

PENNSSTATE



Illegal Behavior:
A Presentation to the Committee on the
Science of Adolescence
of the National Academies

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Overview

- General Background
 - Nature
 - Prevalence
 - Historical Trends
 - Developmental Course
 - Demographic Variations
 - Established Correlates
- Osgood's Additional Interests
 - Generality of Deviance
 - Peer Influence
 - Time Use

The Nature of Illegal Behavior

- Definition of crime or delinquency:
 - Behavior violating criminal or juvenile code.
- Range of phenomena
 - Enormous variety of seriousness
 - Overlaps other risk behaviors
 - Will mainly limit to non-overlapping behaviors
- Context of Societal Reaction
 - Legal code versus response
 - Consequences for measurement & statistics
 - Two legal systems

- Uniform Crime Reports Index Offenses

- Homicide
- Burglary
- Forcible rape
- Larceny-theft
- Fobbery
- Motor vehicle theft
- Aggravated assault
- Arson

- Typical Self-Report Delinquency Items:

How many times in the past year have you:

- Gotten into a serious fight at school or work
- Taken something not belonging to you worth <\$50
- Gone into a building when you weren't supposed to
- Damaged school property on purpose

Prevalence of Illegal Behavior

- Juvenile Arrests (2006, UCR, Ages 10-17)
 - Total = 6.6%, Violent Index = .3%,
 - Murder = .004%, Aggr Assault = .18%,
 - Property Index = 1.2%,
 - Burglary = .25%, Larceny Theft = .8%
- Self Report Offending (MtF, 2007, Age 18)
 - Any = 55.3%, Serious assault = 12.7%,
 - Robbery = 3.6%, Shoplift = 27.4%,
 - Trespass = 24.9%, School vandalism = 10.9%

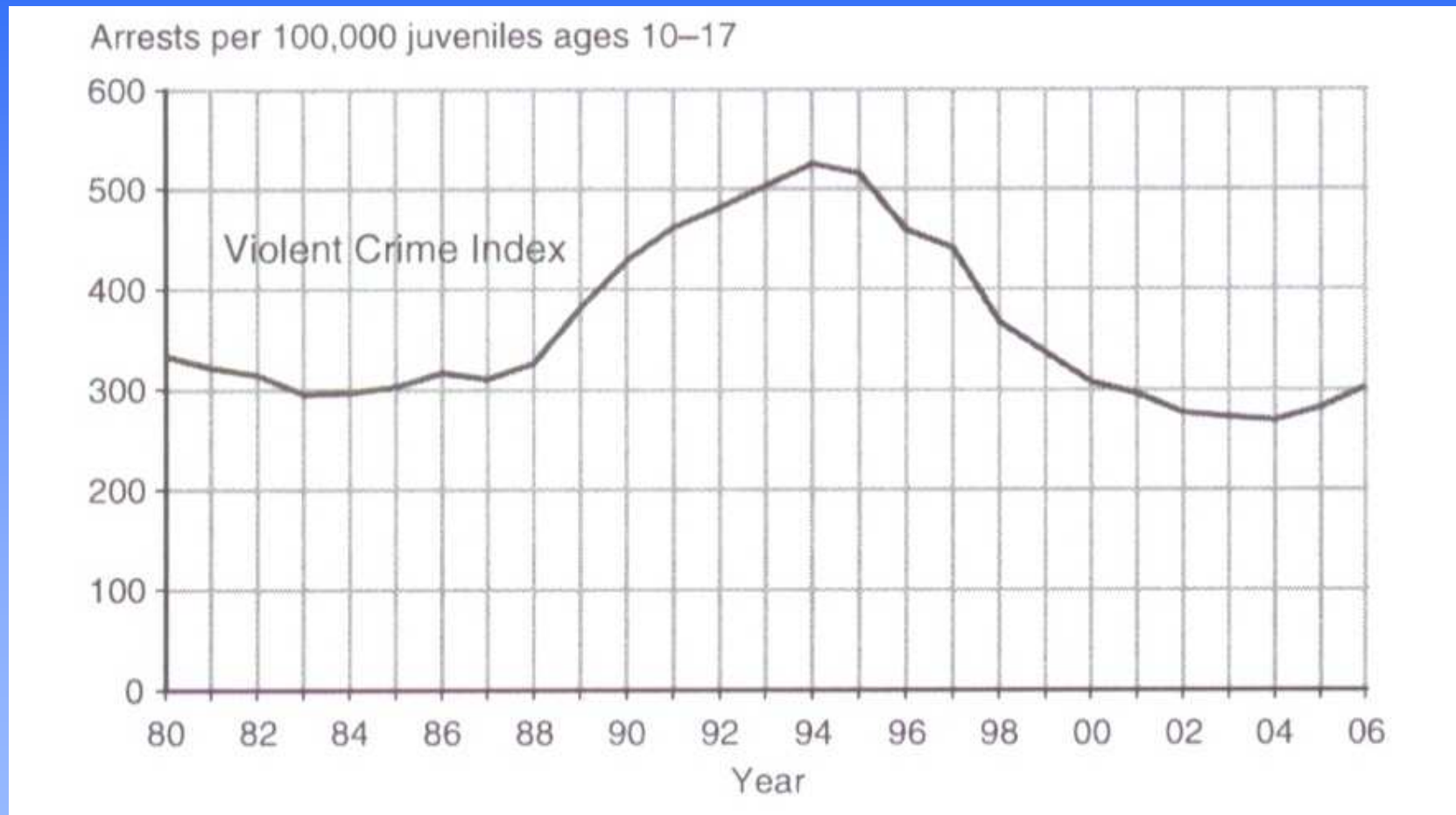
Prevalence of Illegal Behavior

- Most serious & frequent crime concentrated in a select few:
 - Wolfgang: 6% of males with 5+ arrests account for > 50% of arrests

Prevalence of Justice System Involvement

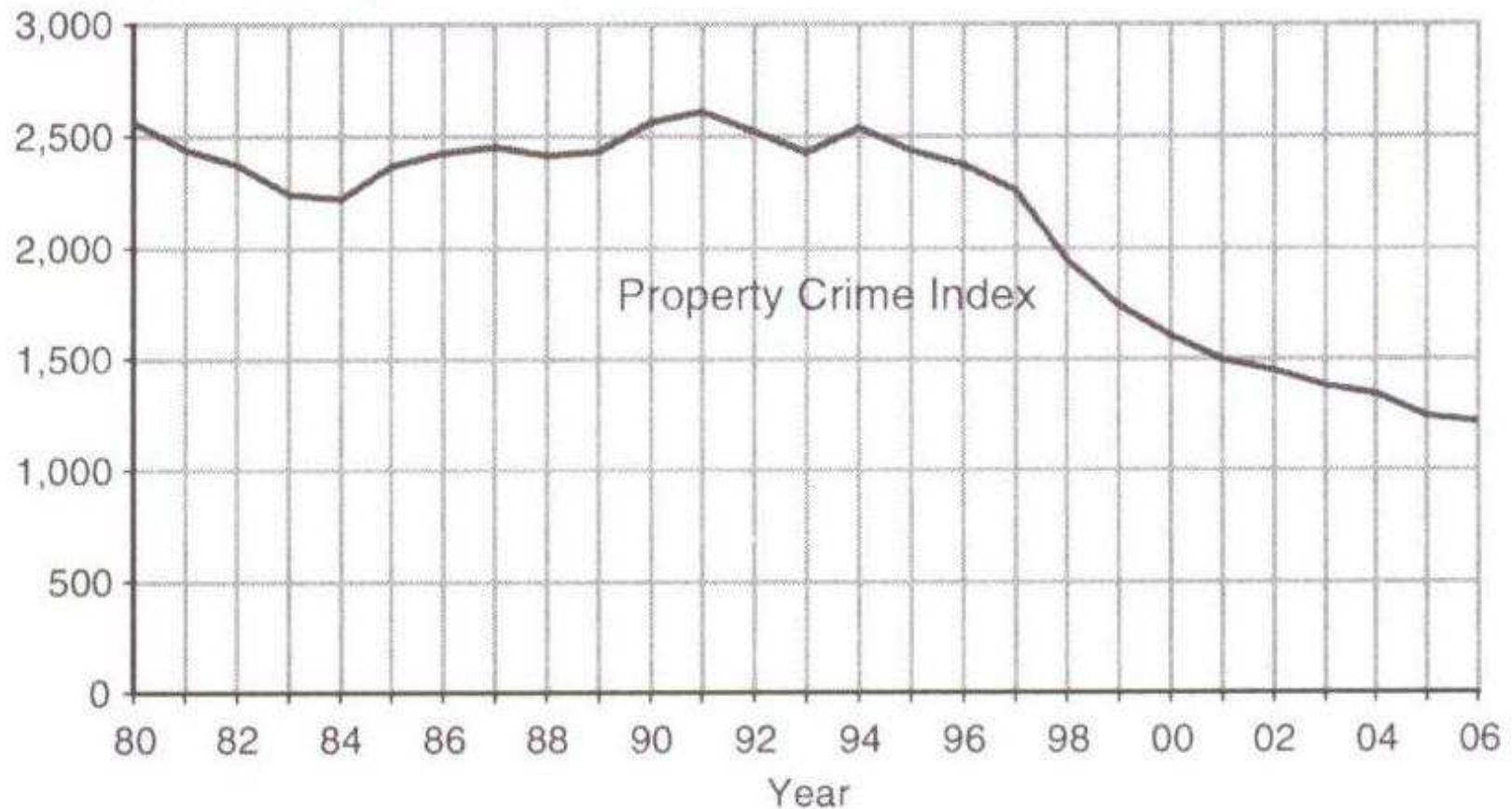
- Of 6.6% of youth arrested (2006),
 - 8% to adult court, 68% to juvenile court
- Of juvenile court cases (1998)
 - 63% of cases adjudicated = 2.8% of juveniles
 - 58% formal probation = 1.6% of juveniles
 - 26% incarcerated = .7% of juveniles
- Incarcerated at a given time(1999)
 - 117,000 = ~.35% of juveniles
 - 25% detained, 75% committed
 - Of these, 3900 in adult state prisons

Historical Trends: Violent Arrests



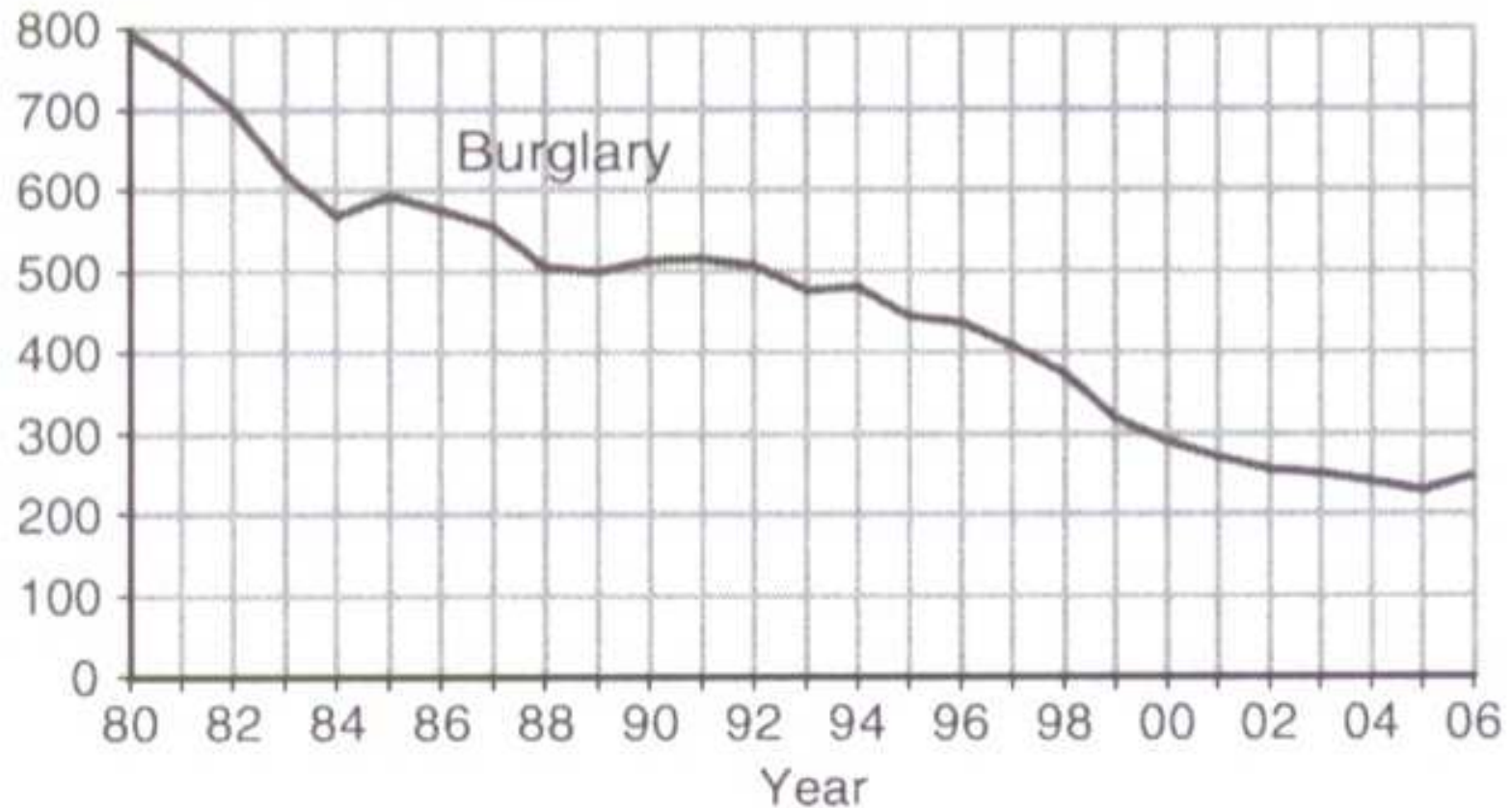
Historical Trends: Property Arrests

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



Historical Trends Can Vary Greatly by Offense

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10–17



A Little Longer Time Frame

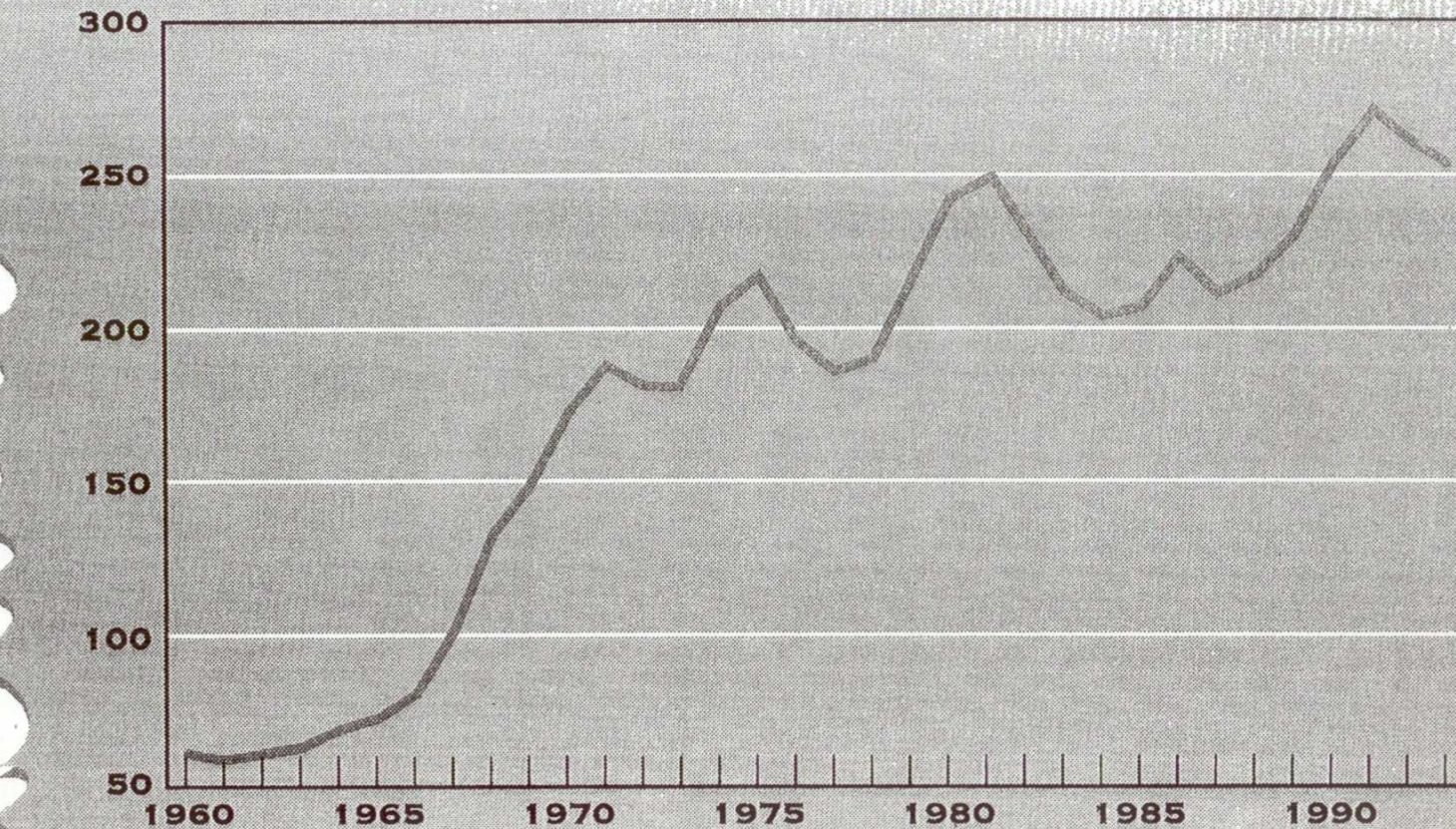


FIGURE 3-9 Robbery, 1960-1993 (Rates per 100,000 population)

Developmental Course: Age & Arrest

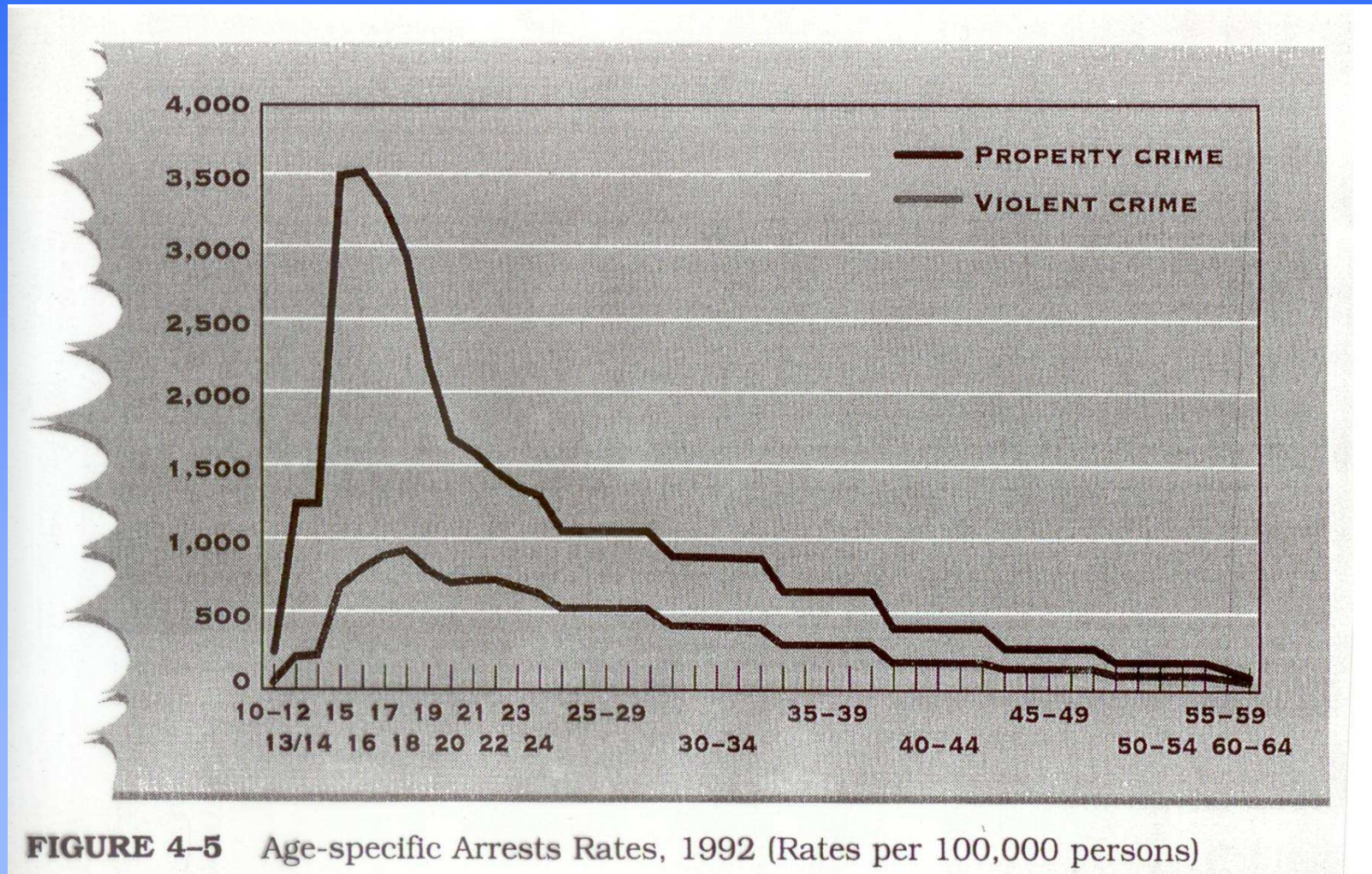
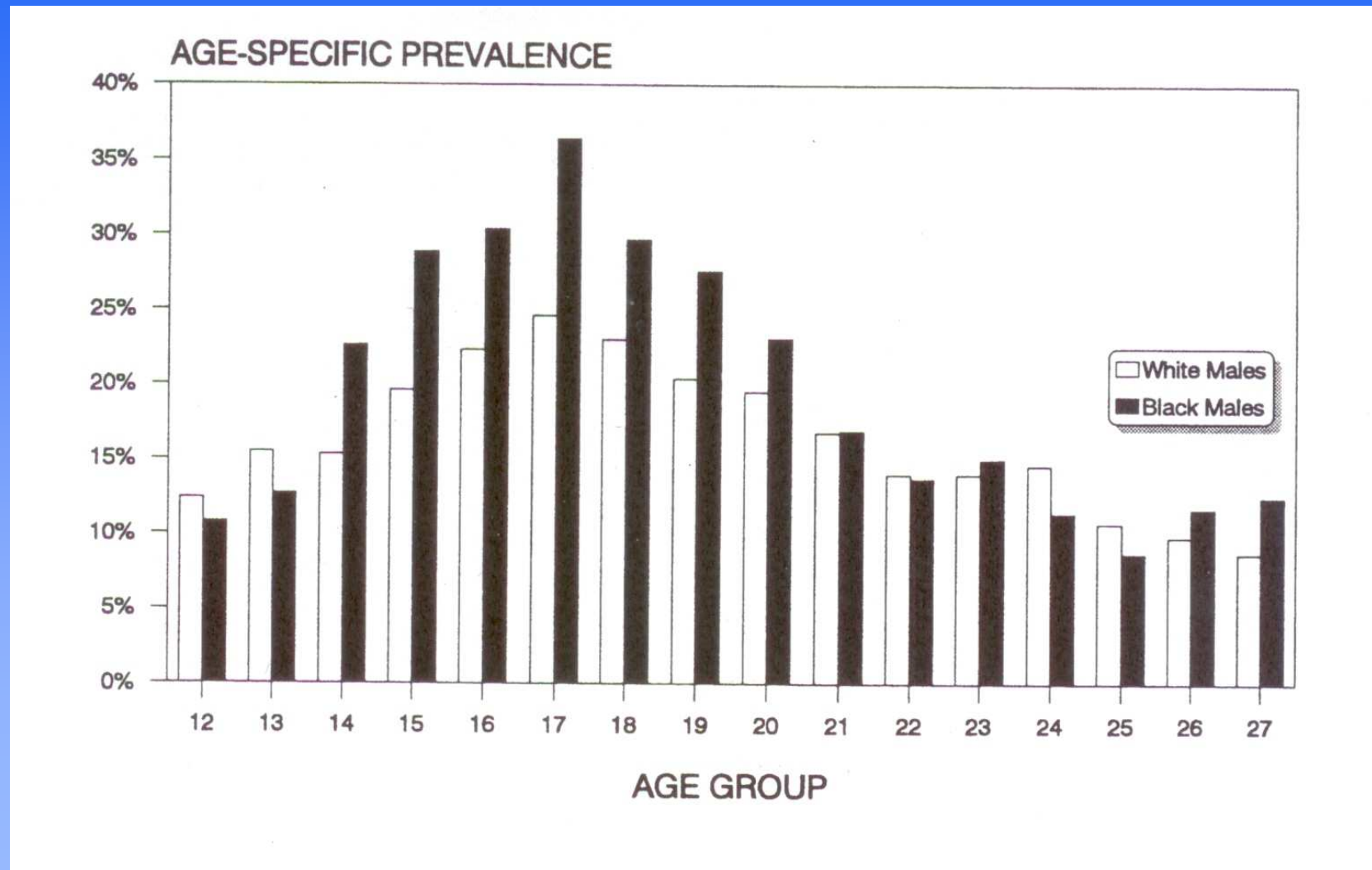


FIGURE 4-5 Age-specific Arrests Rates, 1992 (Rates per 100,000 persons)

Age & Serious Self Report



National Youth Survey, Serious self-reported violence

Developmental Course

- Peak age dependent on social definition
 - Behaviors first observed in toddlers and decline rapidly thereafter (Tremblay)
- Considerable stability in individual differences over life course
 - But considerable change as well
 - Robins dictum . . .
- Early onset correlated with serious & long term offending
 - As is extreme involvement at any age

Demographic Variations

- Sex differences
 - Males engage in more illegal behavior
 - Difference largest for most serious offenses
 - 60% of larceny arrests, 76% aggr assault, 91% robbery
- Race/Ethnicity
 - African Americans' rates higher
 - Difference largest for arrest and violence, e.g., 10:1 robbery arrests, 2.2:1 for property arrests, < 2:1 for self reported serious violence
 - White, Asian, and Native American rates lower
 - Latino rates not well documented

Demographic Variations

- Socio-Economic Status
 - Only weakly related to self report
 - Strongly related to justice system dispositions
- Urban/Rural
 - Population size positively correlated with delinquency rates
 - Considerable variation among places with small populations

Established Correlates

- Personality
 - Impulsiveness, self control, sensation seeking, conscientiousness
 - Agreeableness, negative emotionality
 - Neuropsychological deficits, esp. verbal
- Family
 - Coercive parenting, abuse
 - Parental monitoring
 - Affective relations, attachment

Established Correlates (cont.)

- School
 - Bonding, commitment, effort
 - Grades, performance
- Peers
 - Delinquent friends
 - Unsupervised, unstructured socializing
- Community
 - Economic disadvantage, residential instability
 - Collective efficacy

The Generality of Deviance

- Strongest correlates are other problem behaviors
- What behaviors?
 - Violence, property, substance use, sex, driving . . .
- Shared versus unique variation
 - Need both types of theory
- Implications
 - Shared causes or directional influence?
 - What do they share?
 - Norm violation, risk & excitement, what else?

Peer Influence

- Prominence in theory and findings
 - Often portrayed as strongest influence
- Methodological issues
 - Reliance on perceptions about friends
 - Selection; reciprocal influence
 - Implications: Peer influence more limited
- Promising directions
 - Social network approaches

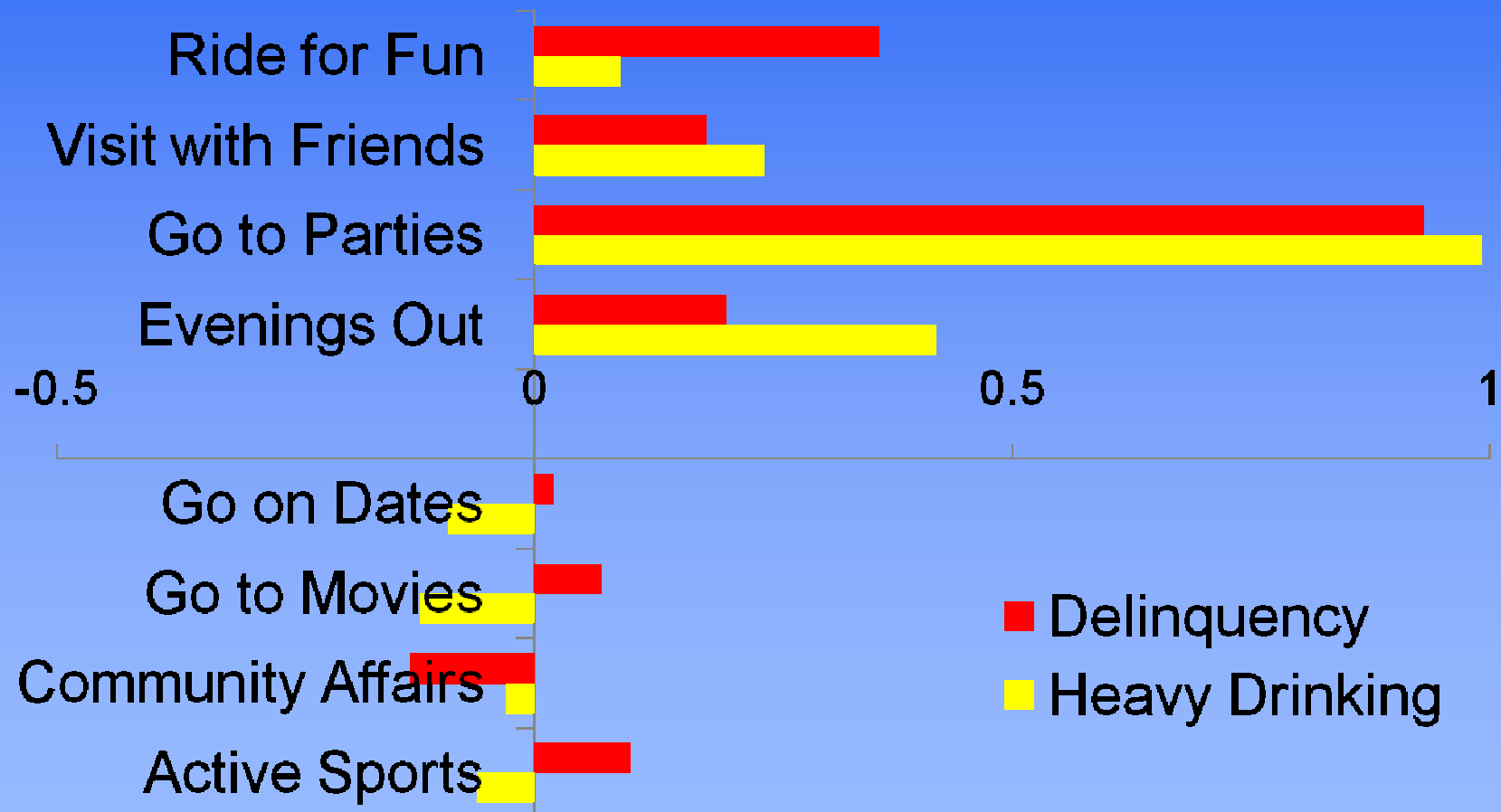
Time Use & Illegal Behavior

- Opportunity explanation & 3 elements of time use
- Breadth of evidence
- Developmental course
- Consistency of relationship
- An explanatory bridge

What Activities Bring Opportunities for Trouble?

- Spending time with peers
 - Can provide assistance
 - An appreciative audience
- In the absence of authority figures
 - People obligated to respond to trouble
 - Leisure activities away from adult family members
- Engaged in unstructured activities
 - That leave time available for deviance

Relationship of Activities & Problem Behavior



Unstructured Socializing & Problem Behavior

- Found by at least 17 studies
- Holds for:
 - Ages 9 to 26
 - Males and females
 - Majority and minority ethnicity
 - Varieties of illegal and problem behaviors
 - Crime & delinquency
 - Alcohol Use
 - Illicit Drugs
 - Dangerous Driving

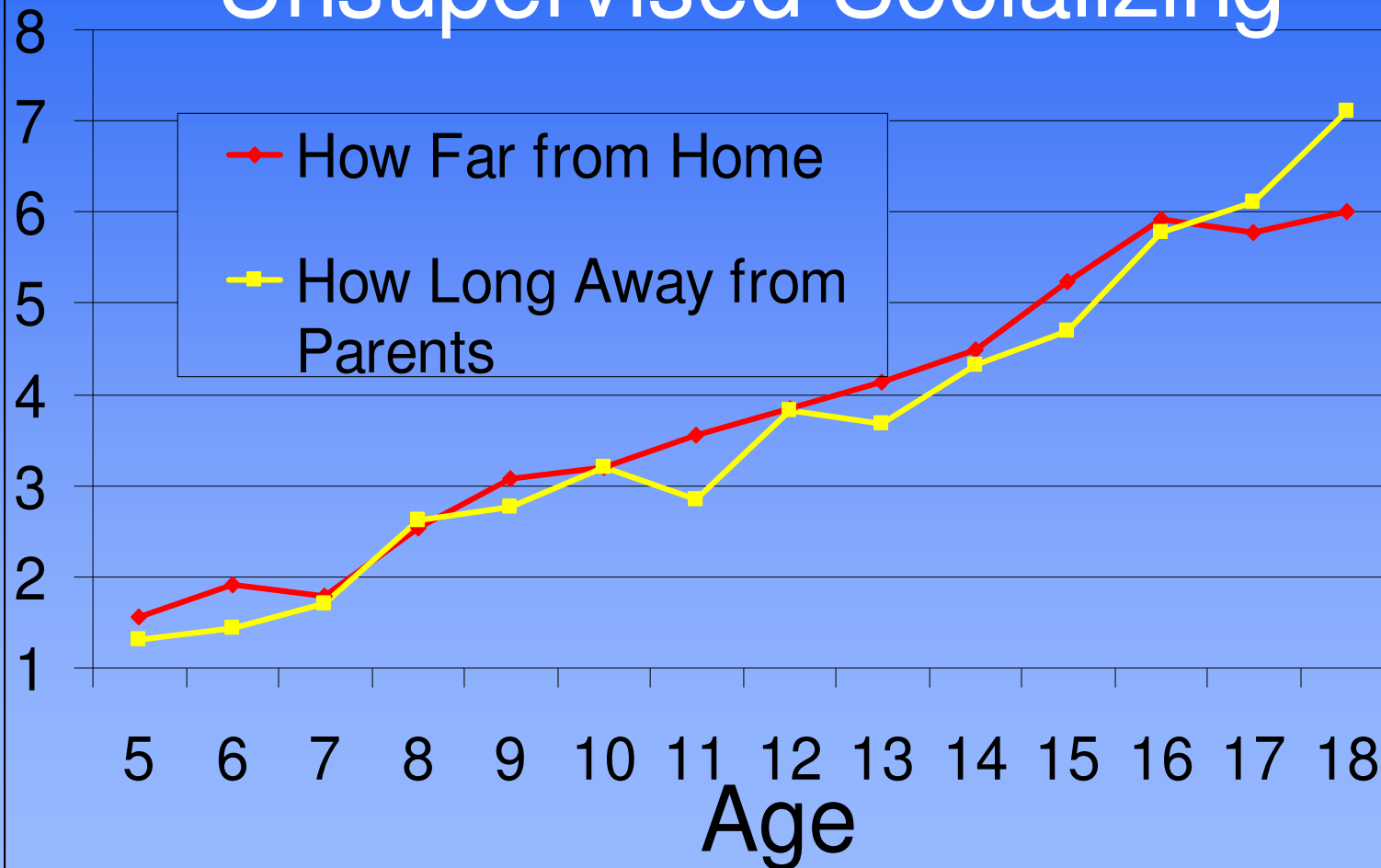
Kinds of Evidence

- Qualitative and quantitative methods
- High and low risk populations
- International: many Western nations
- Cross-cultural
 - Variation across 50 pre-literate cultures
- Holds with strong controls
 - Many covariates; within-person/fixed effects

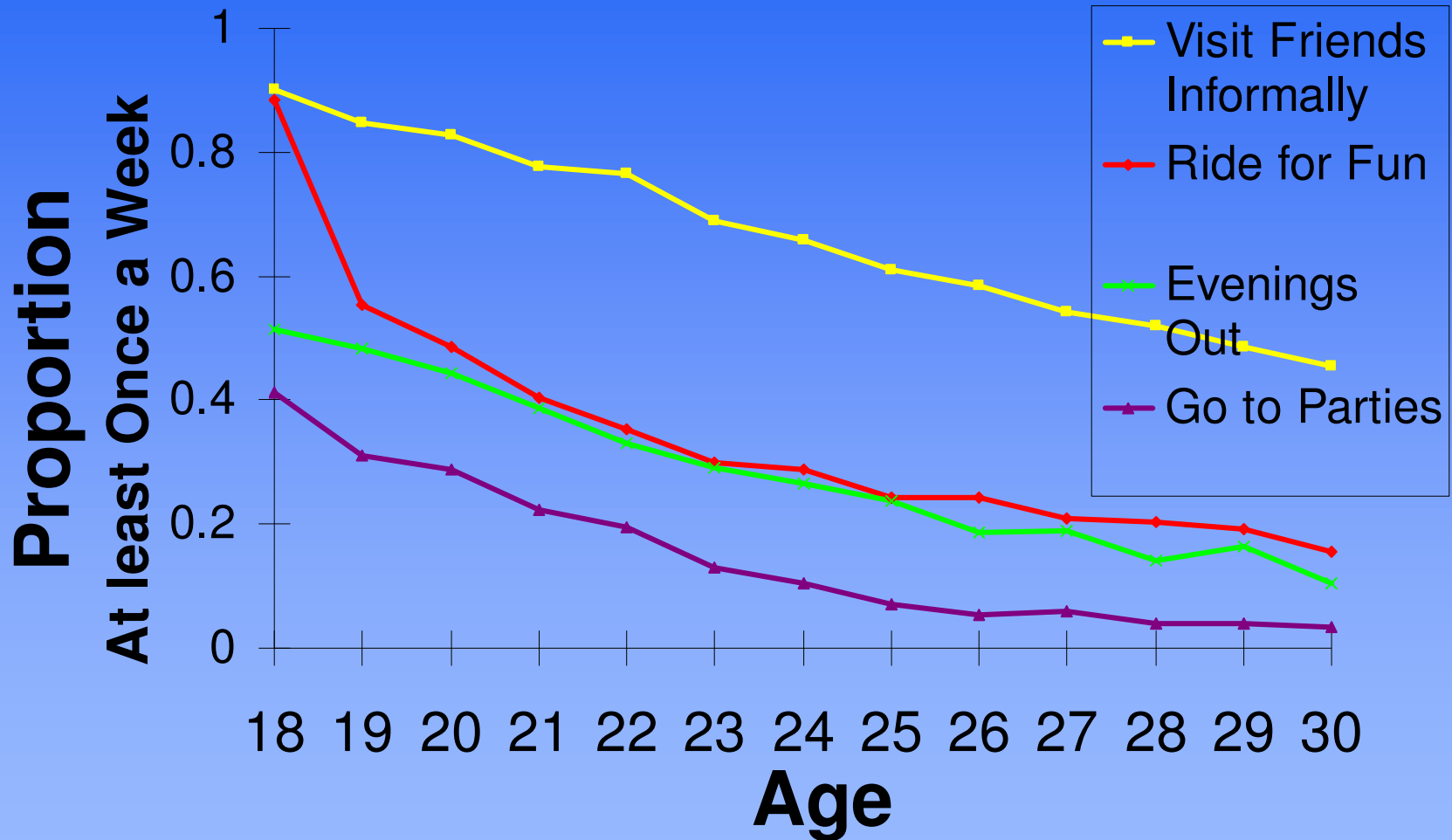
Developmental Course of Unstructured Socializing

- Increases through adolescence
 - Response to growth in skills and judgment
 - Less concern for safety and guidance
 - Anticipation of independence
- Decreases with transition to adulthood
 - Growing responsibilities leave less time available
 - Shifting leisure preferences

Parent's Limits on Unsupervised Socializing



From Teen to Adult



Unstructured Socializing: Additional Findings

- Relationship not due to friends' delinq
- Holds for high & low risk kids
- Explanatory bridge to other factors
 - Gender
 - Teen employment
 - Marriage
 - School/Neighborhood differences
 - Both individual and context effect