Class Activities

Chapter 13: Developmental/Life-Course Perspectives of Criminality

**Class Activity 1: Antidevelopmental Theory: Low Self-Control Theory (Paired or Group Activity)**

**Applying Concepts**

**Instructions:** Read the following section of the textbook: “Antidevelopmental Theory: Low Self-Control Theory” and the paragraphs below. Answer the questions that follow.

**Overview of Low Self-Control**

People who lack self-control have a tendency to (1) act on the spur of the moment, or impulsively, seeking short-term immediate pleasures; (2) prefer easy or simple tasks over complex ones; (3) have a propensity for risk-seeking and prefer excitement; (4) prefer physical activities over mental or cognitive pursuits; (5) be self-centered and insensitive to the wants and needs of others; and (6) lose their temper and resort to aggressive coping strategies when faced with frustrating situations and circumstances.

Above all else, according to Hirschi, what children must learn is self-control; the ability to resist temptations of the moment in favor of long-term projects or prospects. Parents, through socialization, are the primary agents responsible for instilling self-control in their children. Self-control is dependent on effective child-rearing practices, what Gottfredson and Hirschi refer to as *parental management*. Its absence is the primary cause of low self-control, which in turn influences the calculation of the costs and benefits of criminal and deviant behavior.

Gottfredson and Hirschi indicate the effective management of a child requires parents to: (1) monitor the child’s behavior, (2) recognize and acknowledge deviant behavior when it arises, and (3) apply consistent and proportionate (preferably noncorporal) punishment for deviant behavior when it occurs (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). In addition, affection for or an emotional investment in the child represent a necessary condition for setting effective parental management in motion. That is, parents who care about their child will monitor the child’s behavior, identify inappropriate or deviant behavior, and correct the behavior when it happens. If these conditions are met, a child is likely to develop self-control.

1. Do you think a lack of self-control explains criminal behavior among juveniles? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think Gottfredson and Hirschi are correct in their assertion that it is the responsibility of parents to instill self-control in their children? Explain your answer.
3. Do you think self-control must be instilled before age 8 or 10? Why or why not? Do you think self-control can be instilled later in life? Why or why not?
4. Knowing what you now know about self-control, what policy recommendation would you offer to help ensure parents teach their children self-control? Be specific.

## Class Activity 2: Moffitt’s Developmental Taxonomy

**Case Study Development (Paired or Group Activity)**

**Instructions:** Define the terms *adolescence-limited offender* and *life-course persistent offender*. Please answer the questions below.

1. Create a crime scenario (case study) that demonstrates your understanding of an adolescence-limited offender. Be sure to develop the scenario fully.
2. Create a crime scenario (case study) that demonstrates your understanding of a life-course persistent offender. Be sure to develop the scenario fully.

**Class Activity 3: Thornberry’s Interactional Model of Offending**

**Case Study (Paired or Group Activity)**

**Instructions:** Read thefollowing section in the textbook: “Thornberry’s Interactional Model of Offending.”Read the case study carefully and answer the questions below.

**Boy, 14, Burgled 1100 homes using a Go-Kart as a Getaway Vehicle (dailymail.co.uk)**

Police in Nashville are breathing a sigh of relief this week after they say they finally managed to capture a notorious serial house burglar: a 14-year-old boy.

According to authorities, the suspect, whose name is not being released because he is a minor, broke into anywhere between 50 and 100 homes in northern Nashville over the past two years.

They say the 14-year-old was also suspected in multiple cases of vandalism and theft in the Hope Gardens, Buena Vista, and Salemtown neighborhoods.

According to the TV station [**WKRN**](http://www.wkrn.com/story/16344179/14-year-old-arrested-in-2-more-burglaries?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter), the suspected teen bandit was arrested on Friday morning after a neighbor reported seeing him sneaking around a back alley. Police found a kitchen knife and a pair of gloves in his possession.

Police said the teen would scope out a house to target, kick in the back door, rush inside and steal video games, flat-screen TVs and whatever else he could lay his hands on.

1. Thornberry identifies five concepts as part of his theoretical framework: commitment to school; attachment to parents; belief in conventional values (these first three are taken from social control and bonding theory); adoption of delinquent values; and association with delinquent peers (these last two are drawn from social learning and differential association-reinforcement theory). Which of these concepts do you feel explains this juvenile’s offending behavior? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think Thornberry’s theory best explains the juvenile’s behavior, or would you choose some other theory? Explain your choice.
3. What type of punishment should the juvenile receive? Be sure your punishment is linked to the implications of the theory.