

# **Chapter Nine:**

## **Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait**

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Foundations of Developmental Theory
  - Glueck's
    - Sampson and Laub
  - Wolfgang
  - Loeber and LeBlanc

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Life-Course Fundamentals
  - Life-Course Theories
    - The view that criminality is a dynamic process, influenced by many characteristics, traits, and experiences, and that behavior changes accordingly over the life course
  - Latent Trait Theories
    - Theories that a stable feature, characteristic, property, or condition, present at birth or soon after, makes some people crime-prone over the life course

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Life-Course Fundamentals
  - Relationships and behaviors determine adult life course.
    - Conformity to social rules and function effectively in society
    - Later begin careers, leave parental homes, find permanent relationships, and marry and begin families
    - Transitions take place in order

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Fundamentals

- Some individuals are incapable of maturing in a reasonable and timely fashion
  - Family, environmental, or personal problems
  - Transitions can occur too early
  - Transitions may occur too late
  - Interruption of one trajectory can harm another
  - The propensity to commit crimes is neither stable nor constant: It is a developmental process.
    - Desistance

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Life-Course Fundamentals
  - Problem Behavior Syndrome
    - A cluster of antisocial behaviors that may include family dysfunction, substance abuse, smoking, precocious sexuality and early pregnancy, educational underachievement, suicide attempts, sensation seeking, and unemployment, as well as crime
    - Crime is a social problem rather than a result of other social problems

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Life-Course Fundamentals
  - Pathways to Crime
    - Authority conflict pathway
    - Overt pathway
    - Covert pathway

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Life-Course Fundamentals
  - Offense Specialization/Generalization
  - Age of Onset/Continuity of Crime
    - Criminal career starts early in life
    - Persistent criminal offenders begin their careers early in life
    - Early onset creates a downward spiral
    - Adolescent-Limiteds
    - Life-Course Persisters

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Theories of the Criminal Life Course
  - Sampson and Laub's Age-Graded Theory
    - Turning points
    - Social capital
    - Trajectories, transitions, and turning points
    - Testing the age-graded theory
    - Future research directions

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Latent Trait Theories
  - Theories that a stable feature, characteristic, property, or condition, present at birth or soon after, makes some people crime-prone over the life course
  - State Dependence
    - Latent trait disrupts normal socialization

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Crime and Human Nature
  - Wilson and Herrnstein
    - Personal traits may outweigh social variables
    - Close link between decision to commit crime and biosocial factors
      - Low intelligence, body type, genetics, hyper-active autonomic nervous system, psychological traits

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- General Theory of Crime
  - Gottfredson and Hirschi
    - Impulsive Personality
    - Lack of Self-Control
      - Poor parenting
    - Act and offender separate concepts

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Analyzing the General Theory of Crime
  - Critiques
    - Tautological
    - Different Classes of Criminals
    - Ecological Differences
    - Racial and Gender Differences
    - Moral Beliefs
    - Peer Influence

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Analyzing the General Theory of Crime
  - Critiques
    - People change
    - Modest relationship
    - Cross-cultural differences
    - Misreads human nature
    - One of many causes

# Developmental Theories: Life-Course and Latent Trait

- Public Policy Implications of Developmental Theory
  - Social, educational, and family services