

Age-Crime Relationship: The Debate

- There is no finding in criminology stronger than age
- Hugely debated because of its importance
- Involvement in crime is early on in life
- Huge increase for age 15-24
- Decrease after age 24
- Criminal involvement decreases with age

Latent Trait Approach

- Age distribution of crime is invariant across social and cultural conditions
 - Invariant- will never change
- Age has a direct effect on crime
- No factor (or combination of factors) can explain the age-crime relationship

Gottfredson and Hirschi's Self Control Theory (1990)

- **Crime:** an act of force or fraud undertaken in pursuit of self-interest (or pursuit of pleasure)
- **Opportunity:** the specific condition under which low self-control most likely leads to crime
- **Self-Control:** the tendency of individuals to consider the long term consequences of their actions
- Focus is placed on early childhood socialization in the family, which can produce an enduring criminal predisposition called low self-control
- Posits a single, one-dimensional trait of self-control that persist over the life course
 - Level of self control is determined by early childhood and remains the same for the rest of your life- many people disagreed with this

Six Components of the Personality Trait of Low Self- Control

1. Tendency to respond to tangible stimuli in the immediate environment
 - "Here and now" orientation
 - High self-control- defer gratification
2. Tendency to "lack diligence, tenacity, or persistence in the course of action"
 - "Easier or simple self-gratification and desires"
3. Tendency to be "adventuresome" rather than "cautious"
 - Prefer "exciting, risky, or thrilling" acts
4. Embraces a preference for physical activity over "cognitive" or "mental activity"
5. Tendency to be self-centered, indifferent, or insensitive to the sufferings and needs of others
6. Has minimal tolerance for frustration and an inability to respond to conflict through verbal rather than physical means

Theory of Criminality

- Low self-control X opportunity = criminal behavior
- High self-control X opportunity = no criminal behavior

- Summary:
 - Individuals do not change (trait), criminal opportunities change
 - Opportunities decrease with age
 - Early childhood experiences can reduce **criminal propensity**
 - General theory of crime- accounts for various behaviors