

# Crime, Delinquency, & 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

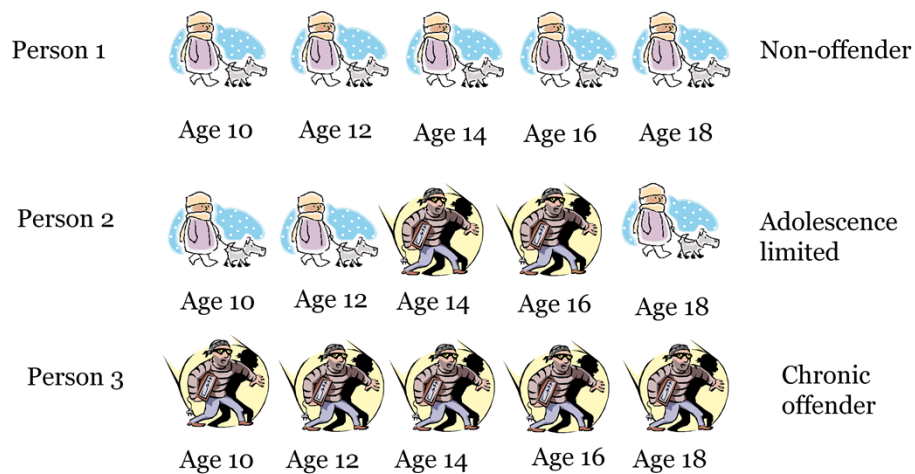


Time 4



Time 5

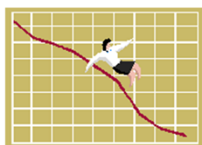
## Compare Individuals & Time



## Compare Individual Trajectories



Smooth Increase



Smooth Desistance



Jagged Increase

# 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

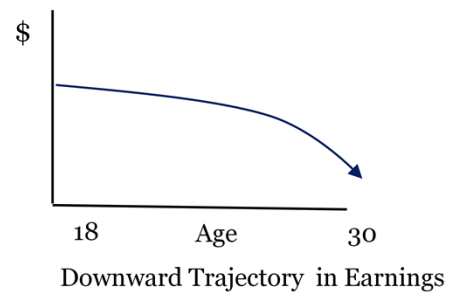
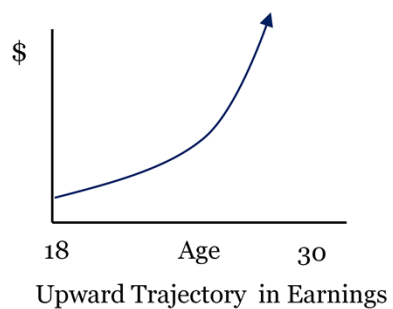
- Getting fired 

## 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

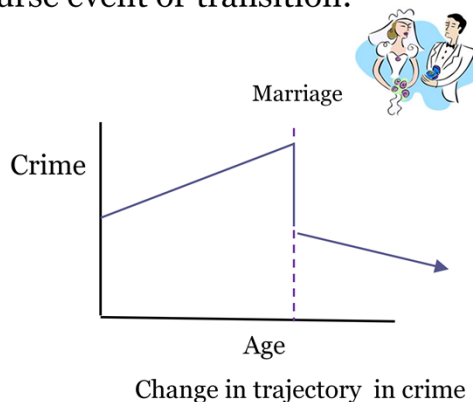
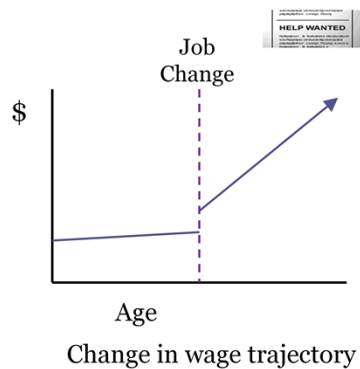
## Life Course Trajectories

- 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
- **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	<b>20</b>	30	40 years of age
1970	10	<b>20</b>	30	40	50
1980	<b>20</b>	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