Lecture 7: A. Gangs, Neighborhoods, and B. Social Disorganization

REVIEW

 gangs
  - Start as we did in defining "juvenile delinquency."
    - What are we talking about?
    - What is the police perspective?
      The sociologist’s perspective? The gang member’s perspective?
  - Your definitions vs. "classic" definitions

produce a gang definition
  - Include diverse distinctive gang behavior (but exclude the U of M football team)
  - Start with a list of characteristics that you think all gangs share
    - Behaviors and activities
    - Attitudes and beliefs
    - Leadership
    - Patterns of social interaction
    - Legal and/or illegal activities
    - Demographics: age, sex, urban residence, income, etc.
  - Then formalize your definition, write it on a sheet of paper, and hand it in with the names of all group members
classic definitions - thrasher

- F. Thrasher (1927): A gang is an interstitial group, originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to local territory.

  • Elements
    - form in "cracks" of social fabric
    - face-to-face interaction
    - conflict gives common enemies: "men are closest to their brothers when they join in stoning others"
  • Critique: too inclusive, fits football teams

classic definitions - miller

- W. Miller (1982): A youth gang is a self-formed association of peers, bound together by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership, well-developed lines of authority, and other organizational features, who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose which generally includes the conduct of illegal activity and control over a particular territory, facility, or type of enterprise.

  • Elements
    - some level of organization
    - identifiable leaders
    - territory
    - recurrent associations
    - specific purpose
    - illegal activity

Esbensen/NYGS definition

- Finn Esbensen – Youth Gang has:
  - 3 or more members
  - Shared identity (name, colors, symbols)
  - Limited age range (12-24)
  - Some permanence and degree of organization
  - Illegal activity
  - [association with geographic area]
scale?

- **2015 National Gang Intelligence Center**
  - Estimates 33,000 US gangs (2011 report)
  - 1.4 million active gang members (precision?)
    - 88% are in nbhd-based street gangs, 9.5% prison gangs, 2.5% outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMG)
    - Tie to extremist groups, military and government
  - Most active on Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, & Twitter (less so on Snapchat, Google+, Flickr, WhatsApp, kik)
- **Thornberry et al:** gang members responsible for large proportion (2/3 in some studies) of serious violent juvenile offenses
- **Blumstein:** gangs/guns/crack and youth homicide trends

**Estimated Gangs per 1,000 population by State (NGIS 2011:13)**

**NYGS: aging gangs (esp urban)**
NYGS Sex: at least 92% male

NYGS race/ethnicity

agencies reporting gang problems (drop in late-'90s; stable since '05)
Rios & Panopticon - Ch. 3-4

- Inverting Foucault’s panopticon (89)
  - boy at center, surrounded by social control
  - no discipline; informal social or self-control
- Tyrell: Violence as collection agent
  - Electronic monitoring (p. 65)
- Jose: Gang-based attack on Puppet (p. 67)
  - 2 wks detention -> 6m group home -> Camp Sweeney commitment for gun (culture of street justice at camps; PO advice?)
- Schools, police, POs reinforced code

Rios 4: “zookeepers”

- Well-intentioned adults participated in criminalization of the boys
  - Victims: Spider stabbed at 15, erroneously registered as a gang member (p. 77)
- Teachers & “continuation school”
  - Criminalize via threats; drugs; narcs
- Parents & “courtesy stigma”
  - Parenting lessons from institutions
- Probation, CJ in community centers
  - Parents, teachers, POs, police
  - High expectations; little support p. 84;
  - magnifying glass effect -> minor arrests
  - Anger management; life skills courses taught by P.O.s (snitching); no funding for youth workers

7B. Social Structural Theories

- Contrast with individual or social-psychological theories
  - Social Disorganization
  - Anomie and Opportunity
  - Conflict
  - Gender-based
- “Root” social and cultural causes
- Then, Delinquent Careers in the Juvenile Justice System
Social Disorganization Theory

- **Background**
  - Race, ethnicity, and “Born Criminals”
  - Clifford Shaw & Henry McKay (1942): a sharp rebuke to racist stereotypes

- **Assumptions**
  - Delinquency due to breakdown of community institutional controls
  - Normative consensus
  - Disorganization is caused by rapid social change (industrialization, urbanization, immigration)
  - Social disorganization leads to self-perpetuating criminal values and traditions

Social Disorganization

- **Conceptual Tools**
  - Social disorganization
  - Ethnic succession
  - Cultural transmission of delinquent traditions (p. 387 – “traditional behavior”)

- **Methods**
  - Maps! Descriptive statistics
  - Life histories

- **Critique**
  - Ecological stability
  - Ethnic groups do not intermingle
  - Measurement: “disorganization” = crime
**SIMPLIFIED SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION DIAGRAM**

- Social Change
  - Industrialization
  - Urbanization
  - Immigration

  [tie to poverty, mobility, heterogeneity]

  → Weakened institutional & informal social controls

  → Development of spontaneous play groups and gangs

  → Cultural Transmission of delinquent traditions

  → High delinquency rates

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**Policy and Extensions**

- **Policy Implications: Chicago Area Projects**
  - Recreation, neighborhood health and sanitation, indigenous gang workers
  - Little evaluation data (Boston Midcity - no effect)
  - But, “moving to opportunity” experiment shows promise in reducing violent crime – at least for girls

- **Extensions: Robert Sampson (CWB) and “Neighborhood Collective Efficacy”**
  - Combines social cohesion with shared expectations for social control (p. 152)
  - Survey measures of reaction to kids hanging out, firehouse closing; plus trust/cohesion of neighbors (correlated -.3 with crime rates in meta-analysis)
  - Videotaping physical and social disorder

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**Robert Sampson (Immigration as Protective against Violence)**

- Neighborhoods that can realize their own values have lower crime rates

- But! Immigration story is different today
  - Not “suicidal maniacs” p. 29, but **lower crime**
  - “Latino Paradox”
  - Higher perceptions of disorder, but **lower disorder**
  - Raise denominator/not numerator
  - Vibrant low-crime cities

- Intact families as mechanism (e.g., Kubrin)
Next

• Review and
• Exam!
• Monday office hours 4-6 if needed