

**Juvenile Delinquency
Sociology 4141
Lecture 1

Chris Uggen**

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**A. Introductions, Class Survey,
and Defining Delinquency
[anonymous survey]**

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- “Notecards” / Survey**
- **Name** (spelling phonetically helps)
 - **Contact**
 - Phone or email you check frequently
 - **Hometown**
 - **Courses**
 - Major/minor and related courses
 - **Experience**
 - Work or internship (especially in criminal or juvenile justice systems)
 - **Future**
 - Long-term career goals?
 - **Motivation**
 - Why are you here?
 - **Interests (Optional)**
 - Ever visited a prison or detention center? Any suggestions for projects, trips, or speakers?
 - **Identification (Optional)**
 - Physical description and seating tendencies

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Background

- **Team**
 - Uggen: "Who I am and how you can be too"
Professional and personal
 - Naomi Cowan: Best of the best!
 - You! Introductions
- **Time: Historical context (28 years)**
 - Crime rates? Punishment?
 - George Floyd, social justice, abolition
- **Space: MN context**
 - University
 - Community

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Syllabus and Logic of Course

- **Extent and distribution of juvenile delinquency – from 3 perspectives!**
 - Police/system, Youth self-reports, Victims
 - **Know this** by next week; we will later argue about what the numbers *mean*, but arrests and survey results are "social facts" we must consider
 - Mainly a lecture format; descriptive statistics
 - Cut through (media-fed) preconceptions about juvenile delinquency

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Sociological Theories

- **Delinquency as group or collective action**
 - But rational choice/juvenile justice system is individualized and not geared for group behavior
- **Recommended/honors: new research, "empirical status" of theories**
 - Tough reading! From the best sources
 - Recommended (esp. for newbies): Agnew text for theory basics (any edition); CWB
- **Format: Lecture, discussion, and application (in exams)**

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Application to Case Study Data

- **Victor Rios**
 - Familiar and unfamiliar subcultures (high school examples)
 - Relation of culture and subculture to social position
- **Urban gangs**
- **News and events**
- **Format: Questions and Discussion**

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Youth Crime Policy

- **What have we tried?**
- **What “works”? How do we know?**
- **Evidence? Abolition?**
- **Format: Lecture, book, discussion, some video – ARTICLES**
 - Saved money and time by assigning articles, but you need to read them
 - Articles are as important as books (all online, free)

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Course Requirements and Expectations

- **Reading varies from quick to difficult**
 - Free on canvas and chrisuggen.com 4141
 - <http://www.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/4141.htm>
- **Grades**
 - **30% Active Participation (10% contribution and 20% group/individual exercises)**
 - **20% Midterm (due 10/21)**
 - Know extent and distribution; work with theories
 - Vote on format
 - **25% Working Paper or Service Learning Option (drafts due 11/17; final paper 11/30)**
 - OR: bigger research project/proposal for grad students and ambitious undergrads
 - **25% Final Exam – format TBA**

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- **Course Policies**
 - Turn in work on time
 - Cheating?
 - Distractions and electronics (2 minute rule)
 - Grading: convert grades to points in spreadsheet, rank, and draw lines (A vs B vs C grades).
 - Note on triggers and offensive materials
 - Note on course page (pdf) <http://www.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/4141.htm>
- **Teaching philosophy**
 - Anonymous grading, except for participation
 - Evaluations
 - Accessibility
 - Learn both social facts and big ideas about them

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news on youth justice

- **National Council of State Legislators. 2020. "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System."**
 - State action on racial injustice (e.g., racial impact statements)
- **Sawyer, Liz. 2020. "St. Paul police arrest 14-year-old in shooting death of teenager." *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*. September 2, 2020.**
 - Youth crime is declining overall, but 2020 rise in shootings and murder in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and several cities.
- **Prather, Shannon. 2019. "Ramsey County's century-old Boys Totem Town closes for good." *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*. August 14, 2019.**
 - Juvenile decarceration in past 20 years - many facilities closing

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Defining and Measuring Delinquency

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**discussion guidelines
(Naomi Cowan)**

- We are here as a learning community, so please keep from verbally attacking individuals or groups who may share different beliefs.
- Respect people’s individual experiences.
- Remember that we are all continuously learning from each other.
- Embrace the discomfort that comes with learning something new
- Take a step back if you need to.
- Stay engaged.
- Expect and accept that we may not have all of the answers...yet.

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Purpose

- Define juvenile delinquency legally and sociologically
 - What do “delinquents” have in common?
 - Why make a distinction between crimes committed by juveniles and those committed by adults?
- Social creation of “childhood” as a distinct stage in the life course
 - Kids gain: more humane, less exploited
 - Kids lose: economically and emotionally dependent
- Definitions are changing social constructions
 - texts differ

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Defining delinquency

- A juvenile is someone who has not reached the “age of majority”
 - Juvenile status is defined by age, but varies by jurisdiction
 - Upper bound (“age of majority”) is usually 17, but sometimes 16 (GA, MI, MO, TX, WI) or 15 (NC) – all states have transfer rules
 - Minnesota is 17 (Minn. Stat. § 260B.007)
 - “Raise the Age” movement (VT to 19; CT to 18; NY to 17; bills in MA, AZ to 18)
 - Lower bound (“age of reason”) was 7 in English Common Law & ~5 states.

9/6/2021 • Many states have no lower limit (age 10 in Minn.)¹⁵

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2018 [Minnesota Statutes 260B.007 DEFINITIONS.](#)
 ... Subd. 5. **Court.** "Court" means juvenile court unless otherwise specified in this section.
 Subd. 6. **Delinquent child.**
 (1) who has violated any state or local law, except as provided in section 260B.225, subdivision 1, and except for juvenile offenders as described in subdivisions 16 to 18;
 (2) who has violated a federal law or a law of another state and whose case has been referred to the juvenile court if the violation would be an act of delinquency if committed in this state or a crime or offense if committed by an adult;
 (3) who has escaped from confinement to a state juvenile correctional facility after being committed to the custody of the commissioner of corrections; or
 (4) who has escaped from confinement to a local juvenile correctional facility after being committed to the facility by the court.
 (b) The term delinquent child does not include a child alleged to have committed murder in the first degree after becoming 16 years of age, but the term delinquent child does include a child alleged to have committed attempted murder in the first degree.
 (c) The term delinquent child does not include a child alleged to have engaged in conduct which would, if committed by an adult, violate any federal, state, or local law relating to being hired, offering to be hired, or agreeing to be hired by another individual to engage in sexual penetration or sexual conduct.

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Legal Definitions

- **Juvenile Court Jurisdiction**
 - Children who violate the (adult) criminal law
 - Status offenders: children who violate laws prohibiting conduct for children (e.g., truancy, runaway)
 - PINS/CHIPS: "persons in need of supervision"/ "children in need of protection or services" (MN)
 - These children do not have to have violated the law to be within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court
 - Juveniles can be waived to adult court or excluded from the juvenile court based on age and offense criteria - move to "blended sentencing" in most states
- **Juvenile delinquency**
 - Law violation by persons who have not yet reached the age of majority

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Sociological Definitions

- **Concept of childhood**
 - Childhood in middle ages? (5th to 15th c)
 - Infanticide, abandonment, wet nurses, swaddling, communal I
 - Mini-adults, integrated into adult economic life
 - Recent creation of concept (17th c)
 - Economically and emotionally dependent for 2 decades
 - Denied pleasures and responsibilities of adulthood
- **Rules of age-appropriate behavior**
 - Ideal: supervised, disciplined, modest, diligent, obedient
- **Formal institutional reaction to violation**
 - 1899 Juvenile Court: less formal, civil, fewer due process rights

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The Policy Moment

- **Schiraldi, Western, and Bradner & NIJ (2015)**
 - Changing transition to adulthood -> Young adult court for 18-24
 - "Raise the Age" movement. Neurological and social basis?
 - Greatest race/ethnicity disparities at 18-24
 - Call for "Age-Responsive Criminal Justice System"
- **Justice system response reproduces (& worsens?) inequalities (and heighten "legal cynicism")**
- **John Laub & WT Grant (2014)**
 - **Emerging Adult Justice Learning Community (2017-2020)**
 - Profs: Western, Schiraldi, Osgood, Bersani, Fader, Jones, Uggen...
 - Practitioners: Judges, practitioners, DAs, MDs, reentry programs
 - **"Stubborn Facts" on victimization and offending**
 - "Chronics" (Wolfgang: 6% of boys did half the offenses)
 - Concentrated by age, sex, race, class, and neighborhood
 - **4 Ds: Decriminalization, Diversion, Due Process, Deinstitutionalization**

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3 Pictures:

(1) The "Police Picture" of Juvenile Crime Arrest

(Uniform Crime Reports)
Data reduction: let's "bullet-point" the evidence

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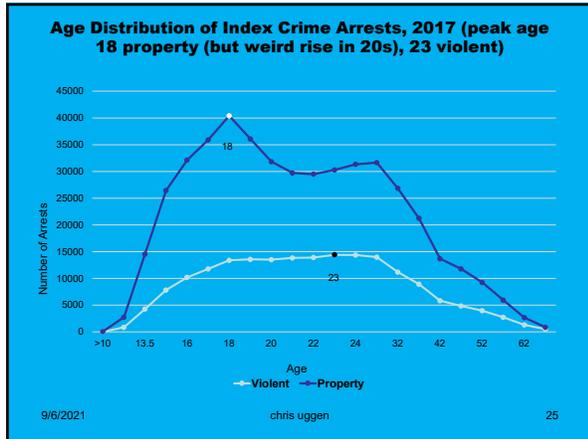
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Rashawn Ray: using VR to train police & assess discrimination

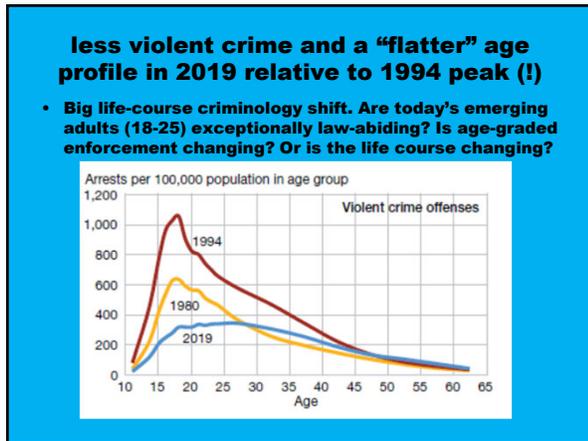


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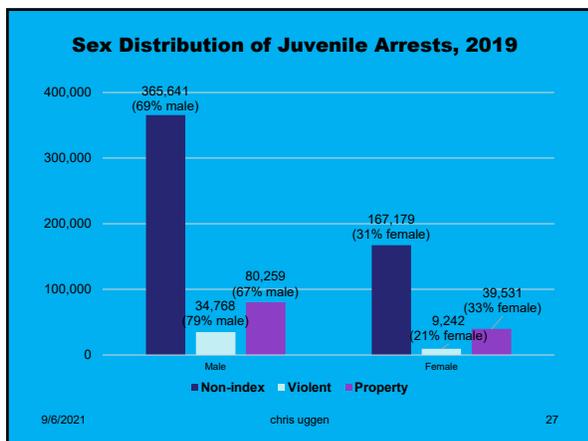
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3 “pictures”

- **General trends (refer to UCR figures in last lecture):**
 - Most youth crime is property crime
 - Overall rise since 1960s; violent rise in 80s-90s, big decline since late 1990s

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“bivariate correlates” of youth arrest

1. **Age:** property peak at 18 violent later at 23 (older!)
2. **Sex:** males are 79% of violent index; 69% other (female share rising, though)
3. **Race:** African Americans 48% of violent index
 - *interaction of age, sex, and race:* In recent years, Black males aged 14-24 have made up about 15% of homicide victims and 27% of arrestees. This group is about 1% of the population
4. **Ethnicity:** Latino rates often fall between those of Black & White (e.g., ~22% violent index; 18% overall), but data are limited
5. **Class:** kids from low-income census tracts most arrested
6. **Chronics:** 6% of male population responsible for 50% of arrests
7. **Local trends:** fewer violent as percent of total; but percent violent increased until mid-90s

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problems with police picture

A. Unreported “Dark Figure” of Crime (tip of iceberg)

1. Most youth crime is concealed (e.g. drug use) or unreported (e.g. theft)

B. Biases over Time and Space

1. Changing norms (marijuana, prostitution)
2. Changes in police priorities or “crackdowns”
3. Police biases; professionalization varies by time, space
4. Local biases, misclassifications
5. Individual biases (implicit and explicit discrimination)

C. Omissions and Idiosyncracies

1. No information on group offending
2. UCRs stop at arrest stage (cases dropped)
3. If multiple crimes, only most serious is reported
4. No federal crimes in UCR (comparatively minor flaw)

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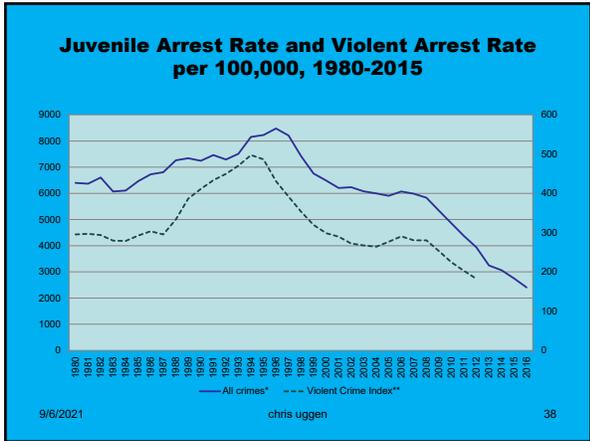
next

Extent and Nature of Delinquency

- self-reports and victimization
- Rios + big picture on crime drop & policy
- Rios, Chapter 1. "Dreams Deferred: The Patterns of Punishment in Oakland." Pp. 3-23.
- Christopher Uggen and Suzy McElrath. 2013. "[Six Social Sources of the U.S. Crime Drop](#)." Forthcoming in *Crime and the Punished*, edited by Douglas Hartmann and Christopher Uggen. New York: WW Norton.
- Sherman, Lawrence L., Denise C. Gottfredson, Doris L. MacKenzie, John Eck, Peter Reuter, and Shawn D. Bushway. 1998. "[Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising](#)." National Institute of Justice Research in Brief, Washington, DC: USGPO.

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