Lecture 8: Social Structural Theories

A. Racism, Neighborhoods, and Gangs
B. Social Disorganization

 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 social 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 soc. 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]
usdoj (2015) centers crime: “a gang is defined as...

(1) an association of three or more individuals; (2) whose members collectively identify themselves by adopting a group identity, which they use to create an atmosphere of fear or intimidation frequently by employing one or more of the following: a common name, slogan, identifying sign, symbol, tattoo or other physical marking, style or color of clothing, hairstyle, hand sign or graffiti; (3) the association’s purpose, in part, is to engage in criminal activity and the association uses violence or intimidation to further its criminal objectives; (4) its members engage in criminal activity, or acts of juvenile delinquency that if committed by an adult would be crimes; (5) with the intent to enhance or preserve the association’s power, reputation, or economic resources; (6) the association may also possess some of the following characteristics: (a) the members employ rules for joining and operating within the association; (b) the members meet on a recurring basis; (c) the association provides physical protection of its members from other criminals and gangs; (d) the association seeks to exercise control over a particular location or region, or it may simply defend its perceived interests against rivals; or (e) the association has an identifiable structure; (7) this definition is not intended to include traditional organized crime groups, such as La Cosa Nostra, groups that fall within the Department’s definition of “international organized crime,” drug trafficking organizations or terrorist organizations.

how many gangs and members? [how would you measure?]

- 2015 National Gang Intelligence Ctr (USDOJ)
  - Survey (fed, state, local, tribal) law enforcement
    - estimates ~30,000 US gangs (2012 report)
    - ~850,000 active gang members (precision?)
  - Pyrooz & Sweeten (2015) estimated 1.1 million using self-report NLSY97 survey data
    - 88% are in nbhd-based street gangs, 10% prison gangs, 3% outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMG)
  - Tie to extremist groups, military and government
  - Most on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter
- Thornberry et al: gang members responsible for large proportion (2/3 in some studies) of serious violent juvenile offenses
  - Most in gangs for relatively short time (< 2 years)
  - Blumstein: gangs/guns/crack and youth homicide

Age: Younger in self-report

- NYGS (Official)
  - Aging in urban gangs? (% adult)

- NLSY97 (Self-report) Pyrooz & Sweeten 2015
  - Peak at 5% at 14

Sex: at least 92% male

- NYGS (Official)
  - ~8% of gang members female

- NLSY97 (Self-report) Pyrooz & Sweeten 2015
  - “Have you ever belonged to a gang?” from age 5-17
  - 29% of self-reported gang members were female

Race/ethnicity

- NYGS (official):
  - 46% Hispanic/Latino
  - 35% Black
  - 12% White
  - 8% other

- NLSY (self-report): Pyrooz & Sweeten 2015

- Gang members
  - 58% White
  - 24% Black
  - 2.5% Asian
  - 9.4% Other

Ethnicity
  - 20% Hispanic/Latino
8B. 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

WEB Du Bois (1899)
Social Account of “Negro Criminal”

- Founder of US “scientific sociology”
  - P. 24: peculiarities of 1. slavery and emancipation, 2. immigration & 3. social environment;
  - Hard to retain “self-respect” in this environment
  - P. 27-8: role of “color prejudice” (work)
- Law traced from 1693: “carried to gaule” to be “publicly whipt”
  - P. 22: “visit the corridors” of courts
- Statistics
  - racial overrepresentation (Table 1); non-violent property (Table 2); “Discrimination greater then”
- Policy: P. 30: encourages “criminal, lazy & shiftless,” not “educated and industrious”
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 #9, p. 387
  - Ethnic succession, #12-13, p. 388
  - Cultural transmission of delinquent traditions (p. 387 – “traditional behavior”)
- **Methods**
  - Maps and descriptive statistics
  - Life histories, such as *The Jack-Roller*
- **Critique**
  - Ecological stability
  - Ethnic groups do not intermingle
  - Measurement: “disorganization” ≠ crime
• **SIMPLIFIED SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION DIAGRAM**

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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: 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
  - Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) in Minneapolis?

- **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
- **Stable ("intact") families may be a mechanism (e.g., Kubrin)**
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 for gun & culture of street justice
  - PO advice (p. 69) and police advice (p. 72)
• Schools, police, POs reinforced code
  - Probation “magnifying glass” (p. 87)

Rios 4: “zookeepers”

• Well-intentioned adults participated in criminalization of the boys
  - Victims: Spider stabbed at 15, erroneously registered as a gang member (p. 77-8)
• Teachers & “continuation school”
  - Criminalize via threats; drugs (exaggerated); 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

Next: Anomie

• Week 9 – 10/29 & 10/31: Anomie and Individual-Level Strain
  - A. Social Structural Theories:
    Anomie
  - B. General Strain Theory