The Effectiveness of Age Graded Informal Social Controls for Emerging Adults

- Christopher Salvatore, PhD, Assistant Professor, Montclair State University, New Jersey
- Travis Taniguchi, PhD, Police Criminologist, Redlands Police Department, California

This research uses data from Add Health, a program project directed by Kathleen Mullan Harris and designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and funded by grant P01-HD31921 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from 23 other federal agencies and foundations.
Research questions

- Do age graded life course transitions reduce crime for emerging adults?

- Does the effectiveness of age graded life course transitions vary by gender?
Laub & Sampson’s Age graded theory

- Trajectories – Pathways of development over the life course
  - Career, relationships, criminal offending

- Transitions – Specific life events within a trajectories
  - First marriage, first job, first child, military service

- Shared beginnings, divergent lives: Delinquent boys at age 70
  - Life events and informal social bonds can alter behavior
Emerging Adulthood- Defined

- Identified by Jeffrey Arnett
- Post 1960’s cohorts
- Neither young adulthood, nor adolescence
- Approximately 18-25
- Delayed turning points
- Result of 3 main areas of social change
  - Marriage
  - Children
  - Economy
Delay in Life Course Transitions- Marriage

- Postponement of marriage
- Marriage requires conformity to conventional social norms
- Decreases deviance
Delay in Life Course Transitions - Children

- Requires avoidance of dangerous behaviors
- Forces many to take on “adult” responsibilities
Delay in Life Course Transitions- Economic shifts

- Shift from a manufacturing to a service based economy
- Education inflation
- Decreased likelihood of middle class lifestyle
Crime & deviance in emerging adulthood

- Increased likelihood of adolescent forms of crime and deviance during emerging adulthood
  - Smoking, risky driving, binge drinking, drug use, and unsafe sex
- Motivated by “sensation seeking” behaviors
- Limited research has found that emerging adulthood is a period of active offending
Hypotheses: Turning points

Those who...

- Don’t cohabitate with romantic partner
- Don’t have children
- Delay marriage
- Who work fewer hours
- Have less education
- Are not actively serving in the military

....will offend more during emerging adulthood
Hypotheses: Social bonds

Those who...

- Have lower levels of religious participation
- Have lower levels of job satisfaction
- Score higher on economic instability
- Score lower on property ownership

....will offend more during emerging adulthood
Data

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
- N=4,880
- Provides data on recent cohort of emerging adults
- Ample demographic variables
- Diverse range of criminal and delinquent acts
### Outcome Variable

- **12 item crime scale**
  \[
  \alpha = .74
  \]

- **In the past 12 months...**
  - Damaged property
  - Buy, hold, sell stolen property
  - Steal something worth <$50
  - Steal something worth >$50
  - Use someone else’s credit/bank card
  - Write a bad check
  - Sell drugs
  - Use a weapon
  - Threaten with a weapon
  - Take part in a group fight
  - Carry a hand gun to work or school
  - Shoplift
  - Go into a house/building to steal
Analytic Plan

- Outcome count of offenses
  - Non-normally distributed

- Models specified (Males n = 2253/Females n = 2629)
  - Demographics – Age
  - Turing points – Children, education, hours worked per week, marriage, cohabitation, and military service
  - Social bonds – Economic instability, job satisfaction, property owed, and religious participation
**Final Model - Males/ Females**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B (M/F)</th>
<th>SE (M/F)</th>
<th>IRR (M/F)</th>
<th>% Change (M/F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.16**/ .01</td>
<td>.03/.05</td>
<td>.85/1.01</td>
<td>-15/ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>.51/-</td>
<td>.30/-</td>
<td>1.66/-</td>
<td>ns/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>-.27*/-.58**</td>
<td>.13/.17</td>
<td>.76/.55</td>
<td>-24/-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.04/-13**</td>
<td>.03/.05</td>
<td>1.04/.88</td>
<td>ns/-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours Worked</td>
<td>-.01/- .01</td>
<td>.01/.01</td>
<td>.99/.99</td>
<td>ns/ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitated</td>
<td>.30**/.18</td>
<td>.11/.16</td>
<td>1.35/1.28</td>
<td>35/ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-.31/- .80**</td>
<td>.17/.23</td>
<td>.73/.45</td>
<td>ns/-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Services</td>
<td>-.60*/-.05</td>
<td>.03/.04</td>
<td>.94/.95</td>
<td>-6/ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Instability</td>
<td>.10*/.25**</td>
<td>.05/.06</td>
<td>1.10/1.28</td>
<td>10/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(higher score = more instability)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.15**/ .06</td>
<td>.05/.08</td>
<td>.86/.94</td>
<td>-14/ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Owned</td>
<td>.01/- .08</td>
<td>.05/.07</td>
<td>1.00/.92</td>
<td>ns/ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*=p<.05, **=p<.01
Discussion: Males- Age

- Offending decreased as males aged
- Supports Gottfredson’s & Hirschi’s invariant view
- Age is a relevant factor in predicting decreases in offending
Discussion: Males & Females- Children

- Having a child reduced offending
- Active turning point
- Parenting relevant for emerging adults
- Supports prior studies
Discussion: Females- Education

- Reduced offending
- More education, less crime
- Not effective for males
Discussion: Males - Cohabitation

- Cohabitation increases offending
- Not a valid turning point?
- May reflect lack of emotional maturity/commitment
Discussion: Females - Marriage

- Marital decreased rates of offending
  - Turning point for emerging adults
  - Males delay marriage?
  - Marriage still “works” for women
Discussion: Males-Religious participation

- Religious participation reduced offending
- Religion still acts as an effective social control
- Supports prior studies
Discussion: Males & Females- Economic instability

- Higher levels of economic instability offending
- Emerging adulthood intersect with other criminological theories that have an economic focus
Discussion: Males-Job satisfaction

- Increased job satisfaction decreases offending
- “Works” for emerging adults
- Supports prior research
Limitations

- Limited to cross sectional design
- Few active in military
- Unable to examine sample past age 25
Future areas of study

- Does emerging adulthood extend the age crime curve?
- The role of cohabitation and same sex relationships as turning points
- Further examination of job satisfaction in emerging adults
- The role of military service for emerging adulthood
- The long term influence of emerging adulthood on offending over the life course
The Effectiveness of Age Graded Informal Social Controls for Emerging Adults

- **Christopher Salvatore**, PhD, Assistant Professor, Montclair State University, New Jersey
- **Travis Taniguchi**, PhD, Police Criminologist, Redlands Police Department, California

This research uses data from Add Health, a program project directed by Kathleen Mullan Harris and designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and funded by grant P01-HD31921 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from 23 other federal agencies and foundations.