

KRM 310 (A): CRIMINOLOGY THEORY

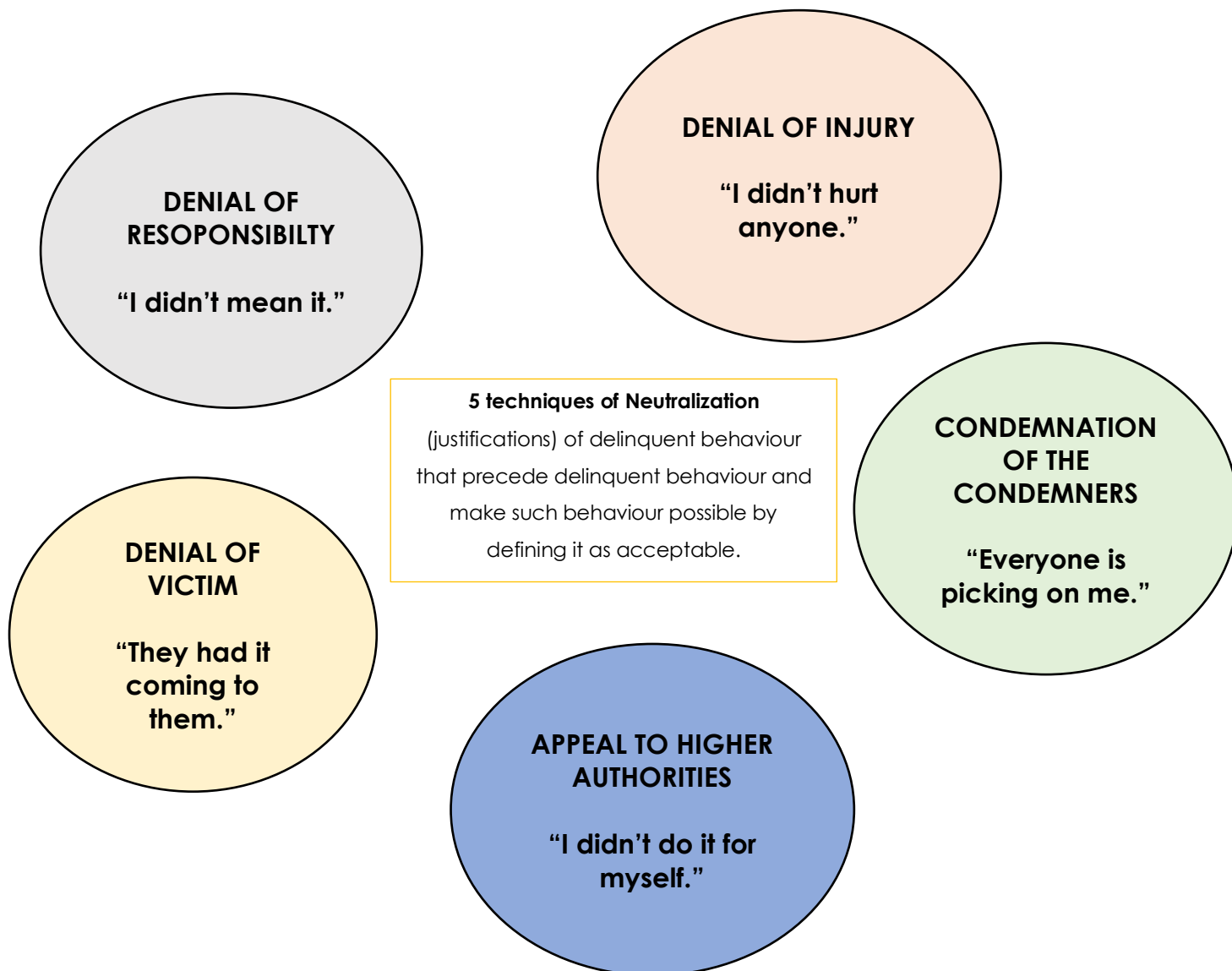
UNIT 7: SOCIAL CONTROL PERSPECTIVES

Matza and Sykes: Delinquency and Drift theory

The process of becoming delinquent begins when a juvenile neutralizes him/herself from the moral bonds of the law and DRIFTS into delinquency.

Drift: *The delinquent transiently exists in limbo between convention and crime, responding in turn to the demands of each, flirting now with one, now the other but postponing commitment, evading decision. Therefore, he/she drifts between criminal and conventional action.*

- Delinquency, then, becomes permissible when **RESPONSIBILITY** is neutralized.
 - Neutralization provides a means of understanding how delinquents **insulate themselves from responsibility for wrongdoing.**



The sense of responsibility, then, is the immediate condition of drift. Other conditions of drift include:

- The sense of injustice
 - Matza claims that subcultural delinquents are filled with a sense of injustice because they depend on a memory file that collects examples of inconsistency.
- The primacy of custom
 - Relates to the male delinquent's observation of the virtues of his subcultures – which stress the traditional precepts of masculinity/manliness (honour, valour, loyalty). In a group setting, the delinquent must demonstrate valour/loyalty when faced with dare/challenge/insult.
- Assertion of tort¹
 - (Has to do with a private transaction between the accused and the victim) – Occurs when the subcultural delinquent considers a harmful wrong to be tort instead of a crime. Subcultural delinquents often believe that the justice process cannot be invoked unless the victim is willing to file a complaint.

The breaking of the moral bind to law arising from neutralization and resulting in drift doesn't assure the commission of a delinquent act. The missing element that provides the thrust/impetus by which the delinquent act is realized is WILL.

- The will is activated both on mundane occasions and extraordinary situations
 - But the subcultural delinquent is not likely to have the will to repeat an old offence if he/she has failed in the past.
 - Desperation can activate ones will to commit infractions

WILL, COMMITMENT & CONVERSION

- Matza suggested that delinquents' will must be captured by deviant influences before they are committed to a delinquent way of life:
- When delinquents permit their will to be captured, then a type of conversion experience happens.
- The former non-delinquent becomes a different kind of person and is willing to stand up for his new way of life.

¹ Tort: a wrongful act or an infringement of a right (other than under contract) leading to legal liability.