

Gina Sanders / Fotolia

## CHAPTER 8

# THEORIES OF SOCIAL PROCESS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- How does the process of social interaction contribute to criminal behavior?
- What are the various social process perspectives discussed in this chapter?
- What kinds of social policy initiatives might be based on social process theories of crime causation?

- What are the shortcomings of the social process perspective?
- What are the various social development perspectives discussed in this chapter?
- What are the central concepts of social development theories?
- What kinds of social policy initiatives might be suggested by social development perspectives?
- What are the shortcomings of social development perspectives on criminality?

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■ **social process theory** A theory that asserts that criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others and that socialization processes that occur as the result of group membership are the primary route through which learning occurs; also called interactionist theory.

■ **social development theory** An integrated perspective on human development that simultaneously examines many different levels of development—psychological, biological, familial, interpersonal, cultural, societal, and ecological.

## Introduction: Labeling a Killer

In 2012, 24-year-old Joran van der Sloot stood before a Peruvian judge and pled guilty to the 2010 murder of 21-year-old Stephany Flores in a Lima, Peru, hotel room. “Yes, I want to plead guilty. I wanted from the first moment to confess sincerely,” he told the judge. “I truly am sorry for this act. I feel very bad.”<sup>1</sup> Van der Sloot, who gained notoriety as the prime suspect in the 2005 disappearance of 18-year-old Alabama cheerleader Natalee Holloway while she was vacationing on the island of Aruba, fled to Chile after the murder but was extradited to face prosecution in Peru. Prior to sentencing, attorneys for Van der Sloot asked the judge for leniency, saying that their client killed Flores as a result of “extreme

Social process theories draw their explanatory power from the process of interaction between individuals and society.

psychological trauma” that he had suffered as a result of the intense negative publicity he had received in the international news media following Holloway’s disappearance. Rejecting his pleas, the judge imposed a sentence

of 28 years in prison and ordered him to pay the Flores family \$75,000 in reparations. He will be eligible for parole in 2026.<sup>2</sup>

## The Perspective of Social Interaction

The theories discussed in the first part of this chapter are called **social process theories**, or interactionist perspectives, because they depend on the process of interaction between individuals and society for their explanatory power. The various types of social process theories include social learning theory, social control theory, and labeling theory. The second part of this chapter focuses on **social development theories**, which tend to offer an integrated perspective and place a greater emphasis on changes in offending over time. Figure 8–1 details the principles of social process and social development theories.

Social process theories of crime causation assume that everyone has the potential to violate the law and that criminality is not an innate human characteristic; instead, criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others, and the socialization process occurring



Paolo Aguilarr/EPA/Newscom

**Joran van der Sloot in a Peruvian courtroom.** Van der Sloot, who pled guilty to the murder of a 21-year-old Peruvian woman, remains the main suspect in the disappearance of Alabama cheerleader Natalee Holloway. How would social process theories explain his behavior?

as the result of group membership is seen as the primary route through which learning occurs. Among the most important groups contributing to the process of socialization are the family, peers, work groups, and reference groups with which one identifies because they instill values and norms in their members and communicate their acceptable worldviews and patterns of behavior.

Social process perspectives hold that the process through which criminality is acquired, deviant self-concepts are established, and criminal behavior results is active, open-ended, and ongoing throughout a person’s life. They suggest that individuals who have weak stakes in conformity are more likely to be influenced by the social processes and contingent experiences that lead to crime, and that criminal choices tend to persist because they are reinforced by the reaction of society to those whom it has identified as deviant.

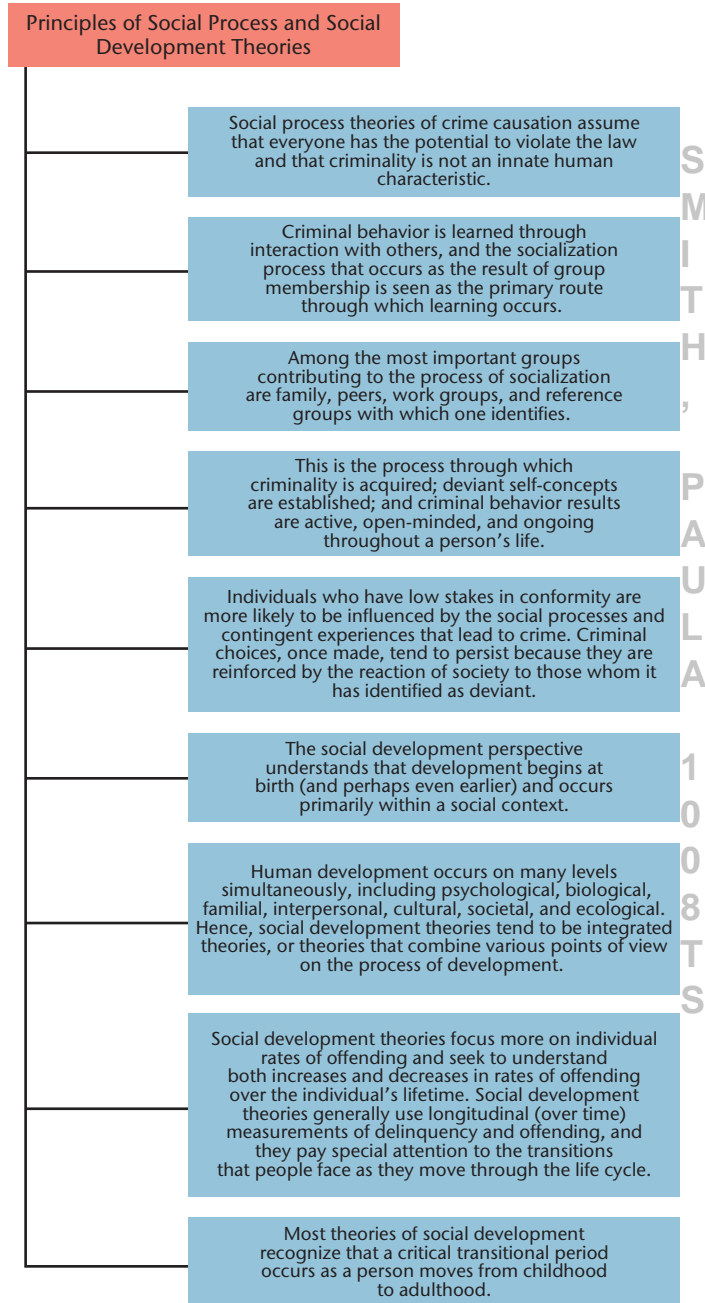
## Types of Social Process Approaches

A number of theories can be classified under the social process umbrella: social learning theory, social control theory, labeling theory, reintegrative shaming, and dramaturgical perspective.

- **social learning theory** A perspective that places primary emphasis on the role of communication and socialization in the acquisition of learned patterns of criminal behavior and the values that support that behavior; also called learning theory.
- **social control theory** A perspective that predicts that when social constraints on antisocial behavior are weakened or absent, delinquent behavior emerges. Rather than stressing causative factors in criminal behavior, social control theory asks why people actually obey rules instead of breaking them.

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- **differential association** The sociological thesis that criminality, like any other form of behavior, is learned through a process of association with others who communicate criminal values.



**Social learning theory** places primary emphasis on the role of communication and socialization in the acquisition of learned patterns of criminal behavior and the values supporting that behavior, whereas **social control theory** focuses on the strength of the bond people share with individuals and institutions around them, especially as those relationships shape their behavior. Labeling theory points to the special significance of society’s response to the criminal and sees the process through which a person comes to be defined as a criminal, along with society’s imposition of the label “criminal,” as a significant contributory factor in future criminality. Reintegrative shaming, a contemporary offshoot of labeling theory, emphasizes possible positive outcomes of the labeling process; the dramaturgical perspective focuses on how people can effectively manage the impressions they make on others. It is to different social learning theories that we now turn our attention.

## Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory (also called learning theory) says that all behavior is learned in much the same way and that such learning includes the acquisition of norms, values, and patterns of behaviors conducive to crime, meaning that crime is also learned and that people learn to commit crime from others. Criminal behavior is a product of the social environment, not an innate characteristic of particular people.

### Differential Association

One of the earliest and most influential forms of social learning theory was advanced by **Edwin Sutherland** in 1939, who stated that criminality is learned through a process of **differential association** with others who communicate criminal values and who advocate the commission of crimes.<sup>3</sup> He emphasized the role of social learning as an explanation for crime because he believed that many concepts popular in the field of criminology at the time—including social pathology, genetic inheritance, biological characteristics, and personality flaws—were inadequate to explain the process by which an otherwise normal individual turns to crime. Sutherland was the first well-known criminologist to suggest that all significant human behavior is learned and that crime is not substantively different from any other form of behavior.

Although Sutherland died in 1950, the tenth edition of his famous book, *Criminology*, was published in 1978 under the authorship of Donald R. Cressey, a professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara. The 1978 edition of *Criminology* contained the finalized principles of differential

**FIGURE 8-1** | Principles of Social Process and Social Development Theories

Source: Schmallegger, Frank, *Criminology*. Printed and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

# THEORY | in PERSPECTIVE

## Types of Social Process Theories

Social process theories (also called interactionist theories) depend on the process of interaction between individuals and society for their explanatory power. They assume that everyone has the potential to violate the law and that criminality is not an innate human characteristic; instead, criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others, and the socialization process that occurs as the result of group membership is seen as the primary route through which learning occurs.

### Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory (also called learning theory) says that all behavior is learned in much the same way and that crime is also learned. It places primary emphasis on the roles of communication and socialization in the acquisition of learned patterns of criminal behavior and the values supporting that behavior.

**Period:** 1930s–present

**Theorists:** Edwin Sutherland, Robert Burgess, Ronald L. Akers, Daniel Glaser

**Concepts:** Differential association, differential association–reinforcement (including operant conditioning), differential identification

### Social Control Theory

Social control theory focuses on the strength of the bond people share with the individuals and institutions around them, especially as those relationships shape their behavior, and seeks to identify those features of the personality and of the environment that keep people from committing crimes.

**Period:** 1950s–present

**Theorists:** Walter C. Reckless, Howard B. Kaplan, Travis Hirschi, Michael Gottfredson, Charles R. Tittle, Per-Olof H. Wikström, and others

**Concepts:** Inner and external containment, self-derogation, social bond, control–balance, general theory of crime (GTC), situational action theory (SAT)

### Labeling Theory

Labeling theory (also called social reaction theory) points to the special significance of society's response to the criminal and sees continued

crime as a consequence of limited opportunities for acceptable behavior that follow from the negative responses of society to those defined as offenders.

**Period:** 1938–1940, 1960s–1980s, 1990s

**Theorists:** Frank Tannenbaum, Edwin M. Lemert, Howard Becker, John Braithwaite, others

**Concepts:** Tagging, labeling, outsiders, moral enterprise, primary and secondary deviance, reintegrative shaming, stigmatic shaming

### Dramaturgical Perspective

The dramaturgical perspective depicts human behavior as centered around the purposeful management of impressions and seeks explanatory power in the analysis of social performances.

**Period:** 1960s–present

**Theorists:** Erving Goffman, others

**Concepts:** Total institutions, impression management, back and front regions, performances, discrediting information, stigma, spoiled identity

### The Social Development Perspective

The social development perspective provides an integrated view of human development that examines multiple levels of maturity simultaneously, including the psychological, biological, familial, interpersonal, cultural, societal, and ecological levels.

**Period:** 1980s–present

**Theorists:** Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, Terrie E. Moffitt, Robert J. Sampson, John H. Laub, Glen H. Elder, Jr., David P. Farrington and Donald J. West, Marvin Wolfgang, Lawrence E. Cohen and Richard Machalek, Terrence Thornberry, and others

**Concepts:** Human development, social development perspective, life course criminology, career criminal, life course, human agency, turning points, social capital, life course–persistent offenders, adolescence–limited offenders, persistence, desistance, evolutionary ecology

association (which, for all practical purposes, were complete as early as 1947). Nine in number, the principles read as follows:<sup>4</sup>

1. Criminal behavior is learned.
2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others in a process of communication.
3. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups.
4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are

sometimes very complicated and sometimes very simple, and (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes.

5. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable.
6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to law violation over definitions unfavorable to law violation.
7. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.

8. The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anticriminal patterns involves all mechanisms involved in any other learning.
9. Although criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values because noncriminal behavior is also an expression of the same needs and values.

Differential association found considerable acceptance among mid-twentieth-century theorists because it combined then-prevalent psychological and sociological principles into a coherent perspective on criminality. Crime as a form of learned behavior became the catchword, and biological and other perspectives were largely abandoned by those involved in the process of theory testing.

### Differential Association–Reinforcement Theory

In 1966, **Robert Burgess** and **Ronald L. Akers** published an article titled “A Differential Association–Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior.”<sup>5</sup> The perspective, often termed differential reinforcement theory or sociological learning theory, expands on Sutherland’s original idea of differential association by adding the idea of reinforcement, the concept of the power of punishments and rewards to shape behavior (see the heading “Behavior Theory” in Chapter 5). In developing their perspective, Burgess and Akers integrated psychological principles of operant conditioning with sociological notions of differential association, and they reorganized Sutherland’s nine principles into seven, the first of which stated, “Criminal behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning.”<sup>6</sup> Fundamental to this perspective is the belief that human beings learn to define behaviors that are rewarded as positive and that an individual’s criminal behavior is rewarded at least sometimes by individuals and groups that value such activity.

Although the 1966 Burgess–Akers article only alluded to the term *social learning*, Akers began to apply that term to differential association–reinforcement theory with the 1973 publication of his book *Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach*.<sup>7</sup> According to Akers, “The basic assumption in social learning theory is that the same learning process, operating in a context of social structure,

interaction, and situation, produces both conforming and deviant behavior.”<sup>8</sup> Akers identified two primary learning mechanisms: differential reinforcement (also called instrumental conditioning), in which behavior is a function of the frequency, amount, and probability of experienced and perceived contingent rewards and punishments, and imitation, in which the behavior of others and its consequences are observed and modeled. These learning mechanisms, said Akers, operate in a process of differential association involving direct and indirect verbal and nonverbal communication, interaction, and identification with others. As with Sutherland’s theory of differential association, the relative frequency, intensity, duration, and priority of associations remain important because they determine the amount, frequency, and probability of reinforcement of behavior that is either conforming or deviant. Interpersonal association also plays an important role because it can expose individuals to deviant or conforming norms and role models.

Akers continued to develop learning theory and in 1998 published the book *Social Learning and Social Structure*, in which he explained crime rates as a function of social learning that occurs within a social structure.<sup>9</sup> He called this explanation of the model of crime the social structure–social learning model (SSSL) and summarized it in seven concise propositions:<sup>10</sup>

1. Deviant behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning.
2. Deviant behavior is learned both in nonsocial situations that are reinforcing or discriminating and through social interaction in which the behavior of others is reinforcing or discriminating for such behavior.
3. The principal part of the learning of deviant behavior occurs in those groups that comprise or control the individual’s major source of reinforcements.
4. The learning of deviant behavior, including specific techniques, attitudes, and avoidance procedures, is a function of the effective and available reinforcers and the existing reinforcement contingencies.
5. The specific class of behavior learned and its frequency of occurrence are a function of the effective and available reinforcers and the deviant or nondeviant direction of the norms, rules, and definitions that in the past have accompanied the reinforcement.
6. The probability that a person will commit deviant behavior is increased in the presence of normative statements, definitions, and verbalizations that, in the process of

Differential association theory says that criminality is learned through a process of association with criminal others.

■ **differential identification theory** An explanation for crime and deviance that holds that people pursue criminal or deviant behavior to the extent that they identify themselves with real or imaginary people from whose perspective their criminal or deviant behavior seems acceptable.

differential reinforcement of such behavior over conforming behavior, have acquired discriminative value.

7. The strength of deviant behavior is a direct function of the amount, frequency, and probability of its reinforcement. The modalities of association with deviant patterns are important insofar as they affect the source, amount, and scheduling of reinforcement.

Akers's SSSL theory says that social learning is the social-psychological mediating process through which social structural aspects of the environment work to cause crime and that it integrates two levels of explanation—social structure and social learning—by specifying the links between the larger social context and the individual relationships that lead to criminal behavior.<sup>11</sup> Hence, a person's location in the social structure—defined by age, gender, ethnicity, place of residence, and so on—is seen as a major determinant of how that person is socialized and what he or she will learn.

### Differential Identification Theory

Like Akers, **Daniel Glaser** built on Sutherland's notion of differential association, and Glaser offered a **differential identification theory**.<sup>12</sup> The central tenet of Glaser's differential identification theory is that “a person pursues criminal behavior to the extent that he identifies himself with real or imaginary persons from whose perspective his criminal behavior seems acceptable.”<sup>13</sup> Glaser proposed that the process of differential association leads to an intimate personal identification with lawbreakers, resulting in criminal or delinquent acts.

Glaser recognized that people will identify with various people and that some of these identifications will be relatively strong and others weaker—hence the term *differential identification*. According to Glaser, it is not the frequency or intensity of association that determines behavior (as Sutherland believed) but the symbolic process of identification. Identification with a person or with an abstract understanding of what that person might be like can be more important than actual associations with real people. Role models can consist of abstract ideas as well as actual people, so an individual might identify with a serial killer or a terrorist bomber even though he or she has never met that person. Glaser also recognized the role of economic conditions, frustrations with one's place in the social structure, learned moral creeds, and group participation in producing differential identifications. Alternatively, identification with noncriminals offers the possibility of rehabilitation.

A recent meta-analysis of 133 empirical studies of social learning theory that had been published in leading



James King-Holmes/Science Photo Library/Photo Researchers, Inc.

**A child watching his mother smoke a cigarette.** Social learning theory says that social behavior is learned. Will this child grow up to be a smoker?

1 criminology journals between 1974 and 2003 found strong support for concepts such as differential association and “definitions favorable to law violations,” but less support for ideas like differential reinforcement and modeling/imitation.<sup>14</sup> The authors concluded that “the empirical support for social learning theory stacks up well relative to the criminological other perspectives that have been subjected to metaanalysis.” Learn more about social learning and adolescent development via Library Extras 8–1 and 8–2.

## Social Control Theories

We mentioned earlier that theories of social control focus primarily on the strength of the bond that people share with the individuals and institutions around them, especially as those relationships shape their behavior. According to **Charles R. Tittle**, a prominent sociologist at Washington State University with a specialty in crime and deviance, social control theory emphasizes “the inhibiting effect of social and psychological integration with others whose potential negative response, surveillance, and expectations regulate or constrain criminal impulses.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, social control theorists seek to identify those features of the personality



■ **containment** An aspect of the social bond that acts as a stabilizing force to prevent individuals from committing crimes and that keeps them from engaging in deviance.

rewards, including financial gain, sexual satisfaction, and higher status, that crime may offer. **Containment** is a stabilizing force that blocks such pushes and pulls from leading the individual into crime.

Reckless believed that inner containment was far more effective than external containment in preventing law violations. “As social relations become more impersonal, as society becomes more diverse and alienated, as people participate more and more for longer periods of time away from a home base, the self becomes more and more important as a controlling agent.”<sup>21</sup>

### Delinquency and Self-Esteem

Social control theory predicts that when social constraints on antisocial behavior are weakened or absent, delinquent behavior will emerge. An innovative perspective on social control was offered by **Howard B. Kaplan** in the mid-1970s, when he proposed that people who are ridiculed by their peers suffer a loss of self-esteem, assess themselves poorly, and abandon the motivation to conform.<sup>22</sup> This approach has come to be known as the *self-derogation theory of delinquency*.

Numerous studies appear to support the idea that low self-esteem fosters delinquent behavior.<sup>23</sup> However, it appears that delinquency can also enhance self-esteem, at least for some delinquents;<sup>24</sup> for example, one study found that delinquent behavior enhances self-esteem in adolescents whose self-esteem is already very low.<sup>25</sup>

Some researchers have examined ethnic identification as both a factor in low self-esteem and a precursor to delinquent behavior. In 1986, K. Leung and F. Drasgow tested Kaplan’s self-derogation theory using white, African American, and Hispanic youth groups.<sup>26</sup> They concluded that although all three groups reported low self-esteem, only among white youths low levels of self-esteem related to delinquent behavior were found. Other researchers found no differences in self-esteem and delinquency between white and African American delinquents and nondelinquents.<sup>27</sup>

In 1990, in an effort to explain some contradictory findings of self-derogation research, Daphna Oyserman and Hazel Rose Markus proposed that “possible selves,” rather than self-esteem, might be a major explanatory factor in delinquency.<sup>28</sup> According to this approach, the degree of disjuncture between what people want to be and what they fear they might become is a good potential predictor of delinquency.<sup>29</sup> For example, an adolescent who is confused about what he or she wants to be or is fearful about what he or she could become may resort to delinquency in order to resolve the conflict. Oyserman and Markus suggested that the highest levels of delinquency can be

■ **social bond** The link, created through socialization, between individuals and the society of which they are a part.

found among youths who lack balance between their expected selves and their feared selves.

### Social Bond Theory

An important form of social control theory was popularized by **Travis Hirschi** in his 1969 book *Causes of Delinquency*.<sup>30</sup> Hirschi’s approach was well received by criminologists and “epitomized social control theorizing for nearly three decades.”<sup>31</sup> Hirschi argued that through successful socialization, a bond forms between individuals and the social group, but when that bond is weakened or broken, deviance and crime may result. Hirschi described four components of the **social bond** (Figure 8–3):

1. Attachment (a person’s shared interests with others)
2. Commitment (the amount of energy and effort put into activities with others)
3. Involvement (the amount of time spent with others in shared activities)
4. Belief (a shared value and moral system)



**FIGURE 8-3** | The Four Components of the Social Bond

Source: Schmalleger, Frank, *Criminology*. Printed and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.



■ **general theory of crime (GTC)** The assertion that the operation of a single mechanism, low self-control, accounts for “all crime, at all times,” including acts ranging from vandalism to homicide, from rape to white-collar crime.

The first component, attachment, refers to a person’s shared interests with others. In his writings, Hirschi cites the psychopath as an example of the kind of person whose attachment to society is nearly nonexistent.<sup>32</sup> Other relatively normal individuals may find their attachment to society loosened through “the process of becoming alienated from others [which] often involves or is based on active interpersonal conflict,” says Hirschi. “Such conflict could easily supply a reservoir of socially derived hostility sufficient to account for the aggressiveness of those whose attachments to others have been weakened.”<sup>33</sup>

The second component of the social bond—commitment—reflects a person’s investment of time and energies into conforming behavior and the potential loss of the rewards that he or she has already gained from that behavior. In Hirschi’s words, “The idea, then, is that the person invests time, energy, himself, in a certain line of activity—say, getting an education, building up a business, acquiring a reputation for virtue. Whenever he considers deviant behavior, he must consider the costs of this deviant behavior, the risk he runs of losing the investment he has made in conventional behavior.”<sup>34</sup> For such a traditionally successful person, committing petty theft is stupid because the potential loss far exceeds the possible gains. Recognizing that his approach applies primarily to individuals who have been successfully socialized into conventional society, Hirschi added, “The concept of commitment assumes that the organization of society is such that the interests of most persons would be endangered if they were to engage in criminal acts.”<sup>35</sup>

Involvement, the third aspect, means “engrossment in conventional activities”<sup>36</sup> and is similar to Reckless’s concept of meaningful roles. In explaining the importance of involvement in determining conformity, Hirschi cited the colloquial saying that “idle hands are the devil’s workshop”—time and energy are limited, so if a person is busy with legitimate pursuits, he or she will have little opportunity for crime and deviance.

Belief (the last of his four aspects of the social bond) sets Hirschi’s control theory apart from subcultural approaches because

GTC holds that crime is a natural consequence of unrestrained human tendencies to seek pleasure and avoid pain.

“control theory assumes the existence of a common value system within the society or group whose norms are being violated. We not only assume the deviant has believed the rules [but also] assume he

believes the rules even as he violates them.”<sup>37</sup> How can a person simultaneously believe it is wrong to commit a crime and still commit it? Hirschi’s answer would be that “many persons do not have an attitude of respect toward the rules of society.”<sup>38</sup> Although they know the rules exist, they basically do not care and invest little of their sense of self in moral standards.

### The General Theory of Crime

In 1990, **Michael Gottfredson**, in collaboration with Hirschi, proposed a **general theory of crime (GTC)** based on the concepts advanced earlier in control theory.<sup>39</sup> “Gottfredson and Hirschi’s general theory of crime claims to be general, in part, due to its assertion that the operation of a single mechanism, low self-control, accounts for ‘all crime, at all times’; acts ranging from vandalism to homicide, from rape to white-collar-crime.”<sup>40</sup> Gottfredson and Hirschi defined self-control as the degree to which a person is vulnerable to temptations of the moment.<sup>41</sup> They proposed that self-control is acquired early in life and that low self-control combined with impulsivity is the premier individual-level cause of crime. It develops by the end of childhood and is fostered through parental emotional investment in the child, monitoring the child’s behavior, recognizing deviance when it occurs, and punishing the child.

Gottfredson and Hirschi thought that it was important to ask, “What is crime?” Because nearly all crimes are mundane, simple, trivial, easy acts aimed at satisfying desires of the moment, their general theory is built on a classical or rational choice perspective—the belief that crime is a natural consequence of unrestrained human tendencies to seek pleasure and avoid pain. They concluded that crime is little more than a subset of general deviant behavior and bears little resemblance to the explanations offered in the media, by law enforcement officials, or by most academic thinkers on the subject.

According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, the offender is neither the diabolical genius of fiction nor the ambitious seeker of the American Dream often portrayed by other social scientists. Offenders appear to have little control over their own desires, so when personal desires conflict with long-term interests, those who lack self-control often opt for the desires of the moment, thus contravening legal restrictions and becoming involved in crime.<sup>42</sup>

Central to Gottfredson and Hirschi’s thesis is the belief that a well-developed social bond will result in the creation of effective mechanisms of self-control. “For Gottfredson and Hirschi, self-control is the key concept in the explanation of all forms of crime as well as other types of behavior. Indeed, they believe

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Steve Rubini/The Image Works



**An example of a social bond forming early in life.** What might this child be learning?

that all current differences in rates of crime between groups and categories may be explained by differences in the management of self-control.”<sup>43</sup>

One recent Canadian study found that the effect of good parenting on the development of positive self-control was very strong, but that the role of factors such as household size and family structure also could make an important difference.<sup>44</sup> Families in which children lived with both biological parents seemed to be best at developing self-control in their children, whereas lower levels of self-control were found in single-parent families and in reconstituted families in which the parents had been divorced and remarried. The researchers concluded that “overall, regardless of family structure, it is evident that a nurturing, accepting family environment is positively associated with self-control.”<sup>45</sup>

Some researchers have called the argument that self-control develops early in childhood and persists over time the *stability thesis*. In research reported in 2006, Florida State University criminologists Carter Hay and Walter Forrest conducted a test of the stability thesis, finding moderately strong support for it.<sup>46</sup> Levels of self-control that developed early in childhood tended to persist, but not as strongly as the general theory of crime would suggest; 16% of the study population showed changes in levels of self-control over time, and those individuals demonstrating the greatest stability in self-control started at the highest levels.

More recent research appears to show that low self-control tends to lead to peer rejection and isolation—especially among

juveniles.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, young people with low self-control tend to associate with their deviant peers, meaning that those with low levels of self-control are essentially self-selected into groups of people who share their characteristics. Constance L. Chapple of the University of Nebraska explained that “the delinquent peer group may provide increased opportunities for crime or exert situational pushes towards delinquency” because of the lack of self-control that characterizes its members.<sup>48</sup>

Gottfredson and Hirschi rejected the notion that some people have an enduring propensity to commit crime or that any such propensity compels people to do so.<sup>49</sup> Crimes require “no special capabilities, needs, or motivation; they are, in this sense, available to everyone.”<sup>50</sup> However, some people have a tendency to ignore the long-term consequences of their behavior; they tend to be impulsive, reckless, and self-centered, and they often end up committing crime because of such tendencies.<sup>51</sup>

A meta-analysis (a summary analysis of other research) of 21 studies of self-control theory conducted by Travis Pratt and Francis Cullen in 2000 found considerable support for the thesis that lack of self-control plays a central role in crime and deviance.<sup>52</sup> Looking at various studies that explored self-control as a delinquency preventative—including those on self-reported juvenile delinquency, self-reported and projected crime and deviance among college students, adult criminal behavior, and official delinquency—Pratt and Cullen concluded that low self-control is “one of the strongest known correlates of crime.”

Carter Hay of Washington State University studied the role that parenting plays in the development of self-control and concluded that effective parenting can contribute to the development of self-control in children.<sup>53</sup> He pointed out that although Gottfredson and Hirschi recognized the importance of parenting in the development of self-control, they failed to adequately consider the nature of effective parenting, which must involve fair and nonphysical forms of discipline; harsh or unfair discipline did not appear to contribute to the development of children’s self-control. Hay stated, “The sort of discipline that teaches children to control their behavior is not simply that which consistently occurs in the wake of deviance; other factors may be consequential as well, including the extent to which discipline is perceived as fair and is not reliant on physical force.”<sup>54</sup>

In 2002, Karen L. Hayslett-McCall and Thomas J. Bernard of Pennsylvania State University proposed a new theory of disproportionate male offending that combined elements of Gottfredson and Hirschi’s theory of low self-control with ideas from attachment theory.<sup>55</sup> Hayslett-McCall and Bernard examined the strong relationship between gender and criminality (men are more likely than women to offend in almost all

■ **situational action theory (SAT)** A perspective on crime holding that criminal behavior is the result of human decision making based on personal morality when viewed within the context of the existing situation. SAT stresses the importance of moral interpretations over a person's ability to exercise self-control.

offense categories) and concluded that gender-based differences in offending are caused by disruptions in attachments to primary caregivers early in childhood and that such disruptions are more likely to occur in the lives of boys than girls because of cultural differences in the way boys are treated. Boys are held less, comforted less when they cry, and spoken to less than girls in their early years because of child-rearing patterns that are thoroughly ingrained in our culture—"boys disproportionately experience disruptions of early attachment and these disruptions are causally related to elements of what is often described as the masculine gender role." Low self-control among males, concluded Hayslett-McCall and Bernard, is the final result of gendered differences in attachment disruptions.

More recently, **Per-Olof H. Wikström** at the University of Cambridge proposed that self-control could best be analyzed as a situational concept rather than as an individual trait.<sup>56</sup> Wikström's **situational action theory (SAT)** suggests that an individual's ability to exercise self-control is an outcome of the interaction between his or her personal traits and the situation in which he or she is involved. SAT highlights the *situation* as the core unit of analysis and places emphasis on a person's sense of morality—which expresses itself when an individual is faced with a particular set of circumstances. In other words, Wikström proposes that acts of violence are essentially moral actions and that all such acts can be explained by a theory of moral action that takes into account both personal characteristics and the social setting.

SAT argues that there is no fundamental difference between people who follow or break moral rules in general and those who follow or break rules defined by the law as criminal. The basic causal processes that operate in both cases are the same, it says—but the decision-making process is one in which moral interpretations are more important than degree of self-control.<sup>57</sup>

SAT says that explaining human moral action, such as acts of violence, has to do ultimately with understanding the interplay between common moral rules of conduct, an individual actor's personal moral rules, and the actor's interpretation of how his or her moral rules apply to the situation at hand.<sup>58</sup> The theory suggests that the particulars of a given situation, in combination with an actor's understanding of moral rules, determines what is right or wrong for that individual and, consequently, what that person will do.

Deterrence is seen as the "main causal mechanism through which formal and informal social controls influence a person's moral actions." Deterrence is defined by Wikström as "the felt worry about or fear of consequences when considering breaking a moral rule or committing an act of crime." Motivation and frictions are other important concepts in SAT. Motivation is defined as goal-directed attention, in which people are tempted to fill desires and commitments, and will seek out

opportunities for fulfillment. Provocations, another important concept in SAT, can result from frictions, or unwanted interferences (i.e., verbal insults, physical interference), that arise in situation-specific circumstances.

For most people and in most circumstances, Wikström says that the decision as to whether or not to engage in acts of crime or deviance is not so much a question of a person's ability to exercise self-control, but rather a question of his or her morality. He argues that the ability to exercise self-control is only a relevant factor in crime causation in those situations where an individual actually deliberates about whether or not to engage in a criminal act. In his 2011 Presidential Address to the American Society of Criminology, Steven F. Messner applauded SAT, saying that it provided the "glimmer of a moral awakening in criminology."<sup>59</sup>

Although the general theory of crime is well accepted today as an explanation for many forms of criminality, some writers note that the most powerful predictors of crime can be found when individuals with low self-control encounter criminal opportunities. They point out that the context of self-control is an important determining factor. In 2010, for example, two German researchers found support for the belief that the interaction between self-control and criminal opportunities is more effective at explaining criminal behavior than self-control alone.<sup>60</sup> Other contextual variables have also been explored. In 2008, for example, a group of researchers reported finding that "diminished language skills" are predictive of low self-control, and that the link between language and self-control had both a genetic and environmental basis.<sup>61</sup>

A few years ago, Gregory M. Zimmerman and colleagues explored the "contextual viability" of the relationship between self-control and offending—in other words, the influence of things like neighborhood variables and economic conditions on self-control.<sup>62</sup> They expected to find that the relationship between self-control and crime would "be amplified in disadvantaged neighborhoods where, due to low social control, opportunities for crime are presumed to be in abundance." In order to test that idea, the researchers looked at data from 1,431 respondents across 41 neighborhoods in two Eastern European cities: one in Russia and the other in the Ukraine. Their findings showed that the morality of a neighborhood was more important than things like socioeconomic status (SES) and neighborhood opportunities for crime. Neighborhood morality was measured by examining the firmness of moral convictions within the community, using a set of questions that assessed the extent to which various acts would be morally acceptable to people living there. They found that the amount of crime in both rich and poor communities was primarily influenced by the strength of moral rules that characterized the community. The researchers explained their findings by noting that "the effects of neighborhood economic conditions are mediated, at

■ **control ratio** The amount of control to which a person is subject versus the amount of control that person exerts over others.

least in part, by community social processes.” The importance of their findings is to show that the relationship between self-control and crime may vary depending on the social context in which people find themselves.

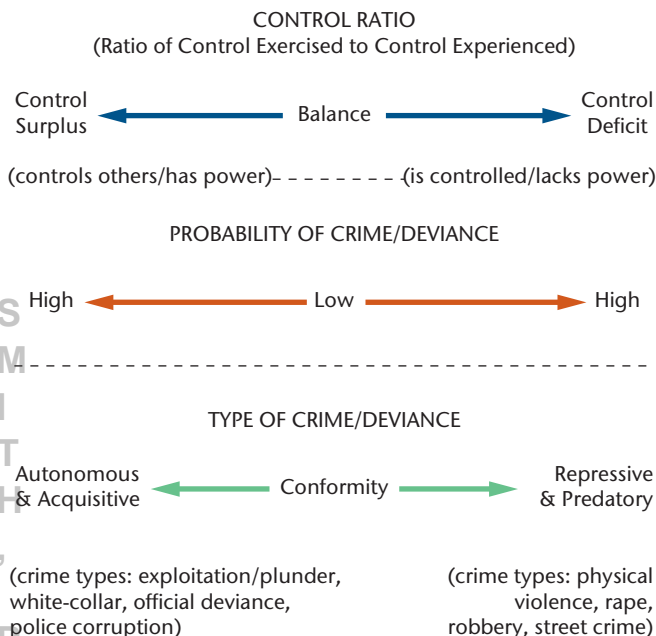
Extending that notion further still, a number of studies have considered the potential role of an individual’s expectation of an early death as it impacts self-control. Texas criminologist Alex R. Piquero, for example, found that a number of variables, including gender, race/ethnicity, and adverse neighborhood conditions, produce a “futureless” mindset among selected young people.<sup>63</sup> People who believe that they will not reach middle age because of their lifestyle, or because they are living in a dangerous or violent environment, may choose to exercise less self-control than those who believe that they will live longer—thus increasing their risk of offending. Piquero notes, however, that “The main message from the results is that an anticipated early death should not be considered deterministic but should instead be viewed as an opportunity for early prevention efforts and resiliency training where young children are taught that there are a variety of options even in the most constrained of circumstances.”

Finally, it should be noted that some recent studies have found at least a partial biological basis for social control and suggest that previous criminological research has largely ignored this relationship. In examining two waves of data from the Add Health database, Kevin Beaver and others found that about half of the variance observed in self-control could be attributed to genetic factors—specifically the interaction of genes and the social environment.<sup>64</sup>

### Control-Balance Theory

Traditional control theories posit that deviance and crime result from either weak social bonds or low levels of self-control, but a novel form of control theory can be found in the control-balance theory of Charles R. Tittle.<sup>65</sup> Tittle’s control-balance approach resulted from blending the social bond and containment perspectives, and he argued that too much control can be just as dangerous as too little. The crucial concept in Tittle’s approach is what he called the **control ratio**—the amount of control to which a person is subject versus the amount of control that person exerts over others—which predicts not only the probability that one will engage in deviance but also the specific form that deviance will take (Figure 8-4).

High levels of control (or overcontrol) are termed *control surplus*; low levels are called *control deficit*. Individuals with control surpluses are able to exercise a great deal of control over others and will work to extend their degree of control even further. Their efforts lead to deviant actions involving exploitation, plunder, and decadence—frequently seen in cases of white-collar crime and political corruption.<sup>66</sup> Tittle explained that control surpluses build on “the fundamental drive toward



**FIGURE 8-4 | Control-Balance Theory**

Source: Schmallegger, Frank, *Criminology*. Printed and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

autonomy,” which involves “a desire to extend control as far as possible” and results in forms of deviance that he called “autonomous.”<sup>67</sup>

A control deficit exists for people unable to exercise much control over others (and who are hence overly controlled) and results in deviance as an attempt to escape repressive controls. Deviance engendered by control deficit takes the form of predation (physical violence, theft, sexual assault, robbery), defiance (challenges to conventional norms, including vandalism, curfew violations, and sullenness), or submission (“passive, unthinking, slavish obedience to the expectations, commands, or anticipated desires of others”<sup>68</sup>). According to Tittle, control imbalance only sets the stage for deviance: Deviance ultimately occurs once a person realizes, at some level, that acts of deviance can reset the control ratio in a favorable way. Opportunity also plays a significant role in Tittle’s theory. “No matter how favorable the motivational and constraint configuration,” said Tittle, “the actual likelihood of deviance occurring depends on there being an opportunity for it to happen.”<sup>69</sup>

### Labeling Theory

In the early 1990s, James Hamm, a convicted murderer who had served 18 years for shooting a man in the head over a drug deal gone bad, found himself at the center of a vicious controversy. While in prison, Hamm had earned a bachelor’s degree

■ **tagging** The process whereby an individual is negatively defined by agencies of justice.

■ **primary deviance** The initial deviance often undertaken to deal with transient problems in living.

■ **secondary deviance** The deviant behavior that results from official labeling and from association with others who have been so labeled.

■ **labeling theory** An interactionist perspective that sees continued crime as a consequence of limited opportunities for acceptable behavior that follow from the negative responses of society to those defined as offenders; also called social reaction theory.

in sociology and had been active in Middle Ground Prison Reform, Inc., a prisoners' rights group. He was paroled after Arizona's parole board had judged him "rehabilitated" and was about to enter Arizona State University School of Law. Students at the university challenged his access to law school, saying that a convicted murderer did not deserve to be admitted. Mark Killian, (then) Arizona Republican house speaker, said, "There are a lot of hard-working young people out there who could not get into law school because he did."<sup>70</sup> Members of the Arizona Board of Regents, which runs the state's public universities, called for a review of policies admitting ex-convicts to the schools. Nonetheless, Hamm, who scored in the top 5% of all applicants taking the law school admissions test nationwide, was eventually admitted to law school and graduated in 1997. Following graduation, he passed the bar exam and applied to be allowed to practice law in Arizona, but the state's parole board refused to terminate his parole, leaving him ineligible to work as an attorney, so he went to work as a paralegal in the areas of criminal defense, civil rights, and appellate law.<sup>71</sup>

The case of James Hamm provides an example of how society's continued reaction to criminal behavior can change the course of an offender's life—even after he or she has paid his dues. Although there are plenty of ex-cons, there is no such thing as an "ex-ex-con" ("once a con, always a con"). Society seems to never forget. Society's response to known or suspected offenders is important not only because it determines the future of those who are labeled as criminals but also because it may contribute to a heightened incidence of criminality by reducing the behavioral options available to labeled offenders.

### Tagging

An early description of societal reaction to deviance can be found in the work of **Frank Tannenbaum**, whose 1938 book *Crime and the Community* popularized the term **tagging** to explain what happens to offenders following arrest, conviction, and sentencing. Tannenbaum told his readers that crime is essentially the result of two opposing views—those of the delinquent and those of the community at large. "This conflict over the situation is one that arises out of a divergence of values. As the problem develops, the situation gradually becomes redefined. The attitude of the community hardens definitely into a demand for suppression. There is a gradual shift from the definition of the specific acts as evil to a definition of the individual as evil, so that all his acts come to be looked upon with suspicion. From the community's point of view, the individual who used to do bad and mischievous things has now become a bad and

unredeemable human being . . . . There is a persistent demand for consistency in character. The community cannot deal with people whom it cannot define."<sup>72</sup>

After the process whereby an offender comes to be seen as ultimately and irrevocably bad has been completed, Tannenbaum said, the offender "now lives in a different world. He has been tagged. The process of making the criminal, therefore, is a process of tagging."<sup>73</sup> Once the offender has been defined as bad, he or she finds that few legitimate opportunities remain open and that only other people who have been similarly defined by society as bad are available to associate with him or her, and this continued association with negatively defined others leads to continued crime.

### Primary and Secondary Deviance

Using terminology developed by **Edwin M. Lemert**, it became fashionable to call an offender's initial acts of deviance **primary deviance** and his or her continued acts of deviance (especially those resulting from forced association with other offenders) **secondary deviance**. Primary deviance may be undertaken to solve some immediate problem or to meet the expectations of one's subcultural group. For example, the robbery of a convenience store by a college student temporarily desperate for tuition money may be the first serious criminal offense he or she has ever committed, and he or she may well intend for it to be the last, but if arrest ensues and the student is tagged with the status of a criminal, then secondary deviance may occur as a means of adjustment to the negative status. In Lemert's words, "When a person begins to employ his deviant behavior or a role based upon it as a means of defense, attack, or adjustment to the overt and covert problems created by the consequent societal reaction to him, his deviation is secondary."<sup>74</sup>

Secondary deviance is especially important due to the forceful role it plays in causing tagged individuals both to internalize the negative labels applied to them and to assume the role of the deviant. According to Lemert, "Objective evidences of this change will be found in the symbolic appurtenances of the new role, in clothes, speech, posture, and mannerisms, which in some cases heighten social visibility, and which in some cases serve as symbolic cues to professionalization."<sup>75</sup>

### Labeling

The person most often associated with labeling theory is **Howard Becker**, who published *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, the work in which the perspective of **labeling theory** (the idea that society's response to the criminal and the process through

■ **moral enterprise** The efforts made by an interest group to have its sense of moral or ethical propriety enacted into law.

Becker said that society creates both deviance and the deviant person by responding negatively to circumscribed behaviors.

which a person comes to be defined as a criminal and labeled “criminal” are significant contributory factors in future criminality) found its fullest development.<sup>76</sup> In *Outsiders*, Becker described the deviant subculture in which jazz musicians live and the process by which an individual becomes a marijuana user, but his primary focus was explaining how a person becomes labeled as an outsider, as “a special kind of person, one who cannot be trusted to live by the rules agreed on by the group.”<sup>77</sup> The central fact is that society creates both deviance and the deviant person by responding to circumscribed behaviors. In Becker’s words, “Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions. The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied.”<sup>78</sup> For Becker and other labeling theorists, no act is intrinsically deviant or criminal but must be defined as such by others; becoming deviant involves a sequence of steps that eventually leads to commitment to a deviant identity and participation in a deviant career.

In developing labeling theory, Becker attempted to explain how some rules carry the force of law whereas others have less weight or apply only within the context of marginal subcultures. His explanation centered on the concept of **moral enterprise**, meaning all the efforts a particular interest group makes to have its sense of propriety embodied in law. “Rules are the products of someone’s initiative, and we can think of the people who exhibit such enterprise as moral entrepreneurs.”<sup>79</sup>

An early example of moral enterprise can be found in the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), a group devoted to the prohibition of alcohol. From 1881 to 1919, the WCTU was highly visible in its nationwide fight against alcohol—holding marches and demonstrations, closing drinking establishments, and lobbying legislators. Press coverage of the WCTU’s activities swayed many politicians into believing that the lawful prohibition of alcoholic beverages was inevitable, and an amendment to the U.S. Constitution soon followed, ushering in the age of prohibition.

A more contemporary example of moral enterprise is NORML—the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. NORML says that its mission is “to move public opinion sufficiently to achieve the repeal of marijuana

prohibition so that the responsible use of cannabis by adults is no longer subject to penalty.”<sup>80</sup> Other recent examples of moral entrepreneurs can be found in those individuals and organizations that lobbied for the creation of Amber Alert systems and the passage of Megan’s Laws (which authorize local law enforcement agencies to notify the public about convicted sex offenders living or working nearby) following the abduction and murder of young girls.

Moral enterprise is used, Becker claimed, by groups seeking to support their own interests with the weight of law. Often the group that is successful at moral enterprise does not represent a popular point of view. The group is simply more effective than others at maneuvering through the formal bureaucracy that accompanies legislation.

Becker was especially interested in describing deviant careers and the processes by which individuals become members of deviant subcultures and take on the attributes associated with the deviant role. Becker argued that most deviance is likely to be transitory but that transitory deviance can be effectively stabilized in a person’s behavioral repertoire through the labeling process. Once a person is labeled deviant, opportunities for conforming behavior are seriously reduced and behavioral opportunities that remain open are primarily deviant ones; the budding deviant increasingly exhibits deviant behavior because his or her choices are restricted by society. Successful deviants must acquire the techniques and resources necessary to undertake the deviant act (drug use, bank robbery) and develop the mind-set characteristic of others like them. Near the end of a deviant career, the person labeled a deviant has internalized society’s negative label, has assumed a deviant self-concept, and is likely a member of a deviant subgroup. “A drug addict once told me that the moment she felt she was really ‘hooked’ was when she realized she no longer had any friends who were not drug addicts.”<sup>81</sup> In this way, explained Becker, deviance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, so labeling is a cause of crime insofar as the actions of society in defining the rule breaker as deviant push the person further in the direction of continued deviance.

### Contributions of Labeling Theory

Labeling theory contributed a number of unique ideas to criminological literature:

- Deviance is the result of social processes involving the imposition of definitions rather than the consequence of any quality inherent in human activity itself.
- Deviant individuals achieve their status by virtue of social definition rather than inborn traits.
- The reaction of society to deviant behavior and to those who engage in such behavior is the major element in

determining the criminality of the behavior and the person in question.

- Negative self-images follow processing by the formal criminal justice system rather than precede delinquency.
- Labeling by society and handling by the justice system tend to perpetuate crime and delinquency rather than reduce them.

Becker's typology of delinquents—the pure deviant, the falsely accused deviant, and the secret deviant—helped explain the labeling approach (Figure 8–5). The pure deviant is one who commits norm-breaking behavior and is accurately appraised by society, who is tried and convicted, and who gets what he or she deserves. The falsely accused individual is one who is not guilty but is labeled deviant nonetheless, who experiences the impact of conviction and of the experiences that attend prison life, and who is left with a negative self-concept and with group associations practically indistinguishable from those of a true deviant. This person demonstrates the power of social definition—the life of the falsely accused is changed just as thoroughly as the life of the pure deviant by the process of labeling. The secret deviant violates social norms, but his or her behavior is not noticed, so negative societal reactions do not follow; a secret deviant again demonstrates the power of societal reaction, but in this case by the lack of consequences.

Although labeling theory fell into disregard during the late 1970s and early 1980s due to accusations that it was vague and ambiguous, some criminologists have recast the approach as a developmental theory of structural disadvantage.<sup>82</sup> The theory is now seen as one that points out the cumulative effects over time of official intervention on future life chances and opportunities for approved success. Robert J. Sampson and John H. Laub observed that labeling theory is “truly developmental in nature because of its explicit emphasis on processes over time.”<sup>83</sup> Contemporary proponents of the labeling perspective generally see labeling as only one factor contributing to cumulative disadvantages in life chances. In 2003, Jon Gunnar Bernburg and Marvin D. Krohn studied the impact of negative official interventions on young men in Rochester, New York, from the time they were about 13.5 years old until they reached the age of 22. In keeping with what labeling theory would predict, Bernburg and Krohn found

that official intervention during adolescence led to increased criminality in early adulthood because it reduced life chances for educational achievement and successful employment and that poor people were more negatively impacted by official processing, probably because they were already disadvantaged along other important social dimensions.<sup>84</sup>

Negative labels can carry significant visible liabilities as well as hidden ones. A 2004 study by the Legal Action Center, a crime and justice policy group, found that all 50 states have laws that hamper the ability of former offenders to re-enter society.<sup>85</sup> Four states—Colorado, Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia—were rated as places where ex-offenders have the least chance to become productive citizens. According to the center, many states prohibit ex-offenders from obtaining professional licenses to work in businesses as diverse as real estate, medicine, and law; 27 states, in keeping with a requirement imposed by Congress on states seeking federal highway funds, revoke or refuse to issue driver's licenses to former drug felons, effectively prohibiting access to many job sites.

Mike S. Adams proposed a general sociological learning theory of crime and deviance that incorporated components of labeling theory and differential association.<sup>86</sup> Adams contended that “labeling effects are mediated by associations with delinquent peers,” concluding that labeling is not a direct cause of delinquency and crime but “appears to cause delinquency indirectly via the effects of associations with delinquent peer groups” and that “the causal chain linking primary to secondary deviance must incorporate links that account for the effects of associations with delinquent [peers].”<sup>87</sup>

In 2013, Emily Restivo and her colleague Mark M. Lanier reported the results of a three-year study in which they randomly examined 677 juveniles selected from the Children at



**FIGURE 8-5** | Becker's Types of Delinquents

Source: Schmallegger, Frank, *Criminology*. Printed and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

■ **reintegrative shaming** A form of shaming, imposed as a sanction by the criminal justice system, that is thought to strengthen the moral bond between the offender and the community.

■ **stigmatic shaming** A form of shaming, imposed as a sanction by the criminal justice system, that is thought to destroy the moral bond between the offender and the community.

Risk study. They found that official intervention by the criminal justice system in the lives of those juveniles led to “an increased delinquent self-identity, decreased pro-social expectations, and an increased association with delinquent peers.”<sup>88</sup> Further, those features were found to contribute to an increased likelihood of future offending. An important strength of labeling theory is that it is dynamic because it allows for changes in self-perception over time that may have important impacts on an individual’s behavior. In 2014, criminologists Michael Rocque, Chad Posick, and Ray Paternoster studied the role of evolving identity in the desistance process using data derived from the Rutgers Health and Human Development Project (HHDP).<sup>89</sup> They found that positive changes in self-identity over time can lead to enhanced desistance to crime and increased resistance to the attractions of crime. The researchers termed their perspective an “identity desistance theory,” and said that it clearly demonstrated the role of adult social bonds and identity change in the desistance process over time. Learn more about labeling theory at **Web Extra 8–1**, and read about the post-prison consequences of a criminal label at **Library Extra 8–3**.



**Minor offenders in Hillsborough County, Florida**, performing court-ordered duties in public view. Some people believe that shaming can be an effective rehabilitative tool. What different kinds of shaming can you identify?

## Reintegrative Shaming

In a contemporary offshoot of labeling theory, **John Braithwaite** and colleagues at the Australian National University (ANU) reported initial results of studies in 1997 on **reintegrative shaming**, which describes processes by which a deviant is labeled and sanctioned but then is brought back into a community of conformity through words, gestures, or rituals.<sup>90</sup>

Called RISE (for Reintegrative Shaming Experiments), the project assessed the efficacy of each approach using several criteria: (1) prevalence and frequency of repeat offending, (2) victim satisfaction with the process, (3) estimated cost savings within the justice process, (4) changes in drinking or drug use among offenders, and (5) perceptions of procedural justice, fairness, and protection of rights.<sup>91</sup>

At the core of the study was Braithwaite’s belief that two different kinds of shame exist. **Stigmatic shaming** is thought to destroy the moral bond between the offender and the community, whereas reintegrative shaming is thought to strengthen the moral bond between the offender and the community. According to Braithwaite and co-author Heather Strang, “Stigmatic shaming is what American judges employ when they make an offender post a sign on his property saying ‘a violent felon lives here,’ or a bumper sticker on his car saying ‘I am a drunk driver.’ Stigmatic shaming sets the offender apart as an outcast—often for the rest of

the offender’s life. By labeling him or her as someone who cannot be trusted to obey the law, stigmatic shaming says the offender is expected to commit more crimes.”<sup>92</sup>

1 Their alternative to stigmatic humiliation is “to condemn the crime, not the criminal.”<sup>93</sup> Through carefully monitored diversionary conferences, Braithwaite and Strang hoped to give offenders the opportunity to rejoin the community as law-abiding citizens, but to earn the right to a fresh start, offenders must express remorse for their past conduct, apologize to any victims, and repair the harm caused by the crime.

S Preliminary results from the RISE studies supported the claimed value of reintegrative shaming, but most of these results have been measured using interviews with offenders following diversionary conferences and consist primarily of anecdotal evidence based on the reported feelings of respondents. These findings showed that offenders are far more likely to feel ashamed of their crimes if they are handled through conferences rather than through formal court processing, and that both offenders and victims find conferences fairer than official court proceedings. Learn more

ZUMA Press/Newscom



- **dramaturgical perspective** A theoretical point of view that depicts human behavior as centered around the purposeful management of interpersonal impressions.
- **impression management** The intentional enactment of practiced behavior that is intended to convey to others one’s desirable personal characteristics and social qualities.

- **discrediting information** Any information that is inconsistent with the managed impressions being communicated in a given situation.
- **total institution** A facility from which individuals can rarely come and go and in which communal life is intense and circumscribed. Individuals in total institutions tend to eat, sleep, play, learn, and worship together.

about reintegrative shaming experiments at **Web Extra 8–2S** and **Library Extras 8–4** and **8–5**.

## Dramaturgical Perspective

Another social process approach to the study of criminology can be found in the work of **Erving Goffman** in his 1959 book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which introduced students of criminology to dramaturgy.<sup>94</sup> The **dramaturgical perspective** says that individuals play a variety of nearly simultaneous social roles—such as mother, teacher, daughter, wife, and part-time real estate agent—and that such roles must be sustained in interactions with others. Goffman argued that social actors present themselves more or less effectively when acting out a particular role and that role performances basically consist of managed impressions. Criminals, through a similar process of managed impressions and by the fear engendered in their victims, may likewise achieve cooperation.

**Impression management**, according to Goffman, is a complex process involving a never-ending give-and-take of information. When it has been successful, said Goffman, dramatic realization has occurred: “Together, the participants contribute to a single overall definition of the situation which involves not so much a real agreement as to what exists but rather a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honored.”<sup>95</sup>

Deviant behavior finds its place in the dramaturgical perspective through the concept of discreditable disclosure. Some actors, said Goffman, may find themselves targeted by the introduction of **discrediting information**, information they have sought to hide that is inconsistent with managed impressions. The flow of interaction is then disrupted and the nature of the performance may be altered substantially.

Goffman’s work takes on considerable relevance for criminology in his later writings, especially his book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, in which he advanced the notion that discredited or stigmatized individuals differ significantly from “normals” in the way that society responds to them.<sup>96</sup> By definition, he said that “we believe that a person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption, we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively,

if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma-theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents. We tend to impute a wide range of imperfections on the basis of the original one.”<sup>97</sup> A stigma may be physical (birthmarks), behavioral (theft), or ideational (low rank in the pecking order).

In *Stigma*, Goffman was primarily concerned with how “normals” and stigmatized individuals interact. At times, discredited individuals are known to others before they come in contact with them, and when that happens, normal people approach the stigmatized ones with expectations of encountering further stigmatizing behavior. When discrediting information does not precede interpersonal encounters, the stigmatized individuals may attempt to pass as normal by using various techniques of concealment, including aliases and misrepresentation.

According to Goffman, societal reactions, although they may forcibly create social identities, are also instrumental in the formation of group identities. When similarly discredited individuals come together in like-minded groups, they may align themselves against the larger society; in so reacting, they may justify their own deviant or criminal behavior. At the conclusion of *Stigma*, Goffman reminded us, “The normal and the stigmatized are not persons, but rather perspectives. These are generated in social situations during mixed contacts by virtue of the unrealized norms that are likely to play upon the encounter.”<sup>98</sup>

In his book titled *Asylums*, Goffman described **total institutions**—facilities from which individuals can rarely come and go and in which communal life is intense and circumscribed.<sup>99</sup> Individuals in total institutions tend to eat, sleep, play, learn, and worship together; military camps, seminaries, convents, prisons, rest homes, and mental hospitals are all types of total institutions. Goffman believed that residents of total institutions bring “presenting cultures” with them to their respective facilities, so some inmates would carry street culture into correctional facilities. However, residents undergo a period of “disculturation,” during which they drop aspects of their native culture that are not consistent with existing institutional culture—a culture that they must acquire. Read about jails as total institutions at Library Extra 8–6.

■ **prosocial bond** A bond between the individual and the social group that strengthens the likelihood of conformity. Prosocial bonds are characterized by attachment to conventional social institutions, values, and beliefs.

## Policy Implications of Social Process Theories

Social process theories suggest that crime-prevention programs should work to enhance self-control and to build **prosocial bonds** (bonds that strengthen conformity). One program that seeks to build strong prosocial bonds while attempting to teach positive values to young people is the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), funded by Congress in 1992 under an amendment to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974.<sup>100</sup> JUMP programs, commencing in 1996, place at-risk youths (those at risk of delinquency, gang involvement, educational failure, or dropping out of school) in a one-on-one relationship with favorable adult role models.

The most recent data showed that 9,200 youths (average age just under 12) enrolled in more than 200 JUMP programs nationwide. Based on evaluation data, both youths and mentors were very positive when rating various aspects of their mentoring experiences.<sup>101</sup> Learn more about JUMP at **Library Extra 8-7**.

Another social control-based program is Preparing for the Drug Free Years (PDFY), designed to increase effective parenting as part of the Strengthening America's Families Project.<sup>102</sup>

PDFY works with parents of children in grades four to eight in an effort to reduce drug abuse and behavioral problems in adolescents, seeks to teach effective parenting skills as a way to decrease the risks that juveniles face, and incorporates both behavioral skills training and communication-centered approaches into parent training. Through a series of ten one-hour sessions, parents learn to (1) increase their children's opportunities for family involvement, (2) teach needed family participation and social skills, and (3) provide reinforcement for positive behavior and appropriate consequences for misbehavior. Early studies showed that program participation (session attendance) tends to be high and that the program is effective at improving general child-management skills among parents.<sup>103</sup> Learn more about PDFY at **Web Extra 8-3**.

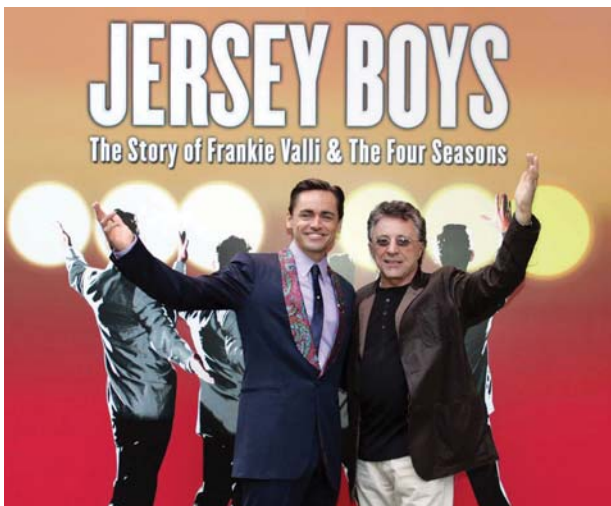
A program emphasizing the development of self-control is the Montreal Preventive Treatment Program, which addresses early-childhood risk factors for gang involvement by targeting boys from poor socioeconomic backgrounds who display disruptive behavior while in kindergarten.<sup>104</sup> The program offers training sessions for parents designed to teach family crisis management, disciplining techniques, and other parenting skills while the boys participate in training sessions emphasizing the development of prosocial skills and self-control. At least one evaluation of the program showed that it was effective at keeping boys from joining gangs.<sup>105</sup>

## Critique of Social Process Theories

Criticisms of social process theories are many and varied. Perhaps the most potent criticism of association theory is the claim that Sutherland's initial formulation of differential association is not applicable at the individual level because even people who experience an excess of definitions favorable to law violation may still not become criminal and those who rarely associate with recognized deviants may still turn to crime. Also, the theory is untestable because most people experience a multitude of definitions—both favorable and unfavorable to law violation—and it is up to them to interpret what those experiences mean, so classifying experiences as either favorable or unfavorable to crime commission is difficult at best.

Other critics suggest that differential association alone is not a sufficient explanation for crime. In effect, association theory does not seem to provide for free choice in individual circumstances, nor does it explain why some

The labeling approach does little to explain the origin of crime and deviance.



**A scene from the Broadway musical *Jersey Boys*.** Some criminologists suggest that people, like actors on a stage, intentionally present themselves to others in ways calculated to produce predictable social responses. How might criminals manipulate impressions?

■ **human development** The relationship between the maturing individual and his or her changing environment, as well as the social processes that the relationship entails.

■ **social development perspective** An integrated view of human development that examines multiple maturational levels, including psychological, biological, familial, interpersonal, cultural, societal, and ecological, simultaneously.



chromatika/Fotolia

**A baby holds on to a spoon.** What concepts are key to the social development approach?

individuals, even when surrounded by associates committed to lives of crime, are still able to hold on to noncriminal values. Biosocial theorists John Paul Wright and Kevin M. Beaver, for example, suggest that there is a substantial genetic component to self-control and that impulsivity may be at least partially based in biology.<sup>106</sup> Finally, association theory fails to account for the emergence of criminal values, addressing only the communication of those values.

Although the labeling approach successfully points to the labeling process as a reason for continued deviance and as a cause of stabilization in deviant identities, it does little to explain the origin of crime and deviance, and few studies seem to support the basic tenets of the theory. Critics of labeling have pointed to its “lack of firm empirical support for the notion of secondary deviance, [and] many studies have not found that delinquents or criminals have a delinquent or criminal self-image.”<sup>107</sup> There is also a lack of empirical support for the claim that contact with the justice system is fundamentally detrimental to the personal lives of criminal perpetrators, but even if that were true, one must ask whether it would ultimately be better if offenders were not caught and forced to undergo the rigors of processing by the justice system. Although labeling theory hints that official processing makes a significant contribution to continued criminality, it seems unreasonable to expect that offenders untouched by the system would forgo the rewards of future criminality. Finally, labeling theory has little to say about secret deviants (people who engage in criminality but are never

caught). Can they be expected to continue in lives of deviance if never caught?

Goffman’s work has been criticized as providing a set of “linked concepts” rather than a consistent theoretical framework.<sup>108</sup> Other critics have faulted Goffman for failing to offer suggestions for institutional change or for not proposing treatment modalities based on his assumptions. Goffman’s greatest failing may be taking the analogy of the theater too far and convincing readers that real life is but a form of playacting; according to George Psathas, “Performing and being are not identical.”<sup>109</sup>

## The Social Development Perspective

Over the past 25 years, an appreciation for the process of **human development** (the relationship between the maturing individual and his or her changing environment and the social processes that relationship entails) has played an increasingly important role in understanding criminality.<sup>110</sup> Students of human development recognize that the process of development occurs through reciprocal dynamic interactions that take place between individuals and various aspects of their environment, and the social development perspective posits that development, which begins at birth (and perhaps even earlier), occurs primarily within a social context. Unlike social learning theory (discussed earlier in this chapter), social development sees socialization as only one feature of that context. If socialization were the primary determinant of criminality, then we might expect that all problem children would become criminals as adults, but because that doesn’t happen, there must be other aspects to the developmental process that social learning theories don’t fully cover.

According to the **social development perspective**, human development simultaneously occurs on many levels—psychological, biological, familial, interpersonal, cultural, societal, and ecological—so social development theories tend to be integrated theories combining various points of view. The rest of this chapter describes life course criminology, the major social development perspective; various ideas contributing to the life course perspective, along with other perspectives on social development, are also described. You can learn more about such perspectives at **Web Extra 8–4**.

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# Concepts in Social Development Theories

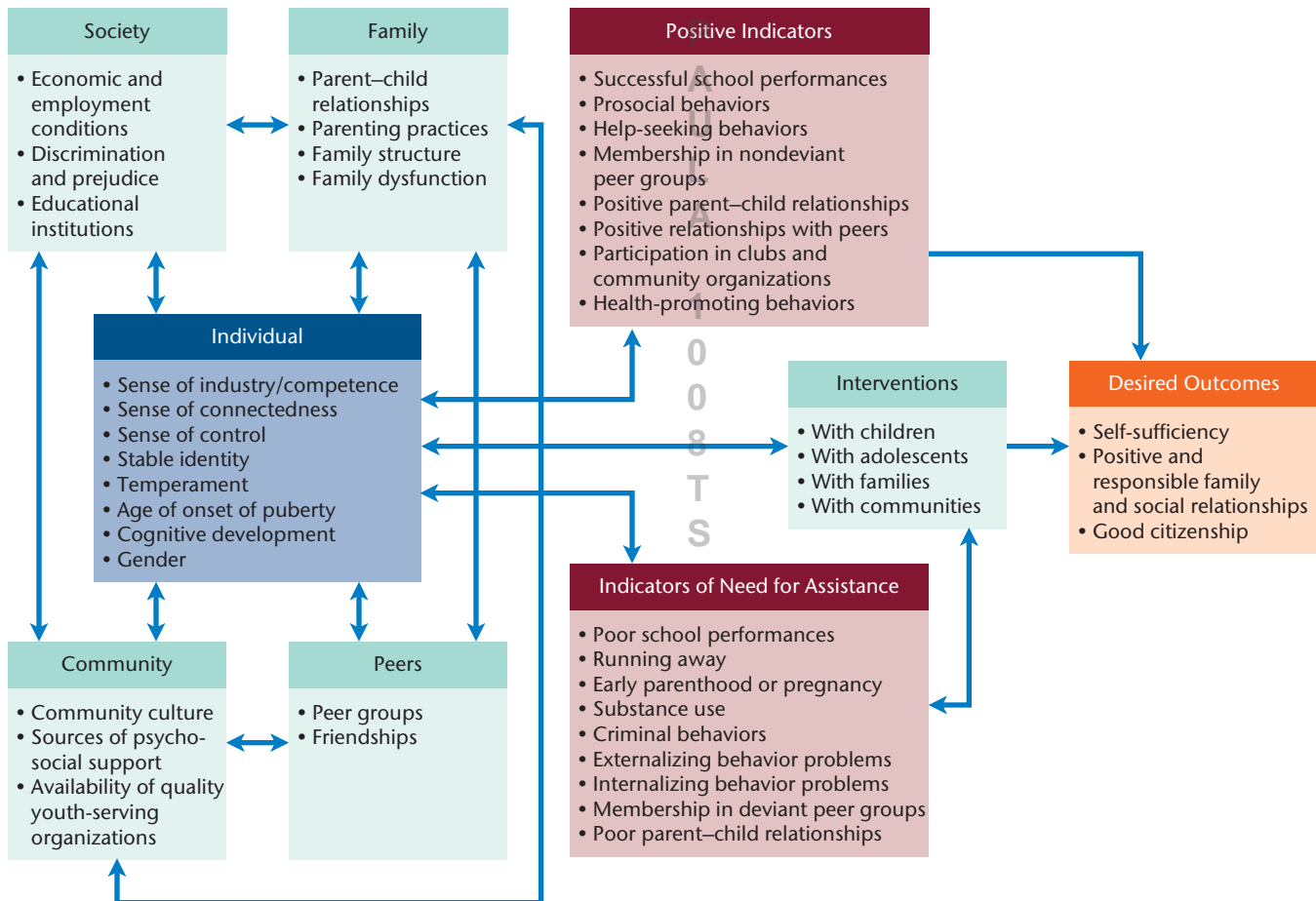
Most sociological explanations for crime involve the study of groups and the identification of differences among groups of offenders, but social development theories focus more on individual rates of offending and seek to understand both increases and decreases in rates of offending over the individual's lifetime. Social development theories generally employ longitudinal (over time) measurements of delinquency and offending, and they pay special attention to the transitions that people face as they move through the life cycle.

Most theories of social development recognize that a critical transitional period occurs as a person moves from childhood to adulthood, and life course theorists have identified at least seven developmental tasks that American adolescents must confront:

- (1) establishing identity, (2) cultivating symbiotic relationships, (3) defining physical attractiveness, (4) investing in a value system, (5) obtaining an education, (6) separating from family and achieving independence, and (7) obtaining and maintaining gainful employment.<sup>111</sup> Youths are confronted with many obstacles or risks in their attempts to resolve these issues as they work to make a successful transition to adulthood. Figure 8–6 provides a conceptual model of the developmental processes that a maturing youth experiences during adolescence. Learn more about the transitional process leading to adulthood at **Web Extra 8–5**.

## The Life Course Perspective

Traditional explanations for crime and delinquency often lack a developmental perspective because they generally ignore developmental changes throughout the life course and frequently fail to



**FIGURE 8–6** | A Conceptual Model of Adolescent Development

Source: Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

- **life course perspective** A perspective that draws attention to the fact that criminal behavior tends to follow a distinct pattern across the life cycle; also called life course criminology.
- **criminal career** The longitudinal sequence of crimes committed by an individual offender.

■ **life course** The different pathways through the age-differentiated life span; the course of a person's life over time.

Developmental theories draw attention to the fact that criminal behavior tends to follow a distinct pattern across the life cycle.

distinguish between different phases of criminal careers.<sup>112</sup> By contrast, developmental theories draw attention to the fact that criminal behavior tends to follow a distinct pattern across the life cycle: Criminality is relatively uncommon during childhood, tends to begin as sporadic instances of delinquency during late adolescence and early adulthood, and then diminishes and sometimes completely disappears from a person's behavioral repertoire by age 30 or 40. Of course, some people never commit crimes or do so only rarely, whereas others become career criminals and persist in lives of crime.

The **life course perspective** (also called *life course criminology*) shifted the traditional focus away from the reasons why people begin offending to questions about what the dimensions of criminal offending are over the entire life course.<sup>113</sup> It has its roots in a 1986 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel report prepared by Alfred Blumstein, Jacqueline Cohen, Jeffrey Roth, and Christy Visher that emphasized the importance of the study of criminal careers and of crime over the life course.<sup>114</sup> The NAS panel defined a **criminal career** as “the longitudinal sequence of crimes committed by an individual offender.”<sup>115</sup> The report was especially important for its analysis of “offending development,” a concept that underlies the life course perspective (see the Theory in Perspective box).

The panel noted (Figure 8–7) that criminal careers can be described in terms of four dimensions: participation, frequency, duration, and seriousness. *Participation*, which refers to the fraction of a population that is criminally active, depends on the scope of criminal acts considered and the length of the observation period.<sup>116</sup> *Frequency* refers to the number of crimes committed by an individual offender per unit of time. Hence, a burglar who commits one burglary a year has a much lower frequency than one who is active monthly or weekly. Frequency is generally not constant and varies over the life course—even for habitual offenders. *Duration* refers to the length of the criminal career. A criminal career can be very short, consisting of

only one offense, or it can be quite long, as in the case of habitual or chronic criminals. *Seriousness* is relatively self-explanatory, although it is worthwhile to note that some offenders with long criminal careers commit only petty crimes, whereas others are serious habitual offenders, and still others commit offenses with a mixed degree of seriousness.

Life course criminology was given its name in a seminal book written by **Robert J. Sampson** and **John H. Laub** in 1993, entitled *Crime in the Making*.<sup>117</sup> Earlier, the concept of **life course** had been defined as “pathways through the life span involving a sequence of culturally defined, age-graded roles and social transitions enacted over time.”<sup>118</sup> Life course theories, which build on social learning and social control principles, recognize that criminal careers may develop as the result of various criminogenic influences that affect individuals over the course of their lives.

Researchers who focus on the life course as it leads to delinquency, crime, and criminal identities are interested both in evaluating the prevalence, frequency, and onset of offending and in identifying different developmental pathways to delinquency. Life course researchers ask a variety of questions: How do early-childhood characteristics (e.g., antisocial behavior) lead to adult behavioral processes and outcomes? How do life transitions (e.g., shifts in relationships from parents to peers, transitions from same-sex peers to opposite-sex peers, moves from school to work, marriage, divorce) influence behavior and behavioral choices? How do offending and victimization interact over the life cycle?<sup>119</sup>

Life course researchers examine “trajectories and transitions through the age-differentiated life span.”<sup>120</sup> According to Sampson and Laub, “Trajectories refer to longer-term patterns and sequences of behavior, whereas transitions are marked by specific life events (e.g., first job or the onset of crime) that are embedded in trajectories and evolve over shorter time spans.”<sup>121</sup> The concept of age differentiation (or age grading) recognizes the fact that certain forms of behavior and some experiences are more appropriate (in terms of their social consequences) in certain parts of the life cycle than in others. Life course theorists search for evidence of continuity between childhood or adolescent experiences and adult outcomes or lifestyles.

Three sets of dynamic concepts are important to the life course perspective: (1) activation, (2) aggravation, and (3) desistance.<sup>122</sup> *Activation*, the way that delinquent behaviors are stimulated and



**FIGURE 8-7** | Aspects of Criminal Careers

Source: Schmallegger, Frank, *Criminology*. Printed and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

## THEORY | in PERSPECTIVE

### Social Development Theories

Social development theories are integrated theories of human development that simultaneously examine many different levels of development—psychological, biological, familial, interpersonal, cultural, societal, and ecological.

#### Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective highlights the development of criminal careers, which are seen as the result of various criminogenic influences that affect individuals throughout the course of their lives.

The life course perspective highlights the development of criminal careers.

the processes by which the continuity, frequency, and diversity of delinquency are shaped, comes in three types: (1) acceleration (increased frequency of offending over time), (2) stabilization (increased continuity over time), and (3) diversification (propensity of individuals to become involved in more diverse delinquent activities). *Aggravation*, the second dynamic process, refers to the existence of a developmental sequence of activities that escalates or increases in seriousness over time. *Desistance*, the third process, which is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, describes a slowing down in the frequency of offending (deceleration), a reduction in its variety (specialization), or a reduction in its seriousness (de-escalation).<sup>123</sup>

Another central organizing principle of life course theories is linked lives, a concept meaning that human lives “are typically embedded in social relationships with kin and friends across the life span”;<sup>124</sup> these relationships exercise considerable influence on the life course of most people.

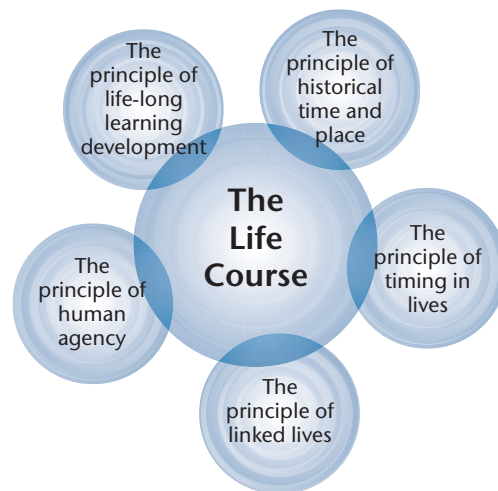
Glen H. Elder, Jr., has identified five important life course principles (Figure 8–8) that provide a concise summary of life course theory.<sup>125</sup>

1. The principle of historical time and place. The life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over their lifetime. Hence, children born in the United States during the Great Depression or in Nazi Germany during World War II were no doubt strongly influenced by the conditions around them. Similarly, surviving children whose parents were lost in the Holocaust experienced trajectories in their life course that probably would have been far different had they been born in a different place or at a different time.

**Period:** 1980s–present

**Theorists:** Alfred Blumstein, John H. Laub, Robert J. Sampson, David P. Farrington, Donald J. West, Lawrence E. Cohen, Richard Machalek, Terence Thornberry

**Concepts:** Criminal career, life course, trajectory, turning points, age grading, social capital, human agency, developmental pathways, life course persists, persistence, desistance, resilience, cohort, cohort analysis, longitudinal research, evolutionary ecology



**FIGURE 8-8 | Five Important Life Course Principles**

Source: Schmallegger, Frank, *Criminology*. Printed and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

2. The principle of timing in lives. The developmental impact of a succession of life transitions or events is contingent on when they occur in a person’s life. Early marriage, for example, or childbearing at an early age can significantly influence the course of people’s lives through the long-term consequences of such events. People who start families early may find themselves excluded from further schooling by the demands of parenthood, and those who leave home and marry at an early age may find that parental financial support is not as readily available to them as it might have been if they had continued to live at home.
3. The principle of linked lives. Lives are lived interdependently, and social and historical influences are expressed through a network of shared relationships. If a child or a spouse develops a serious illness, for example, the lives of

■ **human agency** The active role that people take in their lives; the fact that people are not merely subject to social and structural constraints but actively make choices and decisions based on the alternatives they see before them.

■ **Turning point** Crucial life-experiences that can change behavior.

other family members are likely to be affected. Caring for an ill family member is emotionally and financially costly, and it takes time. Because of such costs, opportunities that might have been otherwise available are likely to be lost.

4. The principle of **human agency**. Human agency refers to the fact that individuals construct their own life course through the choices they make and the actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances. The example that Elder gives is of hard-pressed Depression-era parents who “moved their residence to cheaper quarters and sought alternative forms of income.” In making such choices, they were involved in the process of building a new life course.
5. The principle of life-long learning development. Learning is not limited to youth, and individuals continue to acquire knowledge from the experiences they have at every stage in the life course.

Life course theories are supported by research dating back over three-quarters of a century. During the 1920s and 1930s, **Sheldon Glueck** and **Eleanor Glueck** studied the life cycles and careers of 500 nondelinquent and 500 known delinquent boys and another 500 girls in an effort to identify the causes of delinquency.<sup>126</sup> Study group participants were matched on age, intelligence, ethnicity, and neighborhood residence. Data were collected through psychiatric interviews with subjects, parent and teacher reports, and official records obtained from police, court, and correctional files, and surviving subjects were interviewed again between 1949 and 1965.

Significantly, the Gluecks investigated possible contributions to crime causation on four levels: sociocultural (socioeconomic), somatic (physical), intellectual, and emotional-temperamental and concluded that family dynamics played an especially significant role in the development of criminality—“the deeper the roots of childhood maladjustment, the smaller the chance of adult adjustment.”<sup>127</sup> Delinquent careers, said the Gluecks, tend to carry over into adulthood and frequently lead to criminal careers.

In 2012, in an interesting test of life course theory and turning points, David S. Kirk at the University of Texas at Austin showed that former prisoners returning home to New Orleans were far less likely to continue lives of crimes if they moved to new neighborhoods. Kirk found that the displacement produced by Hurricane Katrina generally led to lower rates of recidivism among those former prisoners because it resulted in a reduction of criminal opportunities and a loss of association with former criminal peers.<sup>128</sup>

Read more about the life course perspective at **Library Extra 8–8**, and review a paper comparing the life course perspective to other theories discussed in this book at **Library Extra 8–9**.

## Laub and Sampson’s Age-Graded Theory

John H. Laub and Robert J. Sampson dusted off 60 cartons of nearly forgotten data that had been collected by the Gluecks and stored in the basement of the Harvard Law School.<sup>129</sup> Upon reanalysis of the data, Laub and Sampson found that children who turned to delinquency were frequently those who had trouble at school and at home and who had friends who were already involved in delinquency. They also discovered that two events in the life course—marriage and job stability—seemed to be especially important in reducing the frequency of offending in later life.

Using a sophisticated cyberanalysis of the Gluecks’ original data, Laub and Sampson developed an “age-graded theory of informal social control.”<sup>130</sup> Like Hirschi (discussed earlier), Laub and Sampson suggested that delinquency is more likely to occur when an individual’s bond to society is weak or broken, but they also recognized that “social ties embedded in adult transitions (e.g., marital attachment, job stability) explain variations in crime unaccounted for by childhood deviance.”<sup>131</sup> Hence, although it incorporated the concept of social bonds, Laub and Sampson’s perspective also emphasized the significance of continuity and change over the life course.

Central to Laub and Sampson’s approach is the idea of **turning points** in a criminal career—“the interlocking nature of trajectories and transitions may generate turning points or a change in the life course.”<sup>132</sup> Turning points were first identified by G. B. Trasler in 1980 when he wrote, “As they grow older, most young men

gain access to other sources of achievement and social satisfaction—a job, a girlfriend, a wife, a home and eventually children—and in doing so become gradually less dependent upon peer-group support.”<sup>133</sup> Given the importance of turning points—which may turn a person toward or away from criminality and delinquency—a clear-cut relationship between early delinquency and criminality later in life cannot be assumed. Sampson and Laub also identified two significant turning points: employment and marriage. Other important turning points can occur in association with leaving home, having children, getting divorced, graduating from school, and receiving a financial windfall. According to Laub and Sampson, even chronic

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## CRIMINAL | PROFILES

### Seung-Hui Cho—An Angry Young Man

Seung-Hui Cho was born on January 18, 1984. He rarely talked and possessed a disassociated manner, displaying little reaction to what was occurring around him. Cho came to America from the Republic of Korea when he was just eight years old, a sullen, withdrawn, brooding child, but he is remembered today as the campus shooter who took the lives of 27 students and five professors at Virginia Tech University in 2007.

Interviewed after the tragic events at Virginia Tech, Cho's 84-year-old great-aunt Yang-Soon Kim said: "When I told his mother that he was a good boy, quiet but well behaved, she said she would rather have him respond to her when talked to than be good and meek."<sup>i</sup>

After coming to America and moving to the tight-knit Korean community in Centreville, Virginia, the family maintained an "uncommonly private" existence.<sup>ii</sup> Cho's progression through elementary school was unremarkable; at nearby Westfield High School, Cho was teased and bullied, especially about his poor English and deep-throated voice;<sup>iii</sup> he remained a quiet and aloof loner who acted, a neighbor observed, "like he had a broken heart."<sup>iv</sup>

Whereas others (including his own sister, Sun-Kyung) in the success-oriented community were heralded in the community newspaper for making the selection lists at some of the most elite Ivy League universities, Cho's less-than-stellar grades kept him off such lists, so he went to Virginia Tech in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Cho's freshman, sophomore, and junior years as an English major at Virginia Tech were noteworthy for the palpable anger of his writings, and the disturbingly violent nature of his papers caused the chairwoman of the English Department to remove him from a creative writing class. She attempted to teach him one on one and then sought assistance from the university's counseling department and other university officials.<sup>v</sup>

The anger within Cho was also of concern to his fellow students, who openly discussed whether he could become a school shooter.<sup>vi</sup> *New York Times* columnist Benedict Carey eloquently explained afterward that "the tragedy illustrates how human social groups, whether in classrooms, boardrooms or dormitories, are in fact exquisitely sensitive to a threat in their midst."<sup>vii</sup>

The attacks on the Virginia Tech campus were planned and executed with near-military precision. Weeks before the shooting, Cho acquired two handguns, extra magazines, ammunition, and lengths of chain to secure the doors of classroom buildings so that potential victims would be unable to escape. Days before the killings, he videotaped a raging manifesto-like diatribe/suicide note blaming society for making him into what he'd become.<sup>viii</sup>



Virginia State Police/Associated Press

**Seung-Hui Cho**, age 23, of South Korea, identified by police as the shooter in a massacre that left 33 people dead at Virginia

Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, on April 16, 2007. The shooting is the deadliest killing by a single gunman in modern U.S. history. How can crimes like Seung-Hui's be understood?

Shortly after 7 A.M. on April 16, 2007, Cho killed his first two victims, which police mistakenly believed was the result of a lovers' quarrel. Their error gave Cho the time he needed to make his last preparations for another attack.<sup>ix</sup>

Entering Norris Hall around 9:30 A.M., Cho secured the interior door handles with chains and then systematically slaughtered everyone he encountered. During the next 15 minutes, he fired more than 175 rounds of ammunition from two weapons, leaving 30 people dead.<sup>x</sup> When Cho heard police blast through the entrance doors to gain access to the building, he turned the gun on himself. His rampage is the worst of its kind in U.S. history, leaving a total of 32 victims.

The case of Seung-Hui Cho raises a number of interesting questions. Among them are the following:

1. Why was Cho so angry? Could his lack of social bonds be partially to blame?
2. How might Cho's bonds with those around him have been strengthened, perhaps avoiding the tragedy at Virginia Tech?
3. What did Cho mean when he blamed society for making him what he'd become?

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■ **social capital** The degree of positive relationships with others and with social institutions that individuals build up over the course of their lives.

offenders can be reformed when they experience the requisite turning points, whereas individuals with histories of conventionality can begin offending in response to events and circumstances that undermine previously restraining social bonds.<sup>134</sup>

Because transitions in the life course are typically associated with age and because transitional events either enhance or weaken the social bond, Sampson and Laub contended that “age-graded changes in social bonds explain changes in crime”; because these events are not the result of “purposeful efforts to control,” they are dubbed “informal social controls.”<sup>135</sup>

In 2001, an examination of data from the Dunedin Study (referred to in Chapter 5) suggested the idea of life course interdependence, in which “the effects of social ties on crime vary as a function of criminal propensity.”<sup>136</sup> In other words, prosocial ties that deter crime (education, marriage, steady employment) are more likely to discourage criminality among those who are already predisposed to avoid it than among those who are not; researchers dubbed this the “social-protection effect.” Conversely, a “social-amplification effect” could be identified in antisocial ties (delinquent friends) that promote crime among individuals predisposed to criminality. The researchers concluded that certain features of the social environment could serve as positive turning points in the lives of antisocial individuals, but the social-amplification effect could produce negative turning points in the lives of the same people.

Similarly, in 2014, a combined research effort examined the importance of jobs and employment on desistance from crime. The study found that transition to employment is largely a consequence of desistance rather than its cause, but that the most critical issue has to do with the timing of employment transitions in the life trajectory.<sup>137</sup> In other words, employment can be seen as the cement that holds together and finalizes positive changes that have already led to important turning points in offenders’ lives.

Also in 2014, researchers examining the role that changes in personal identity have on desistance learned that people are more likely to refrain from crime commission as they move from a deviant to pro-social conception of self. They found that increases in “pro-social identity over time ... is a robust predictor of criminal behavior over the life course.”<sup>138</sup>

Another important concept in Laub and Sampson’s theory is **social capital**, which refers to the degree of positive relationships with other people and with social institutions that individuals build up over the course of their lives.<sup>139</sup> Social capital directly impacts life course trajectories: The greater a person’s social capital, the less chance there is of criminal activity.<sup>140</sup>

A study of how two primary constituents of social capital—marriage and full-time employment—impact life course trajectories was reported by Matthew G. Yeager in 2003. He examined the lives of 773 adult male prisoners released from the Canadian federal prison system between 1983 and 1984, following them for a period of three years.<sup>141</sup> He found that being married reduced the likelihood of return to prison, but an even

stronger indicator of postprison success was full-time employment, which Yeager described as having “a strong suppression effect on general criminal recidivism.” Because employment is something for which prisoners can be prepared and because it can be offered by the state or federal government, Yeager suggested that it provides a rare opportunity for successful intervention in the lives of released prisoners.

In 2006, Sampson and Laub reported on the application of sophisticated data-analysis techniques to subjects from the Gluecks’ original study group who were reinterviewed at age 70. The 2006 study supported the conclusion that “being married is associated with an average reduction of approximately 35 percent in the odds of crime compared to nonmarried status for the same man.”<sup>142</sup>

An interesting evaluation of social capital—commitment to a romantic partner, strong job attachment, and nature of close friends among adult subjects—was reported by a group of criminologists in 2002.<sup>143</sup> They found that adolescent delinquency tended to result in involvement with an antisocial romantic partner for both males and females and that such a relationship tended to influence the nature of adult relationships and to increase the likelihood of later criminality. Conventional romantic partners and friends, along with strong job attachment, were found to be especially likely to reduce the chance of criminality among young adult women, but only conventional adult friends had the same effect among males.

Finally, in 2006, Lisa M. Broidy and Elizabeth E. Cauffman reexamined the Glueck’s early data on girls in order to determine how social capital contributed to desistance from crime among women.<sup>144</sup> Using data on 500 female offenders originally collected by the Gluecks, the researchers found that social capital in the form of marriage, motherhood, and positive work experiences led to desistance from crime “in a manner that transcends both gender and historical content.” Because much of the data gathered by the Gluecks came from the 1920s, Broidy and Cauffman concluded that marriage, because it was regarded as a universal goal for women during that period of time and because it signified a commitment to conventional norms, represented a significant turning point in the life of young women that marked the start of the desistance process. Learn more about the concept of social capital via Library Extra 8–10.

## Moffitt’s Dual Taxonomic Theory

Criminologists have long noted that although adult criminality is usually preceded by antisocial behavior during adolescence, most antisocial children do not become adult criminals. Psychologist **Terrie E. Moffitt** developed a two-path (dual taxonomic) theory of criminality that helps to explain this observation.<sup>145</sup> Moffitt’s theory contends that as a result of neuropsychological deficits (specifically, early brain damage or chemical imbalances)

- **life course–persistent offender** An individual who displays more or less constant patterns of misbehavior throughout life.
- **adolescence–limited offender** An individual who goes through limited periods where they exhibit high probabilities of offending.

- **persistence** A person’s continuity in crime or continual involvement in offending.
- **desistance** A person’s cessation of criminal activity or termination of a period of involvement in offending behavior.

combined with poverty and family dysfunction, some people come to display more or less constant patterns of misbehavior throughout life.<sup>146</sup> These people are called **life course–persistent offenders** or *life course persisters*. Life course persisters tend to fail in school and become involved in delinquency at an early age. As a consequence, their opportunities for legitimate success become increasingly limited with the passage of time.

Other teenagers, says Moffitt, go through limited periods where they exhibit high probabilities of offending. Probabilities of offending are generally highest for these people, says Moffitt, during the mid-teen years. This second group, called **adolescence–limited offenders**, is led to offending primarily by structural disadvantages, according to two–path theory. The most significant of these disadvantages is the status anxiety of teenagers that stems from modern society’s inadequacy at easing the transition from adolescence to adulthood for significant numbers of young people. Moffitt hypothesizes that a significant source of adolescent strain arises from the fact that biological maturity occurs at a relatively early age (perhaps as early as 12) and brings with it the desire for sexual and emotional relationships as well as personal autonomy.<sup>147</sup> Society, however, does not permit the assumption of autonomous adult roles until far later (around age 18). As adolescents begin to want autonomy, they are prevented from achieving it because of preexisting societal expectations and societally limited opportunities, resulting in what Moffitt calls a “maturity gap.” They might be told, “You’re too young for that,” or “Wait until you grow up.” Lacking the resources to achieve autonomy on their own, they are drawn into delinquent roles by lifelong deviants who have already achieved autonomy and serve as role models for others seeking early independence. At least an appearance of autonomy is achievable for adolescence–limited offenders by engaging in actions that mimic those routinely undertaken by life course–persistent offenders. Once adolescence–limited offenders realize the substantial costs of continuing misbehavior, however, they abandon such social mimicry and the participation in delinquent acts that characterizes it. As they mature, they begin to aspire toward achieving legitimate autonomy. Those who fail to make the transition successfully add to the ranks of the life course–persistent population.

Moffitt notes that adolescence–limited offenders display inconsistencies in antisocial behavior from one place to another. They might, for example, participate in illicit drug use with friends or shoplift in stores. They might also experiment sexually. Still, their school behavior is likely to remain within socially acceptable bounds, and they will probably act with respect toward teachers, employers, and adults. Life course–persistent offenders, on the other hand, consistently engage in antisocial behavior across a wide spectrum of social situations.

Research findings indicate that positive developmental pathways are fostered when adolescents are able to develop (1) a sense of industry and competency, (2) a feeling of connectedness to others and to society, (3) a belief in their ability to control their future, and (4) a stable identity.<sup>148</sup> Adolescents who develop these characteristics appear more likely than others to engage in prosocial behaviors, exhibit positive school performances, and be members of nondeviant peer groups. Competency, connectedness, control, and identity are outcomes of the developmental process. They develop through a person’s interactions with his or her community, family, school, and peers. The following kinds of interactions appear to promote development of these characteristics:

- Interactions in which children engage in productive activities and win recognition for their productivity
- Interactions in which parents and other adults control and monitor adolescents’ behaviors in a consistent and caring manner while allowing them a substantial degree of psychological and emotional independence
- Interactions in which parents and other adults provide emotional support, encouragement, and practical advice to adolescents
- Interactions in which adolescents are accepted as individuals with unique experiences based on their temperament; gender; biosocial development; and family, cultural, and societal factors

## Farrington’s Delinquent Development Theory

Life course theorists use the term **persistence** to describe continuity in crime or continual involvement in offending; **desistance** refers to the cessation of criminal activity or the termination of a period of involvement in offending behavior. Desistance (mentioned briefly earlier in this chapter) can be unaided or aided: Unaided desistance refers to desistance that occurs without the formal intervention or assistance of criminal justice agencies like probation or parole agencies, the courts, or prison or jail, and aided desistance, involving agencies of the justice system, is generally referred to as rehabilitation. Delinquents often mature successfully and grow out of offending; even older persistent offenders may tire of justice system interventions, lose the personal energy required for continued offending, and “burn out.”

A number of early criminologists noted the desistance phenomenon. Marvin Wolfgang described the process as one of “spontaneous remission,”<sup>149</sup> although it was recognized far earlier—in 1833, Adolphe Quetelet argued that the penchant for

■ **Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development** A longitudinal (life course) study of crime and delinquency tracking a cohort of 411 boys born in London in 1953.

- **resilience** The psychological ability to successfully cope with severe stress and negative events.
- **cohort analysis** A social scientific technique that studies a population with common characteristics over time. Cohort analysis usually begins at birth and traces the development of cohort members until they reach a certain age.

crime diminished with age “due to the enfeeblement of physical vitality and the passions.”<sup>150</sup> The Gluecks later developed the concept of maturational reform to explain the phenomenon and suggested that the “sheer passage of time” caused delinquents to “grow out” of this transitory phase and to “burn out” physiologically, concluding, “Ageing is the only factor which emerges as significant in the reformatory process.”<sup>151</sup>

In 1985, Walter R. Grove proposed a maturational theory of biopsychosocial desistance that sees the desistance phenomenon as a natural or normal consequence of the aging process.<sup>152</sup> “As persons move through the life cycle, (1) they will shift from self-absorption to concern for others; (2) they will increasingly accept societal values and behave in socially appropriate ways; (3) they will become more comfortable with social relations; (4) their activities will increasingly reflect a concern for others in their community; and (5) they will become increasingly concerned with the issue of the meaning of life.”<sup>153</sup> Some criminologists argued, however, that the claim that aging causes desistance is meaningless because it doesn’t explain the actual mechanisms involved.

Longitudinal studies of crime over the life course conducted by **David P. Farrington** and **Donald J. West** have shown far greater diversity in the ages of desistance than in the ages of onset of criminal behavior.<sup>154</sup> In 1982, in an effort to explain the considerable heterogeneity of developmental pathways, Farrington and West began tracking a cohort of 411 boys born in London in 1953 in an ongoing study known as the **Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development**, which uses self-reports of delinquency as well as psychological tests and in-depth interviews. To date, participants have been interviewed eight times, with the earliest interviews being conducted at age eight.

The Cambridge study reveals that life course patterns found in the United States are also characteristic of English delinquents. Farrington found that the study’s persistent offenders suffered from “hyperactivity, poor concentration, low achievement, an antisocial father, large family size, low family income, a broken family, poor parental supervision, and parental disharmony.”<sup>155</sup> Other risk factors for delinquency included harsh discipline, negative peer influences, and parents with offense histories of their own. Chronic offenders were found to have friends and peers who were also offenders, and offending was found to begin with early antisocial behavior, including aggressiveness, dishonesty, problems in school, truancy, hyperactivity, impulsiveness, and restlessness. Consistent with other desistance studies, Farrington found that offending tends to peak around the age of 17 or 18 and then declines. By age 35, many subjects were found to have conforming lifestyles, although they were often separated or divorced and had poor employment records and patterns of residential instability.

Many former offenders were also substance abusers and consequently served as very poor role models for their children.

Although studies of desistance are becoming increasingly common, one of the main methodological problems for researchers is determining when desistance has occurred. Some theorists conceptualize desistance as the complete or absolute stopping of criminal behavior of any kind, whereas others see it as the gradual cessation of criminal involvement.<sup>156</sup> In 1990, Rolf Loeber and Marc LeBlanc identified four components of desistance:<sup>157</sup> (1) deceleration—a slowing down in the frequency of offending, (2) specialization—a reduction in the variety of offenses, (3) de-escalation—a reduction in the seriousness of offending, and (4) reaching a ceiling—remaining at a certain level of offending and not committing more serious offenses.

**Resilience**, another important concept in life course research, refers to the psychological ability to successfully cope with severe stress and negative events and has important implications for the development of delinquency and criminal offending.<sup>158</sup>

Resilience is the psychological ability to successfully cope with severe stress and negative events and has important implications for the development of delinquency and criminal offending.

One recent study of resilience among teenage girls exposed to a number of risk factors associated with delinquency development (physical and sexual assault, neglect, poverty, unemployed parents, female-headed households) found a number of protective factors that could enhance resilience among girls. Included were things like religiosity, school connectedness and success, and presence of a caring adult; the latter offered the most protection against delinquency. “The most consistent protective effect ... was the extent to which a girl felt she had caring adults in her life.”<sup>159</sup>

## Evolutionary Ecology

Because life course theory uses a developmental perspective in the study of criminal careers, life course researchers typically use longitudinal research designs involving **cohort analysis**, which usually begins at birth and traces the development of a population whose members share common characteristics until they reach a certain age. One well-known analysis of a birth cohort, undertaken by **Marvin Wolfgang** during the 1960s, found that

■ **evolutionary ecology** An approach to understanding crime that draws attention to the ways people develop over the course of their lives.

■ **interactional theory** A theoretical approach to exploring crime and delinquency that blends social control and social learning perspectives.

a small nucleus of chronic juvenile offenders accounted for a disproportionately large share of all juvenile arrests.<sup>160</sup> Wolfgang studied male individuals born in Philadelphia in 1945 until they reached age 18 and concluded that a small number of violent offenders were responsible for most of the crimes committed by the cohort—6% of cohort members accounted for 52% of all arrests (Figure 8–9). A follow-up study found that the seriousness of the offenses among the cohort increased in adulthood but that the actual number of offenses decreased as the cohort aged.<sup>161</sup> Wolfgang’s analysis has since been criticized for its lack of a second cohort, or control group, against which the experiences of the cohort under study could be compared.<sup>162</sup>

The ecological perspective on crime control, pioneered by **Lawrence E. Cohen** and **Richard Machalek**, provides a more contemporary example of a life course approach.<sup>163</sup> **Evolutionary ecology** builds on the approach of social ecology while emphasizing developmental pathways encountered early in life. Criminologist Bryan Vila stated that “the evolutionary ecological approach draws attention to the ways people develop over the course of their lives. Experiences and environment early in life, especially those that affect child development and the transmission of biological traits and family management practices across generations, seem particularly important.”<sup>164</sup> According to Vila, evolutionary ecology “attempts to explain how people acquire criminality—a predisposition that disproportionately favors criminal behavior—when and why they express it as crime, how individuals and groups respond to those crimes, and how all these phenomena interact as a dynamic self-reinforcing system that evolves over time.”<sup>165</sup>

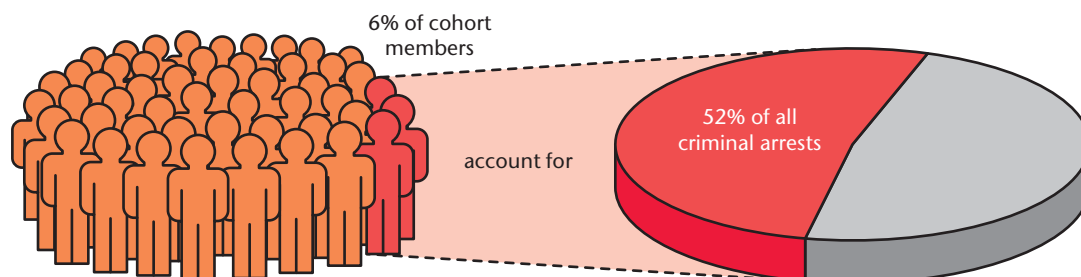
## Thornberry’s Interactional Theory

**Terence Thornberry** proposed what he calls an **interactional theory** regarding crime, which integrates social control and social learning explanations of delinquency.<sup>166</sup> In constructing his approach, Thornberry was attentive to the impact of social

structure on behavior and noted how delinquency and crime seem to develop within the context of reciprocal social arrangements. Reciprocity was especially important to Thornberry because he believed that too many other theories were overly simplistic in their dependence on simple unidirectional causal relationships (see the Theory versus Reality box).

The fundamental cause of delinquency according to interactional theory is a weakening of a person’s bond to conventional society.<sup>167</sup> Thornberry pointed out that adolescents who are strongly attached to their parents and family and who strive to achieve within the context of approved social arrangements, such as education, rarely turn to serious delinquency. It takes more than weak conventional bonds, however, for delinquency to develop; it requires the presence of an environment in which delinquency can be learned and in which rule-violating behavior can be positively rewarded. Delinquent peers are especially important in providing the kind of environment necessary for criminal behavior to develop, and gang membership can play a highly significant role in the development and continuation of such behavior. Associating with delinquent peers, said Thornberry, leads to delinquent acts but also involves a causal loop such that those who commit delinquent acts are likely to continue associating with others like themselves—creating a mechanism of social reinforcement and resulting in ever-escalating levels of criminal behavior. Thornberry also predicted that delinquents will seek out association with ever-more delinquent groups if their delinquency continues to be rewarded, so delinquency is seen as a process that unfolds over the life course.

In a test of interactional theory, Thornberry used data drawn from the Rochester Youth Development Study, a multiwave panel study designed to examine drug use and delinquent behavior among adolescents in the Rochester, New York, area.<sup>168</sup> Study findings (discussed in more detail later) supported the loop-type aspects of interactional theory and showed that delinquency is part of a dynamic social process, not merely the end result of static conditions. The study also found that the development of beliefs supportive of delinquent behavior tends to follow that



**FIGURE 8-9** | The Nucleus of Chronic Offenders

Source: Schmalleger, Frank, *Criminology*. Printed and Electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

# THEORY | versus REALITY

## Social Influences on Developmental Pathways

A report by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) identified five “aspects of the social context” that can either promote or block the development of prosocial behavior among adolescents:

1. Biophysical aspects of the individual. Biophysical characteristics found to influence developmental pathways during adolescence include temperament, gender, cognitive development, and age of onset of puberty. The influence of these factors on development depends to a large extent on how others in the social context react to them. Individuals bring these aspects of self to the interactions in which they are engaged, and the reaction of the social context to these aspects determines the quality and nature of the interactions.
2. Aspects of society. Society may be understood as the economic and institutional structures, values, and mores that constitute a national identity. Some of the aspects of society that influence the development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control, and identity are current economic and employment conditions, discrimination and prejudice, and educational institutions. Societal factors influence adolescent development directly and indirectly through their effects on communities and families. The societal factors of prejudice and discrimination often present barriers to positive developmental pathways for minority and economically disadvantaged youths, so for these youths, community and family contexts are particularly important for moderating the potentially negative influences of societal factors.
3. Aspects of the community. The community context (neighborhood or town) incorporates where individuals spend their time and with whom they spend it. The aspects of the community context that have been studied with respect to their effects on adolescent development include community culture, availability of sources of support to parents and youths, and availability of quality community institutional or organizational resources for children and youths. As with societal factors, community factors have both direct and indirect influences on developmental pathways during adolescence. Formal and informal broad-based community institutions and organizations, in particular, influence adolescent development directly by teaching and encouraging prosocial behaviors and indirectly by supporting parents in their parenting efforts.

4. Aspects of the family. The following aspects of the family context have received considerable research attention with respect to their influences on developmental pathways: quality of the parent–child relationship, parenting styles or practices, family structure, and family dysfunction. In general, family practices that serve to monitor and control adolescents’ behaviors in a caring and consistent manner, provide support and encouragement to adolescents, and allow them psychological and emotional independence appear to be most effective in fostering the development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control over one’s fate in life, and identity.
5. Aspects of peer relationships. Research findings do not support the popular notion that adolescent problem behaviors are the result of peer pressure; instead, it has been shown that peers do not direct adolescents to new behaviors as much as they reinforce existing dispositions that helped direct the adolescent to a particular peer group in the first place. Close friendships with peers during adolescence have been found to promote positive growth because they foster the development of conceptions of fairness, mutual respect, empathy, and intimacy, through which youths are able to develop a sense of connectedness to others and a stable sense of identity.

The information in the Family and Youth Services Bureau report suggested that interventions designed to assist youths in making successful transitions to adulthood will need to provide adolescents, either directly or through parents and community resources, with opportunities to engage in interactions that foster the development of a sense of competency, connectedness, control, and identity and that interventions must address children, families, and communities as a unit if they are to be effective for large numbers of children and their families.

### Discussion Questions

1. How would you rank the five aspects of the social context identified in this box as impacting the development of prosocial behavior among adolescents in order of relative importance? Why would you choose such a ranking?
2. How might the five aspects of the social context interact?
3. Are there other important aspects of the social context that can be identified? If so, what might they be?

Source: Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January 1997).

behavior in time. In other words, commitment to delinquent values may be more a product of delinquent behavior that is rewarded than an initial cause of such behavior.

Thornberry also found that childhood maltreatment (based on official records) could be an important element of the developmental process leading to delinquency and that the degree of maltreatment experienced in childhood bore some relationship to the extent of delinquent involvement later in life.<sup>169</sup> While maltreatment appears to weaken the bond to conventionality, it also weakens the family bond. Suman Kaker of Florida International University, in an extension of interactional theory, noted that delinquency also puts stress on the family, resulting in a further weakening of the familial bond.<sup>170</sup>

## Developmental Pathways

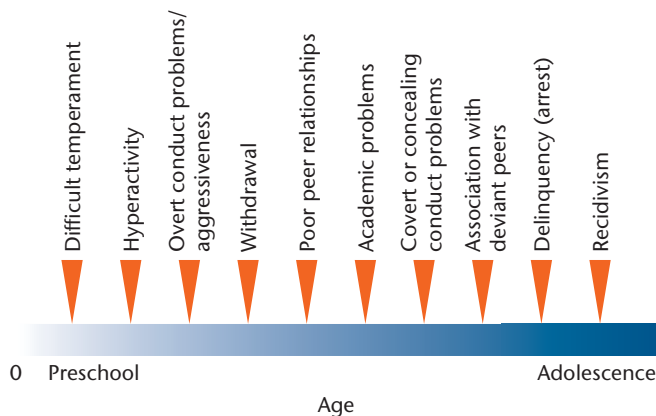
Researchers have found that manifestations of disruptive behaviors in childhood and adolescence are often age dependent, reflecting a developing capability to display different behaviors with age.<sup>171</sup> Budding behavioral problems can often be detected at an early age. In 1994, Rolf Loeber and Dale F. Hay described the emergence of opposition to parents and aggression toward siblings and peers as a natural developmental occurrence during the first two years of life.<sup>172</sup> As toddlers develop the ability to speak, they become increasingly likely to use words to resolve conflicts, with oppositional behaviors declining between ages three and six as children acquire greater verbal skills for expressing their needs

Childhood maltreatment is an important element of the developmental process leading to delinquency.

and for dealing with conflict, but children who are unable to develop adequate verbal coping skills commit acts of intense aggression, initiate hostile conflict, and are characterized by parents as having a difficult temperament.<sup>173</sup> Figure 8–10 shows the order in which disruptive and antisocial childhood behaviors tend to manifest between birth and late adolescence, and Figure 8–11 shows the order of learning of skills and attitudes deemed necessary for successful prosocial development during childhood and adolescence.

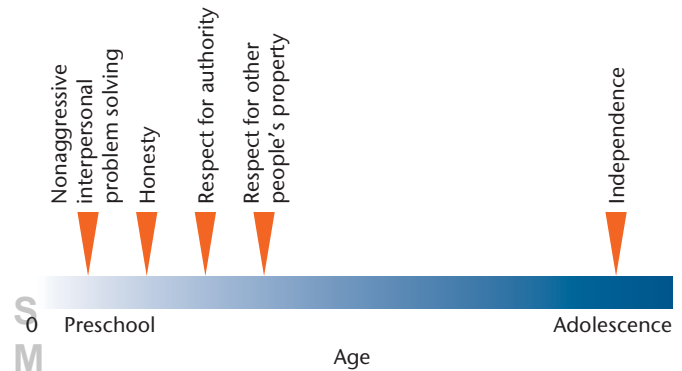
One of the most comprehensive studies to date attempting to detail life pathways leading to criminality, which began in 1986, is the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The program, a longitudinal study producing ongoing results, aims to better understand serious delinquency, violence, and drug use by examining how youths develop within the context of family, school, peers, and community.<sup>174</sup> It has compiled data on 4,500 youths from three distinct but coordinated projects: the Denver Youth Survey, conducted by the University of Colorado; the Pittsburgh Youth Study, undertaken by University of Pittsburgh researchers; and the Rochester Youth Development Study, fielded by professors at the University at Albany (New York).

The Causes and Correlates projects, using a similar research design, are longitudinal investigations involving repeated contacts with youths during a substantial portion of their developmental



**FIGURE 8-10 | Manifestations of Disruptive and Antisocial Behaviors in Childhood and Adolescence**

Source: Barbara Tatem Kelley et al., *Developmental Pathways in Boys’ Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, December 1997).



**FIGURE 8-11 | The Order of Learning of Skills and Attitudes Necessary for Successful Prosocial Development**

Source: Barbara Tatem Kelley et al., *Developmental Pathways in Boys’ Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, December 1997).

years. Researchers conduct individual face-to-face interviews with inner-city youths considered to be at high risk for involvement in delinquency and drug abuse. Multiple perspectives on each child’s development and behavior were obtained through interviews with the child’s primary caretakers and with teachers. In addition to interview data, the studies collect extensive information from official agencies, including police, courts, schools, and social services.<sup>175</sup> Following are some program results:

1. Delinquency is related to individual risk factors such as impulsivity.
2. The more seriously involved in drugs a youth is, the more seriously that juvenile will be involved in delinquency.
3. Children who are more attached to and involved with their parents are less involved in delinquency.
4. Greater risks exist for violent offending when a child is physically abused or neglected early in life.
5. Students who are not highly committed to school have higher rates of delinquency, and delinquency involvement reduces commitment to school.
6. Poor family life, especially poor parental supervision, exacerbates delinquency and drug use.
7. Affiliation with street gangs and illegal gun ownership are both predictive of delinquency.
8. Living in a bad neighborhood doubles the risk for delinquency.
9. A family being on public assistance (welfare) is associated with the highest risk of delinquency (followed by a family having low socioeconomic status).<sup>176</sup>

Results showed that “peers who were delinquent or used drugs had a great impact on [other] youth” and that “the best

predictors of success were having conventional friends, having a stable family and good parental monitoring, having positive expectations for the future, and not having delinquent peers.”<sup>177</sup>

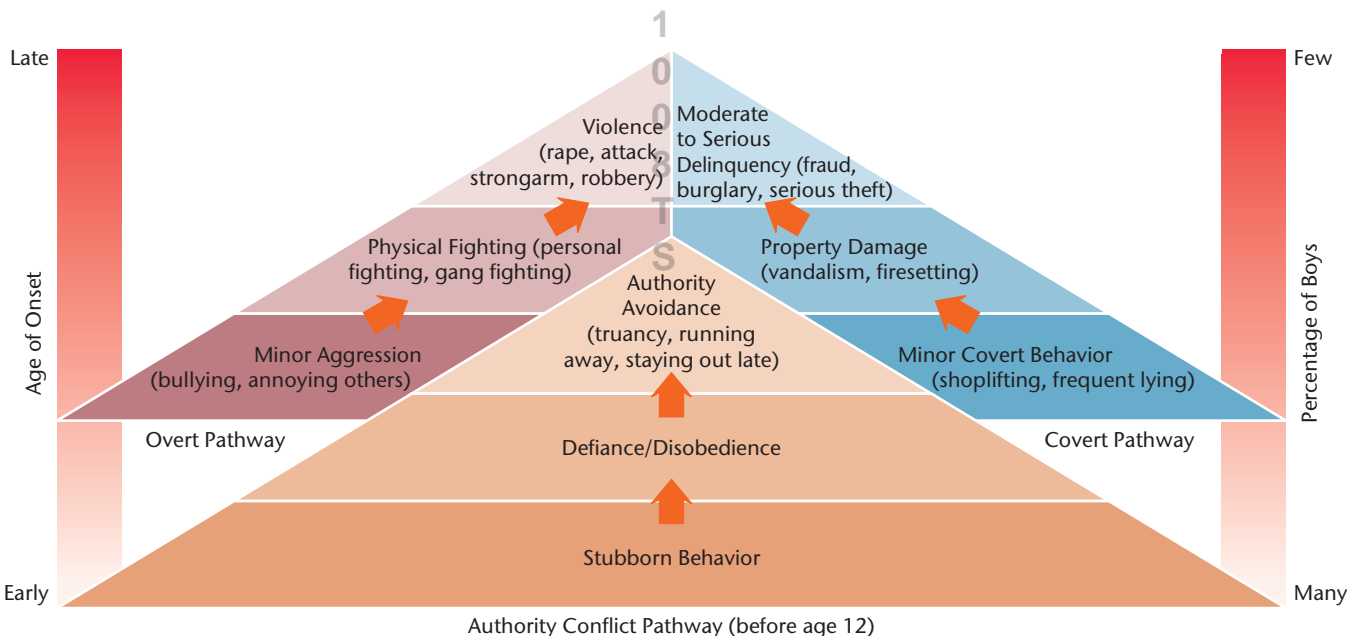
Research findings indicated that positive developmental pathways are fostered when adolescents are able to develop (1) a sense of industry and competency, (2) a feeling of connectedness to others and to society, (3) a belief in their ability to control their future, and (4) a stable identity.<sup>178</sup> Competency, connectedness, control, and identity develop through youths’ interactions with their community, family, school, and peers. Adolescents who develop these characteristics appear more likely than others to engage in prosocial behaviors, exhibit positive school performance, and be members of nondeviant peer groups. The following interactions appear to promote these characteristics:

- Children engage in productive activities and win recognition for their productivity.
- Parents and other adults control and monitor adolescents’ behaviors in a consistent and caring manner while allowing them a substantial degree of psychological and emotional independence.
- Parents and other adults provide emotional support, encouragement, and practical advice to adolescents.
- Adolescents are accepted as individuals with unique experiences based on their temperament, gender, and biosocial development as well as family, cultural, and societal factors.

Perhaps the most significant result of the Causes and Correlates study is the finding that three separate developmental pathways to delinquency (shown in Figure 8–12) exist:<sup>179</sup>

1. Authority conflict pathway. Subjects appear to begin quite young (three or four years of age) on the authority conflict pathway. “The first step,” said the study authors, “was stubborn behavior, followed by defiance around age 11, and authority avoidance—truancy, staying out late at night, or running away.”
2. Covert pathway. “Minor covert acts such as frequent lying and shoplifting usually [start] around age 10.” Delinquents following the covert pathway quickly progress “to acts of property damage, such as fire starting or vandalism, around age 11 or 12, followed by moderate and serious forms of delinquency.”
3. Overt pathway. The first step on the overt pathway is minor aggression such as “annoying others and bullying—around age 11 or 12.” Bullying was found to escalate into “physical fighting and violence as the juvenile progressed along this pathway.” The overt pathway eventually leads to violent crimes like rape, robbery, and assault.

Researchers have found that these three different pathways are not necessarily mutually exclusive and can at times converge (see Figure 8–13). Self-report data have shown that simultaneous progression along two or more pathways leads to higher rates of delinquency.<sup>180</sup> Learn more about the Causes and

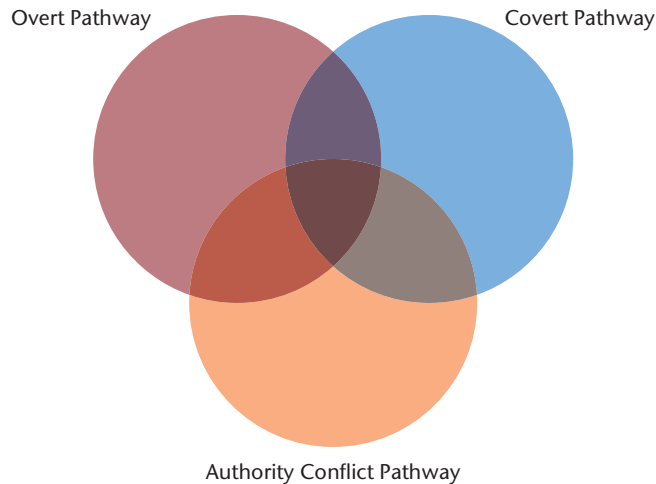


**FIGURE 8-12** | Three Pathways to Disruptive Behavior and Delinquency

Source: Barbara Tatem Kelley et al., *Developmental Pathways in Boys’ Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, December 1997).

ISBN 1-323-65050-4

■ **Pathways to Desistance study** The largest longitudinal study of serious adolescent offenders ever conducted. The study analyzed data that was gathered on serious youthful offenders as they moved from adolescence into early adulthood.



**FIGURE 8-13** | Single or Multiple Disruptive Pathways

Source: Barbara Tatem Kelley et al., *Developmental Pathways in Boys' Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, December 1997).

Correlates study and view results from each study site at **Web Extra 8–6**. Read more about the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency at **Library Extra 8–11**, and review literature on developmental pathways at **Library Extras 8–12** and **8–13**.

### Pathways to Desistance

The **Pathways to Desistance study** is the largest longitudinal study of serious adolescent offenders ever conducted. The study, which involved multiple sites, gathered data on serious adolescent offenders as they transitioned from adolescence into early adulthood.

Between November 2000 and January 2003, 1,354 adjudicated youths from the juvenile and adult court systems in Maricopa County (Phoenix), Arizona, and Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, were enrolled into the study. The youth were at least 14 years old and under 18 years old at the time of offense.

Each study participant was followed for a period of seven years past enrollment, and interviews were conducted regularly with the adolescents as well as with family members and friends, providing a comprehensive picture of life changes in a wide array of areas over the course of the study. Overall, more than 20,000 interviews were conducted. The study attempted to identify factors that lead youth who commit serious offenses to continue or desist from offending, including individual maturation, life changes, and involvement with the criminal justice system.

The primary findings of the study include (1) a decrease in self-reported offending over time by the most serious adolescent offenders, (2) the relative inefficacy of longer juvenile incarcerations and its lack of impact on decreasing recidivism, (3) the effectiveness of community-based supervision as a component

### ■ Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN)

An intensive study of Chicago neighborhoods employing longitudinal evaluations to examine the changing circumstances of people's lives in an effort to identify personal characteristics leading toward or away from antisocial behavior.

of aftercare for incarcerated youth, and (4) the positive impact of substance abuse treatment in reducing both substance use and crime commission by serious adolescent offenders. Significantly, the study also found that most youth who commit felonies greatly reduce their offending over time—regardless of intervention, preventative efforts, earlier experiences, or the expectations of others. Longer stays in juvenile confinement facilities were not found to reduce recidivism.<sup>181</sup> Learn more about the Pathways to Desistance study at **Library Extra 8–14**.

## S Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN)

The **Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN)**, begun in 1990, is jointly sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.<sup>182</sup> The PHDCN is directed by physician Felton J. Earls, professor of human behavior and development at Harvard University's School of Public Health; also involved are Robert Sampson, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, and Stephen Raudenbush, professor of education at Michigan State University. Earls and Albert J. Reiss described the ongoing research as “the major criminologic investigation of this century.”<sup>183</sup>

The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN) has been called “the major criminologic investigation of the century.”

The PHDCN, which consists of a longitudinal analysis of how individuals, families, institutions, and communities evolve together, is now “tracing how criminal behavior develops from birth to age 32.”<sup>184</sup> It involves experts from a wide range of disciplines, including psychiatry, developmental and clinical psychology, sociology, criminology, public health and medicine, education, human behavior, and statistics.

The project is actually two studies combined into a single comprehensive design: One is an intensive study of Chicago's neighborhoods that evaluates the social, economic, organizational, political, and cultural components of each neighborhood and seeks to identify changes that have taken place in the neighborhoods over the study's eight-year data-gathering period. The second study consists of a series of coordinated longitudinal evaluations of 6,000 randomly selected children, adolescents,





## WHO'S TO BLAME—The Individual or Society?

### Sexual Abuser Claims Victim Status

Mortimer Rataway was arrested after authorities received a report of a man struggling with a boy in a Short Stop food and beverage store. A police officer on nearby patrol arrived at the scene within minutes and observed Rataway forcing the boy, nine-year-old Justin, into an old sedan outside the convenience store. When the officer asked Rataway what was going on, the boy blurted out that he had been kidnapped.

The officer had heard reports on his radio describing the kidnapping of a nine-year-old boy from a school bus stop in an adjacent city two days earlier, and he quickly took Rataway into custody on suspicion of kidnapping.

Justin was taken to a special area reserved for juveniles in the local police station, where he told detectives that he was the boy who had been kidnapped. Although he was physically okay, he told police that Rataway had forced him to engage in repeated masturbation and that Rataway had taken many photographs of him naked.

A search of Rataway's apartment uncovered a number of digital cameras and a computer Web server hosting a child pornography site. The camera and computer contained photos of many other young boys; some of the photos had probably been purchased over the Internet, but Rataway later admitted taking others.

"I never hurt anybody," Rataway told investigators. "Most of the boys agreed to serve as models after I paid them. But

I got carried away and grabbed Justin because I thought he'd make one of my best models.

"Yeah, I'm gay," Rataway told the police in a recorded statement. "And sure, I like boys. But it isn't my fault. When I was growing up as a young Catholic I was taught to enjoy my body and to like other men by the parish priest. Now I know that most priests are good men and that the crisis in the Church was way overblown by the media some time back. But if that hadn't happened to me, I know I would have been straight, and I'm sure I would have gotten married and had kids of my own. Because of what happened to me when I was a kid, I'm as much a victim as anybody. It doesn't matter how much you punish me, I'm never going to change my sexual orientation."

### Think about it

1. Do you see Rataway as a criminal or a victim (as he claims)? Might he be both?
2. Some people describe child molesters as "sick." Is Rataway "sick"? If so, how can he be cured?
3. Will sending Rataway to prison rehabilitate him? Why or why not? How can you ensure that he won't pose a future threat if he is released back into society someday?
4. How does this case illustrate the way our understandings of criminal motivation and crime causality influence our notions of fairness and justice in the treatment of offenders?

Note: Who's to Blame boxes provide fictionalized critical thinking opportunities based on actual cases.

and young adults that looks at the changing circumstances of people's lives and attempts to identify personal characteristics leading toward or away from antisocial behavior (see the Who's to Blame box). Researchers explore a wide range of variables—from prenatal drug exposure, lead poisoning, and nutrition to adolescent growth patterns, temperament, and self-image—as they try to identify which individuals might be most at risk for crime and delinquency. They also study children's exposure to violence and its consequences and evaluate child care and its impact on early childhood development. Various study methodologies, including self-reports, individualized tests and examinations, direct observations, examination of existing records, and reports by informants, are being used. Following are some areas and questions being explored:<sup>185</sup>

- **Communities.** Why do some communities experience high rates of antisocial behavior whereas apparently similar communities are relatively safe?
- **Schools.** Some children have achievement problems early in school and others have behavioral or truancy problems; some exhibit both kinds of problems, and others neither kind. Why do these differences exist? What are their causes and effects?

- **Peers.** Delinquent youths tend to associate with delinquent peers and usually act in groups. Does this association lead to delinquency, or is it simply a case of "like finding like"? Are the influences of peers equally important for girls and for boys or are their developmental pathways entirely different?
- **Families.** Poor parenting practices are strongly associated with substance abuse and delinquency, but are they the cause of such behaviors? If so, then social programs in parenting skills could make a difference. But what if there are underlying factors, such as temperamental characteristics or social isolation, that cause problems in both parents and children?
- **Individual differences.** What health-related, cognitive, intellectual, and emotional factors in children promote positive social development? What factors put them at risk of developing antisocial behaviors?

PHDCN study results have led to targeted interventions intended to lower rates of offending. According to Sampson, "Instead of external actions (e.g., a police crackdown), we stress in this study the effectiveness of 'informal' mechanisms by which residents themselves achieve public order. In particular, we

**■ Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders program** A National Institute of Justice initiative that provides participating communities with a framework for preventing delinquency, intervening in early delinquent behavior, and responding to serious, violent, and chronic offending.



Danita Delimont/Alamy

**A tug-of-war in Chicago during the annual Youth Fest.** The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN) is a multidisciplinary project, consisting of a longitudinal analysis of how individuals, families, institutions, and communities evolve together, jointly sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. What results has the study produced?

believe that collective expectations for intervening on behalf of neighborhood children [are] a crucial dimension of the public life of neighborhoods.”<sup>186</sup> Life course perspectives, like the one informing the PHDCN, often point to the need for early intervention with nurturant strategies that build self-control through positive socialization. As Vila pointed out, “There are two main types of nurturant strategies: those that improve early life experiences to forestall the development of strategic styles based on criminality, and those that channel child and adolescent development in an effort to improve the match between individuals and their environment.”<sup>187</sup> Learn more about the PHDCN at **Web Extra 8–7. Library Extra 8–15** discusses cultural mechanisms involved in neighborhood violence.

## Policy Implications of Social Development Theories

Social development strategies have been widely applied to juvenile justice and human services settings. The OJJDP adopted the social development model as the foundation for its **Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders program**, which provides participating communities with a framework for preventing delinquency, intervening in early delinquent behavior, and responding

to serious, violent, and chronic offending. It assists communities in establishing or modifying a juvenile justice continuum of care through risk-focused prevention, risk and needs assessment, structured decision making, and graduated sanctions training and technical assistance. The OJJDP’s Comprehensive Strategy program centers around the following six components:

1. Strengthening families in their role of providing guidance and discipline and instilling sound values as the first and primary teacher of children
2. Supporting core social institutions, including schools, churches, and other community organizations, so that they can reduce risk factors and help children develop their full potential
3. Promoting prevention strategies that enhance protective factors and reduce the impact of negative risk factors affecting the lives of young people at risk for high delinquency
4. Intervening immediately and constructively when delinquent behavior first occurs
5. Identifying and controlling a small segment of violent and chronic juvenile offenders
6. Establishing a broad spectrum of sanctions that ensure accountability and a continuum of services

A few years ago, the OJJDP began a national evaluation of the Comprehensive Strategy Program. Learn more about the program via **Web Extra 8–8**, where you can keep abreast of the ongoing evaluation.

Another contemporary example of social intervention efforts tied to a developmental model is Targeted Outreach, a program operated by Boys and Girls Clubs of America.<sup>188</sup> The program has

**THE OJJDP adopted the social development model as the foundation for its Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders program.**

its origins in the 1972 implementation of a youth development strategy based on studies undertaken at the University of Colorado, which showed that at-risk youths could be effectively diverted from the juvenile justice system through the provision of positive alternatives. Using a wide referral network made up of local schools, police

departments, and various youth services agencies, club officials work to end what they call the “inappropriate detention of juveniles.”<sup>189</sup>

The program’s primary goal is to provide a positive and productive alternative to gangs for the youths who are most vulnerable to their influences or are already entrenched in gang activity. It recruits at-risk youngsters (as young as seven years old)

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and diverts them into activities intended to promote a sense of belonging, competence, usefulness, and self-control: A sense of belonging is fostered through clubs that provide familiar settings where each child is accepted; competence and usefulness are developed through opportunities for meaningful activities, which young people in the club program can successfully undertake; and self-control is developed as youthful participants have a chance to be heard and to influence decisions affecting their future. To date, Targeted Outreach has served more than 10,000 at-risk youths and hopes to eventually involve more than 1.5 million youngsters between the ages of seven and 17. Mobilization for Youth and Targeted Outreach are the kinds of programs that theorists who focus on the social structure typically seek to implement.

## Critique of Social Development Theories

Social development theories have been criticized for definitional issues. What, for example, do life course concepts like turning point, pathway, risk factor, persistence, desistance, and

criminal career really mean? Precise definitions of such concepts are necessary if hypotheses derived from life course theories are to be tested. Some writers have identified “associated problems of how to develop risk/needs assessment devices and how to use these both in fundamental research (to maximize the yield of serious offenders while still making it possible to draw conclusions about the general population) and in applied research (to decide which populations should be targeted by interventions).”<sup>190</sup>

Like the social structural approaches discussed in Chapter 6, social development theories are intimately associated with the first prong of this text theme—the social problems approach (described in Chapter 1). For policy makers, important questions include: What role (if any) does individual choice play in human development? Do people actively select components of the life course? Do they influence their own trajectories? Because so many important life course determinants are set in motion in early childhood and during adolescence, should those who make wrong choices be held accountable?

### SUMMARY

- According to social process theories, criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others. The socialization process occurring as the result of group membership—in families, peer groups, work groups, and reference groups—is seen as the primary route through which learning occurs. Social process theories suggest that individuals who have weak stakes in conformity are more likely to be influenced by the social processes and contingent experiences that lead to crime, and that criminal choices tend to persist because they are reinforced by the reaction of society to those whom it has identified as deviant.
- A number of theories can be classified under the social process umbrella: social learning theory, social control theory, labeling theory, reintegrative shaming, and dramaturgical perspective.
- Social process theories suggest that crime-prevention programs should enhance self-control and build prosocial bonds. Preparing for the Drug Free Years (PDFY) is designed to increase effective parenting and is part of the Strengthening America's Families Project.
- Criticisms of social process theories are many and varied. Differential association theory is not applicable at the individual level; in addition, the theory is untestable. The labeling approach does little to explain the origin of crime and deviance. Dramaturgical perspective's greatest failing may be in taking the analogy of the theater too far and convincing readers that real life is but a form of playacting.
- The life course perspective is the major social development perspective discussed in this chapter and emphasizes turning points in a criminal career. Age-graded theory incorporates the element of social bonds and also stresses the idea of turning points in a criminal career. The delinquent development approach places an emphasis on desistance and persistence over the life course, and interactional theory points to a weakening of a person's bond to conventional society as the fundamental cause of delinquency.
- The central concepts of social development theories include: criminal careers, the life course, trajectory, turning points, age grading, social capital, human agency, developmental pathways, life course persisters, persistence, desistance, resilience, cohort, cohort analysis, longitudinal research, and evolutionary ecology.

- Social development strategies have been widely applied to juvenile justice and human services settings. The OJJDP has adopted the social development model as the foundation for its Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders program, which provides participating communities with a framework for preventing delinquency, intervening in early delinquent behavior, and responding to serious, violent, and chronic offending.
- Social development theories have been criticized for definitional issues. What do life course concepts like turning point, pathway, risk factor, persistence, desistance, and criminal career really mean? Precise definitions of such concepts are necessary if hypotheses derived from life course theories are to be tested.

## KEY TERMS

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## QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How does the process of social interaction contribute to criminal behavior?
2. What are the various social process perspectives discussed in this chapter? Describe each.
3. What kinds of social policy initiatives might be based on social process theories of crime causation?
4. What are the shortcomings of the social process perspective?
5. What are the various social development perspectives discussed in this chapter? Describe each.
6. What are the central concepts of social development theories? Explain each.
7. What kinds of social policy initiatives might be suggested by social development perspectives?
8. What are the shortcomings of social development perspectives on criminality?

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. This chapter describes both social process and social development perspectives. What are the significant differences between these two perspectives? What kinds of theories characterize each?
2. This text emphasizes the theme of social problems versus social responsibility. Which of the perspectives discussed in this chapter (if any) best support the social problems approach? Which (if any) support the social responsibility approach? Why?
3. This chapter contains a discussion of the labeling process. What are a few examples of the everyday imposition of positive (rather than negative) labels? Why is it so difficult to impose positive labels on individuals who were previously labeled negatively?
4. Do you believe that Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, which sees the world as a stage and individuals as actors on that stage, provides any valuable insights into crime and criminality? If so, what are they?
5. Examine your personal life course. What turning points did you experience that led to where you are today?