

Age-Graded Informal Social Control Theory

Crime and the Life Course
SOC 401D

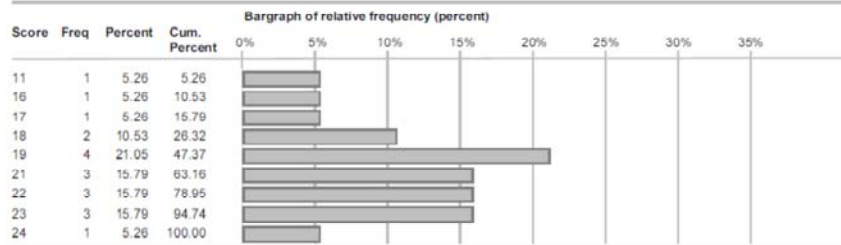
First Exam Distribution (Multiply scores by two)

SOC 401 A
 Matsueda, Ross
 Exam 1

21023

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1 student = 5.26% of the group.

Score Name	Number of Students	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Largest Observed Score	Smallest Observed Score
Exam 1	19	19.89	3.04	24.00	11.00

Sampson and Laub. 1993 *Crime in the Making*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



Robert J. Sampson



John H. Laub

Assumptions of Control Theories

- **Consensus model of society:** Society consists of a single moral order
- **Crime is not relative**, but is invariant across time and societies
- **Everyone is equally-motivated to commit crime**
 - Crime is **not learned**
 - Explain conformity, not crime

Build on Hirschi's (1969) Social Control Theory

- **Take deviance for granted; conformity is problematic**
 - Crime is not learned; it is natural.
 - Why do some people refrain from crime?
 - Answer: Strong bonds to society.
- **Bond to society**
 - Attachment to parents, peers, teachers, others.
 - Commitment to conventional activities
 - Acquire education.
 - Develop a career.
 - Build a reputation.
 - Involvement in conventional activities (idle hands are the devils workshop).
 - Belief in the moral order.
- **When the bond is weak or broken, individuals are free to deviate if they so desire.**
- **Delinquent peers do not transmit crime.**

Stability and Change in Offending

- If crime is correlated .60 over time, that means that stability explains 36%
- Leaves 64% unexplained by stability. This is change.
- Assume individual differences in propensity to offend
 - Maybe due to early socialization
 - Maybe due to genetics and prenatal care
- Beyond individual differences in propensity, try to explain variation over the life course.

Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control - Sampson and Laub

- Follow Hirschi (1969) emphasizing informal social bonds.
 - Interpersonal social bonds:
 - Parent-child
 - teacher-student
 - friendships
 - Social bonds (embeddedness) to conventional institutions:
 - Families: marriage, parenthood
 - Schools: commitment to education
 - Workplace: job stability
 - Military
- Allow social bonds to vary across the life course

Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control, continued

- Emphasize life course trajectories and turning points.
- Trajectories begin early in life
 - Shaped by parent-child socialization – build in controls
 - Trajectories shaped by interaction with environment
 - Cumulative continuity
- **Turning points: Life course transitions**
 - Transition to adolescence and adulthood: what does this consist of?
 - Elementary school: attachment and commitment to school
 - Peer processes: attachment to peers reduces delinquency
 - Delinquency is not learned from delinquents
 - Delinquent peers may increase delinquency by providing criminal opportunities or situational motives

Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control, continued

- **Turning points, con't.**
 - High school: commitment and attachments reduce crime (see Hirschi)
 - Deemphasize subcultures
 - Adulthood
 - Job stability
 - Military service
 - Marriage
- **In examining turning points, always consider selection into the life course role**
 - Unobserved heterogeneity: delinquency selects negatively for life course roles
 - Cumulative continuity: temperamental children select into negative social environments
 - But net of selection, Sampson and Laub argue that life course transitions reduce crime.

Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control, Laub and Sampson

- Modified their theory based on qualitative interviews
- Emphasis on three concepts:
 - Human Agency: subject's constructive activity (emergent process)
 - Situational Context: routine activities & opportunity (suitable targets, capable guardians)
 - Historical Context: effect of WWII and the GI bill for members of the Glueck sample.

Criticisms of Informal Social Control Theory

- Causal mechanisms explaining life course transitions are simple
 - Job stability, good marriages, military service
 - Relies on Hirschi
 - Need a situational decision-making model
 - No theory of the meaning of crime.
- Parenting and child development is not well-developed
 - Child development
 - Interplay between genetics and environment not well developed
- Reliance on control theory ignores the role of subculture, organization among criminals, and delinquent peers.