



Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives

John H. LAUB, Robert J. Sampson

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This book analyzes newly collected data on crime and social development up to age 70 for 500 men who were remanded to reform school in the 1940s. Born in Boston in the late 1920s and early 1930s, these men were the subjects of the classic study *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1950). Updating their lives at the close of the twentieth century, and connecting their adult experiences to childhood, this book is arguably the longest longitudinal study of age, crime, and the life course to date.

John Laub and Robert Sampson's long-term data, combined with in-depth interviews, defy the conventional wisdom that links individual traits such as poor verbal skills, limited self-control, and difficult temperament to long-term trajectories of offending. The authors reject the idea of categorizing offenders to reveal etiologies of offending--rather, they connect variability in behavior to social context. They find that men who desisted from crime were rooted in structural routines and had strong social ties to family and community.

By uniting life-history narratives with rigorous data analysis, the authors shed new light on long-term trajectories of crime and current policies of crime control.

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The accounts of individuals are quite riveting, and the book can be recommended strongly purely for the stories provided about diverse lives. However, the book is much, much more than that in terms of the serious challenge that the authors' findings and ideas present to some of the leading contemporary theories of both crime and development. A highly original and scholarly contribution of the highest quality.

--Sir Michael Rutter, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London

Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives is an extraordinary work which shows the deep insights gained by studying the whole life course, beginning in childhood and ending in later life. With access to a rare data archive, the authors provide compelling evidence on the remarkably varied adult lives of teenage delinquents who grew up in low-income areas of Boston (born 1925-1935). The story behind these varied life paths and their consequences inspires fresh thinking about crime over the life course through models of life trajectories and vivid narratives that reveal the complexity of lives.

--Glen H. Elder, Jr., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This book redraws the landscape of developmental criminology that Laub and Sampson already have done so much to define, setting new standards and benchmarks along the way. The authors both provide new evidence for earlier conclusions and challenge prevailing assumptions and assertions, thereby reshaping the criminological research agenda for years to come.

--John Hagan, Northwestern University

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