

A Life Course Perspective





Definitions and analytical tools

Life Course Approach (Tools)

- Definition of the life course:
 - “A sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time.”

- Life Course Perspective
 - Study people’s lives over time within structural, social, and cultural contexts.
 - Emphasis is on social change
 - People change over time
 - Contexts change over time

Life Course Event

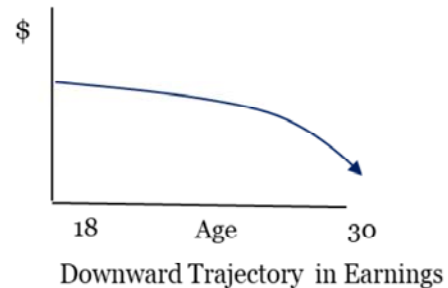
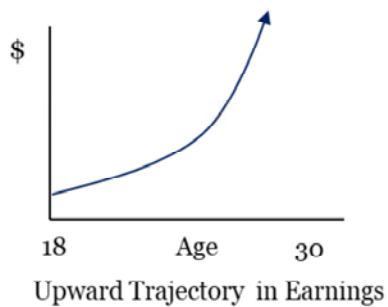
- Something that happens to a person that has implications for the life course
- Examples:
 - Birth 
 - Graduation from College 
 - Marriage and divorce 
 - Parenthood 
 - Getting a job
 - Getting fired 

Life Course Transition

- A life course **state** or **role** is a present life course position occupied
 - Examples: child, student, spouse, parent
 - Life course state have a **duration** (length of time in the state or role)
 - Duration dependence: something depends on duration
- A life course **transition** is a change in state or role
 - Marriage: change from the state of being single to being married
 - Employment: change from the state of jobless to employed
 - Parenthood: change from the state of being a non-parent to being a parent

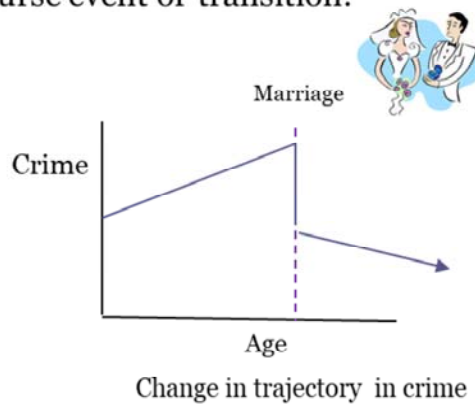
Life Course Trajectories

- A trajectory is a life course path one takes over time:



Life Course Turning Points

- A turning point is an abrupt change of trajectory usually associated with a life course event or transition:



Interdependence and the Life Course

- The elements of the life course are assumed to be interdependent (correlated)
- Life course events, trajectories, transitions
- This interdependence is what life course scholars study

Age, Period, and Cohort Effects

- **Age:** The effects of time since birth
 - Crime peaks between ages 13-25
 - Crime declines slowly after the peak ages
- **Period:** The effect of a specific **historical period** or point in time.
 - 9/11
 - Great depression
 - WWII
- **Cohort:** The effect of being in a specific **birth cohort** (usually measured in year of birth)
 - Greatest Generation (born 1901-24) (fought in WWII)
 - Silent Generation (Children of the Great Depression) (1925-45)
 - Baby boomers (born 1946-1964)
 - Generation X (1960s-1980s)
 - Generation Y (Millennials) (1980s-1990s)
 - Generation Z (2000-2013)

Separating Age, Period, and Cohort Effects

- Data on a single cohort cannot distinguish effects
- Need data on multiple cohorts over time

Year	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Cohort					
1960	0	10	20	30	40 years of age
1970	10	20	30	40	50
1980	20	30	40	50	60
1990	30	40	50	60	70 years of age

Stages of the Life Course

- Normative stages (life course markers)
- Socially constituted (vary by cohort and historical period)
- Off time: informal sanctions

<u>Childhood</u>	<u>Adolescence</u>	<u>Adulthood</u>
Nursing	Puberty	College
Walking	Boys & Girls	Employment
Talking	Sexual Debut	Marriage
Toilet Training	Dating	Parenthood
School	Graduation	Empty Nest
		Elderly Care

Crime, Juvenile Delinquency, and Child Behavior Problems

Defining our outcome variable

Our Subject Matter

- Child behavior problems (age 2-7)



- Juvenile delinquent behavior (age 8-17)



- Adult criminal behavior (age 18-older)





Criminal Behavior

- Criminal behavior is a violation of criminal law.
 - Culpability.
 - Criminal intent.
 - Children < 8 and legally insane.
- Criminal law: A list of specific acts prohibited by law and punishable by the state.
 - Punishment: general deterrence.
 - Rational choice assumption.

Examples of Criminal Behavior

Felonies

Aggravated assault
Arson
Murder
Grand larceny
Auto theft
Robbery
Burglary
Rape
etc.

Misdemeanors

Minor assault
DUI
Petty theft
Vandalism
Public intoxication
Loitering
etc.

Measuring Criminal Behavior

- **Police Statistics: Uniform Crime Report (UCR)**
 - Crimes known to police
 - Arrests

- **Victimization Surveys**
 - National Crime Victimization Survey
 - Personal Interview
 - How many times have you been a victim of a crime?

- **Self-Report Surveys**
 - Survey (interview or questionnaire)
 - How many times in the past year have tried to steal something from someone by force?

Examples of Self-Report Surveys

In the past year, how many times have you

- Stolen something worth more than \$100?
- Damaged school property?
- Purposely set fire to a building or vehicle?
- Carried a hidden weapon?
- Attacked someone with the intention of seriously hurting them?
- Knowingly bought or sold stolen goods?
- Sold illegal drugs such as heroin, cocaine, or marijuana?
- Been involved in gang fights?
- Used checks illegally?
- Used force or strongarm methods to get money or things from other people?

Self-Reports: Reliability and Validity

- Reliability
 - Test-retest correlations: .90 after 45 minutes
 - Generally considered good

- Validity
 - Good construct validity
 - Items correlate with each other well.
 - Items are correlated with arrest, conviction, and other criteria.
 - Some underreporting (overall 20%)
 - Higher for serious offenders
 - Higher for blacks and males



Juvenile Delinquency

- **Criminal behavior** committed by a juvenile (age 8 to 17).
- **Status offenses:** behaviors that are illegal for minors only (e.g., curfew violations, underage drinking, runaway)
- **Wards of the juvenile court** (e.g., abandoned, destitute, homeless)

Juvenile Court



- Invention of the juvenile court (1899)
- Treatment ideology.
 - Social workers and counselors
 - Diagnosis, treatment
 - Contradiction: punishment versus treatment
- Crackdown on crime
 - Rehabilitation is dead.
 - Juvenile offender law (1970s)



Child Behavior Problems

- Behavior problems for children under 8 years of age
 - Achenbach behavioral checklist
 - Examples on the next slide
- Continuity with delinquency and crime
 - Correlations: high (.60-.80)
 - Early intervention

Child Behavior Problems

I am going to read a list of items that describes children and youth (last 2 years or currently)

- 0 = Not True
- 1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True
- 2 = Very True or Often True



Internalizing Problems

Mood changes
Feels unloved
High strung
Fearful
Confused
Feels worthless
Obsessive
Unhappy
Withdrawn
Clings
Cries
Demands attention
Too dependent

Externalizing Problems

Cheats
Argues
Bullies
Disobedient
Trouble getting along with others
Impulsive
Not liked
Restless
Stubborn
Strong temper
Destructive

Crime Across the Life Course

- Traditionally, compare criminals with non-criminals at one point in time



Time 1

- View crime across a person's life span



Time 1



Time 2



Time 3

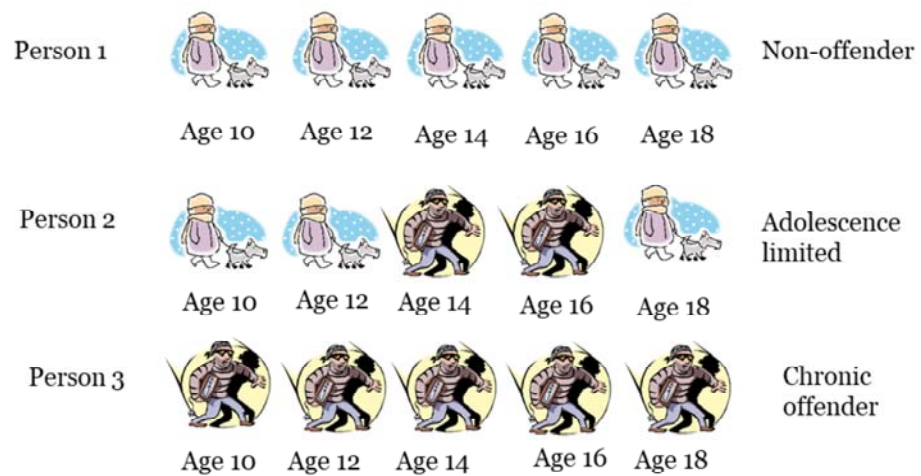


Time 4



Time 5

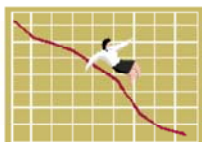
Compare Individuals & Time



Compare Individual Trajectories



Smooth Increase



Smooth Desistance



Jagged Increase