

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

- Name (spell phonetically if necessary)
- 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
  - Stephen Wulff
- Time: Historical context (23 years)
  - Crime rates? Punishment?
- Space: MN context
  - University
  - Community

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## Syllabus and Logic of Course

- Extent and distribution of juvenile delinquency
  - 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
  - Statistics give one view of delinquency while monographs give others
  - 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
- You've heard theories, now learn the evidence: Cullen, Wright, Blevins
  - Tough reading! From the best sources
  - Recommended: Agnew text for theory basics
- Format: Lecture, discussion, and application (in exams)

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## Application to Case Studies

### Groups of "Data"

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

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## Juvenile Delinquency Policy

- What have we tried?
- What "works"?
- Evidence?
- Format: Lecture, book, discussion, some video - ARTICLES
  - Saved money and time by assigning articles, but you need to read them
  - Articles available online are as important as two books you purchased

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## Course Requirements and Expectations

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

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

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## Defining and Measuring Delinquency

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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 state 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 or 15.
    - Minnesota is 17 (Minn. Stat. § 260B.007)
  - Lower bound ("age of reason") was 7 in English Common Law.
    - Many states do not have a lower limit (age 10 in Minn.)

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### 2012 Minnesota Statutes 260B.007 DEFINITIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Scope.** As used in this chapter, the terms defined in this section have the same meanings given to them.

Subd. 2. **Agency.** "Agency" means the local social services agency or a licensed child-placing agency.

Subd. 3. **Child.** "Child" means an individual under 18 years of age and includes any minor alleged to have been delinquent or a juvenile traffic offender prior to having become 18 years of age.

Subd. 4. **Child-placing agency.** "Child-placing agency" means anyone licensed under sections 245A.01 to 245A.16 and 252.28, subdivision 2.

Subd. 5. **Court.** "Court" means juvenile court unless otherwise specified in this section.

Subd. 6. **Delinquent child.**

(a) Except as otherwise provided in paragraphs (b) and (c), "delinquent child" means a 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 under the age of 16 years 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? (5<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> c)
    - Infanticide, abandonment, wet nurses, swaddling, communal I
    - Mini-adults, integrated into adult economic life
  - Recent creation of concept (17<sup>th</sup> 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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## 3 Pictures: (1) The "Police Picture" of Juvenile Crime

(Uniform Crime Reports)

Data reduction: let's "bullet-point" the evidence

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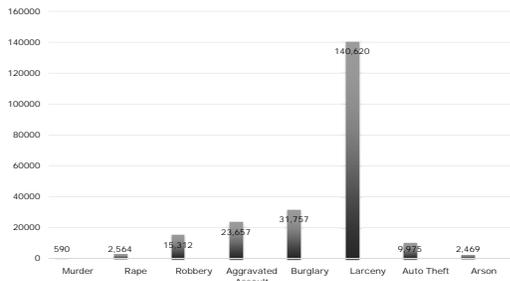
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US Distribution of Juvenile Arrests for Index Crimes, 2014 (total of 804,104 arrests)



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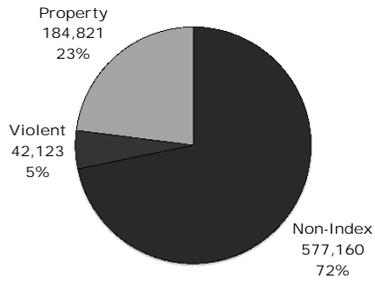
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Percent Distribution of US Juvenile Arrests by Crime Category, 2011



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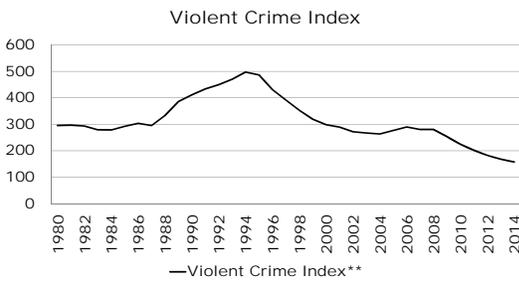
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Juvenile Violent Arrest Rate per 100,000 Juveniles Age 10-17, 1980-2014



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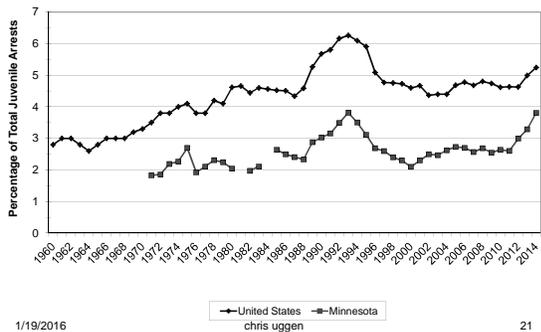
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Percentage of Juvenile Arrests involving Violent Index Crimes, 1960-2014



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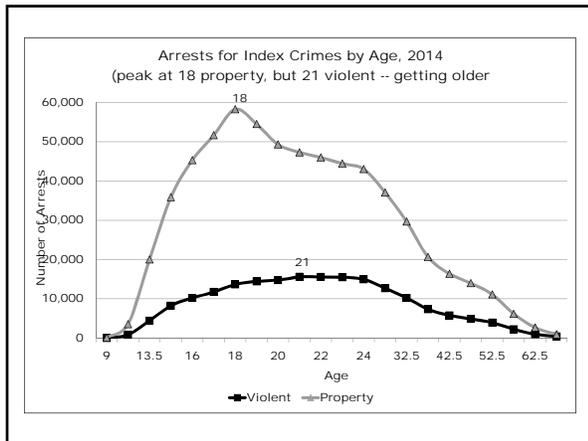
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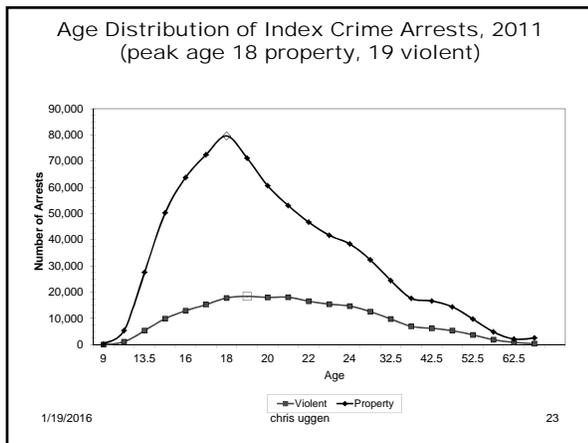
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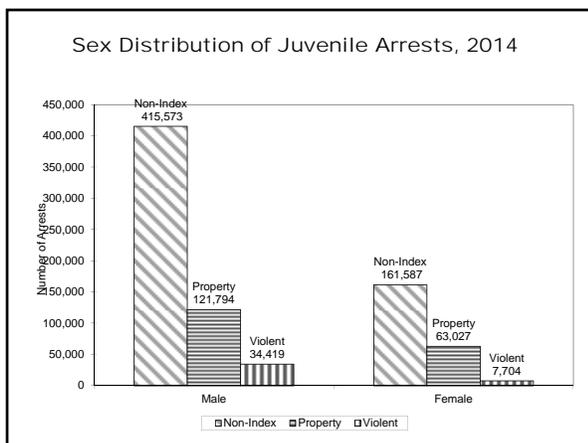
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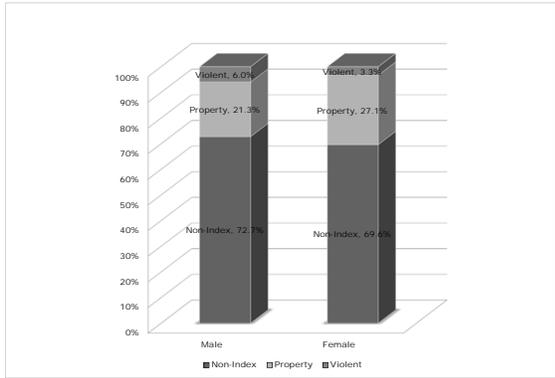
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Within-Sex Distribution of Juvenile Arrests, 2014




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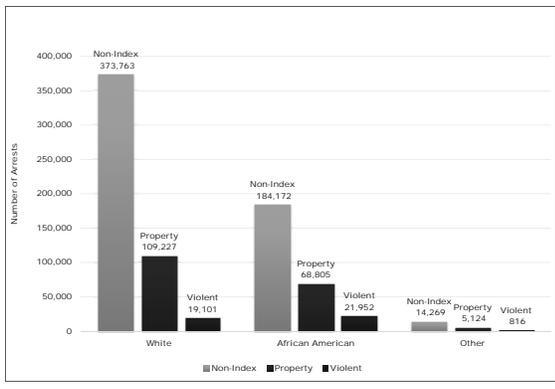
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US Racial Distribution of Juvenile Arrests, 2014




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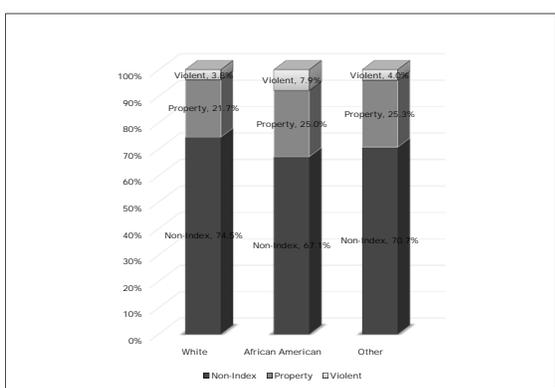
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US Distribution of Juvenile Arrests within Race, 2014




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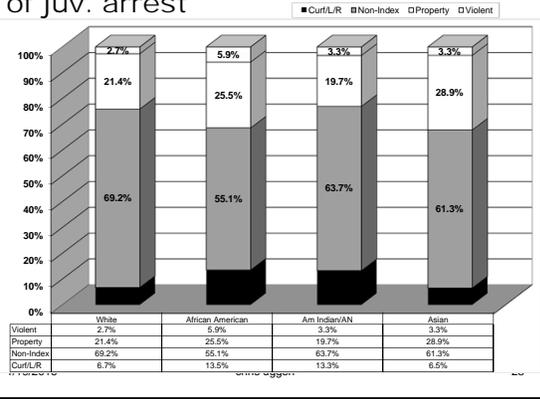
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### Minnesota within-race distribution of juv. arrest




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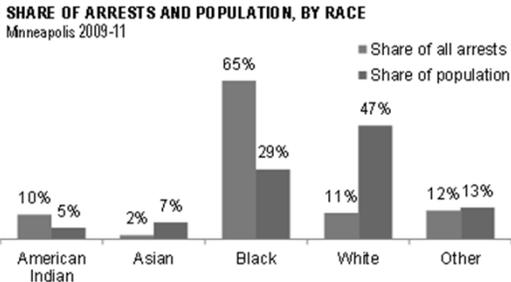
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### Minneapolis arrests by race, 2009-11

(source: Minneapolis Foundation)




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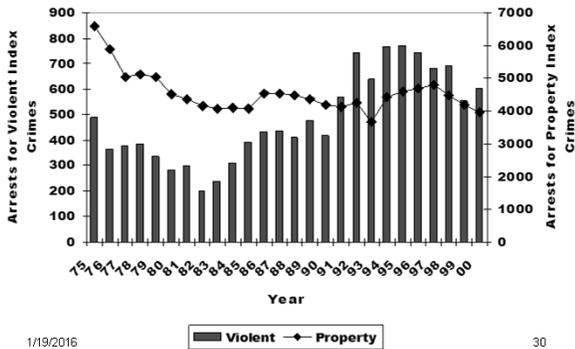
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### Juvenile Arrests for Index Crimes in Hennepin County, 1975-2000




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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, decline since late 1990s
  - Big recent decline in juvenile arrests, especially for less serious offenses

spring 2004

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### "bivariate correlates" of youth crime

1. Age: property peak at 16 violent later at 17-18
2. Sex: males are 85% of violent index; 75% total
3. Race: African-Americans about 52% of all violent index in 2014
  - *interaction of age, sex, and race*: One 2008 study reports African-American males aged 14-24 made up 16% of homicide victims and 27% of offenders. This group is about 1% of the population
4. Ethnicity: Latino overrepresentation in murder
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

1. "Dark Figure" or tip of the iceberg- most youth crime is concealed (e.g. drug use) or unreported (e.g. theft)
  - Systematic versus random error
2. Changing norms and expectations (marijuana, prostitution)
3. Changes in police priorities or "crackdowns"
4. Police professionalization as emergent process
5. No information on group offending
6. Local biases, misclassifications;
7. UCRs stop at arrest stage (cases dropped)
8. If multiple crimes by same offender, only most serious reported
9. 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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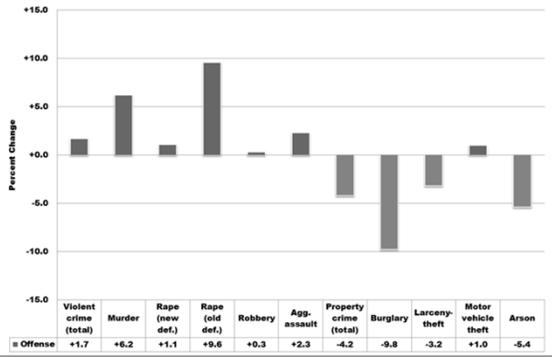
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**Percent Change in UCR Crimes Known to Police  
(Jan-June 2015 versus Jan-June 2014)**



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