

Lecture 8: Social
Structural Theories

A. Racism, Neighborhoods,
and Gangs

B. Social Disorganization

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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]

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scale?

- 2015 National Gang Intelligence Ctr (USDOJ)
 - Estimates ~30,000 US gangs (2012 report)
 - ~850,000 active gang members (precision?)
 - Pyrooz & Sweeten estimated 1.1 million using self-report NLSY97 data
 - 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 are active 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

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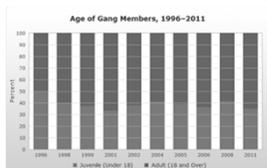
Law Enforcement Estimates of Gang Prevalence by State (NGIS 2011:13)



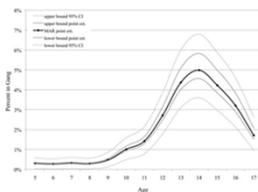
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Age: Younger in self-report

- NYGS (Official)
 - Aging in urban gangs? (% adult)
- NLSY97 (Self-report) Pyrooz & Sweeten 2015
 - Peak at 5% at 14



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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

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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

agencies reporting gang problems (drop in late-'90s; stable since '05)

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*

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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"

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Social Disorganization Theory



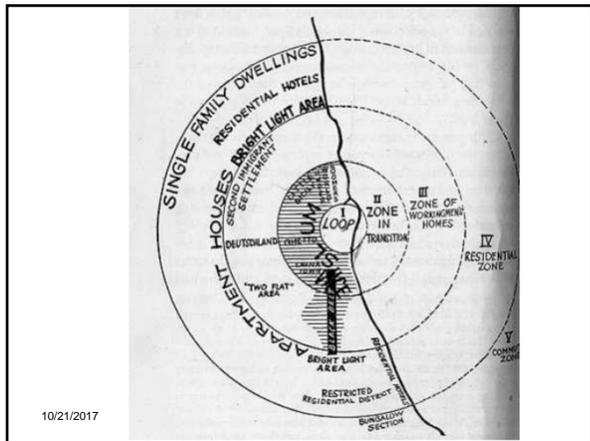
- Background
 - Race, ethnicity, and "Born Criminals"
 - Clifford Shaw & Henry McKay (1942) : a sharp rebuke to racist stereotypes
- Assumptions
 - Delinquency due to breakdown of community institutional controls
 - Normative consensus
 - Disorganization is caused by rapid social change (industrialization, urbanization, immigration)
 - Social disorganization leads to self-perpetuating criminal values and traditions

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Social Disorganization

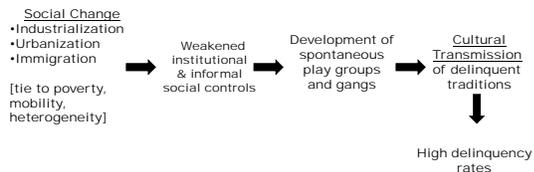
- Conceptual Tools
 - Social disorganization #9, p. 387
 - Ethnic succession, #12-13, p. 388
 - Cultural transmission of delinquent traditions (p. 387 - "traditional behavior")
- Methods
 - Maps! Descriptive statistics
 - Life histories
- Critique
 - Ecological stability
 - Ethnic groups do not intermingle
 - Measurement: "disorganization" = crime

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• SIMPLIFIED SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION DIAGRAM



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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)



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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 of Probation "magnifying glass" (p. 87)

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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

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Next: Anomie

• Week 9 – 10/30 & 11/1: Anomie and Individual-Level Strain

- A. Social Structural Theories:

Anomie

- Merton, Robert K. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie," *American Sociological Review* 3:672-82.
- CWB, Chapter 4. Steven F. Messner and Richard Rosenfeld. "The Present and Future of Institutional-Anomie Theory." Pp. 127-148.

- B. General Strain Theory

- Rios, Chapter 5. "Dummy Smart: Misrecognition, Acting Out, and Going Dumb." Pp. 97-123.
- CWB, Chapter 3. Robert Agnew. "General Strain Theory: Current Status and Directions for Further Research." Pp. 101-125.

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