Caine. Ever since Caine was a child, he had attitudes and values that encouraged deviant behavior. His father was his biggest role model, and he was a drug dealer. Caine received positive reinforcement from his lifestyle and was constantly earning money and respect. The rewards of selling drugs and committing robberies always outweighed the anticipated punishments that Caine would receive because he did not fear being incarcerated or death. However, Caine did have positive influences in his life. Caine's grandfather, Ronnie, Mr. Butler, and Sharif Butler had deep conversations with Caine about changing his lifestyle and leaving California. By the time Caine was ready to leave, he was killed

in a drive-by shooting. Aker's social learning theory applies well to Caine in the movie *Menace II Society*.

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