Aggravated Inequality: Delinquency, School, and Neighborhood Disadvantage

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- NIJ support (Grant number 2000-IJ-CX-0026) to use the NLSY to study how labor markets and employment influence criminal involvement by young adults and juveniles
- This paper presents results for juveniles
- Two questions:
  - How is juvenile employment related to crime?
  - Does labor market participation of adults effect juveniles?
Work and juvenile delinquency

- Previous studies found a positive relationship between work and delinquency
- Interpretations for this finding
  - work causes delinquency
  - excessive work causes delinquency
  - children already likely to engage in delinquency are more likely to work than the average school kid
- Warren, LePore, & Mare (2000)
For juveniles, it is school that matters

- Research has found that school attachment and school performance are negatively associated with delinquency.
- In earlier work we found that kids who work were, on average, more involved in delinquency.
- But the highest levels of delinquency are among kids who are neither working nor in school.
This Paper—focus on the neighborhood context

- Wilson’s argument in *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987)
- When jobs disappear in communities it usually is not the adults who lose jobs that turn to crime
- So, how does job loss translate into increased crime?
- What becomes of kids when adults are marginalized...
Labor Stratification and Juveniles

- The adult thesis—all jobs are not created equal
  - Unemployment and secondary sector jobs
- For kids adult marginalization leads to lower school investment
  - (Crutchfield et al., 1993; Wadsworth 1997; Bellair, et al., 2003).
- Which in turns leads to more delinquency
The Study

- NLSY & The Center for Human Resources Development at The Ohio State Univ.—trials and tribulations—“The Matrix”
- Used Mothers and Children of the NLSY-98
- Series of OLS regressions & path models on the full sample and 3 sub-samples
  - Respondents in Metropolitan Areas
  - Respondents in Central Cities
  - Respondents outside of SMSAs—“Rural Sample”
Variables in the Models

- Background variables: sex, age, race, ethnicity, father or stepfather present
- Parental SES variables: family pov, mother’s ed.
- School variables: attachment, grades, par. invol.
- Youth employment
- Mothers employment
- Neighborhood variables: % black, % Hispanic, Disadvantage, % marginal employment, % of adults w/out a high
Results

- Juvenile employment is unrelated to delinquency
- Mother’s employment is unrelated to delinquency
- School Attachment and grades are inversely related to delinquency
- Family poverty is positively related
- Mother’s employment is positively related to school performance
GPA & Delinquency

-0.05
-0.045
-0.04
-0.035
-0.03
-0.025
-0.02
-0.015
-0.01
-0.005
0

GPA

FULL  SMSA  City  Rural
Interaction Effects

- Focus on the interaction of school performance—GPA and measures of neighborhood disadvantage
- GPA*Disadvantage
- GPA*% of Adults marginal to the labor market
- GPA*% of Adults without a high school diploma
Interaction of Grades and Disadvantage: Whole Sample

Legend
- High Disadvantage
- Mean Disadvantage
- Low Disadvantage
Interaction of Grades and Disadvantage: In SMSA Sample

Legend:
- Blue: High Disadvantage
- Green: Mean Disadvantage
- Red: Low Disadvantage
Summary or Results

- Living in disadvantaged neighborhoods tempers good grades as a protective factor.
- Those with low grades and living in disadvantage are considerably more likely to be delinquent—"aggravated inequality."
- The same is true where more adults are marginal to the labor market and without a high school diploma.
So What?

- Children in disadvantaged neighborhoods suffer because of what their parents cannot provide.
- The quality of their schools is generally lower.
- Those schools reproduce inequality.
- Juveniles there are more likely to become involved in crime.
- That subsequent crime leads to poorer life chances.
Interpreting the interaction effect

**NEIGHBORHOOD DISADVANTAGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADES</th>
<th>High (GPA = 1)</th>
<th>Mean (GPA = 4.84)</th>
<th>Low (GPA = 12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>10.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Sample N=1497</th>
<th>In SMSA N=1167</th>
<th>Central City N=475</th>
<th>Rural N=330</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Poverty</td>
<td>.080** .166 (.054)</td>
<td>.063* .124 (.059)</td>
<td>.069 .132 (.091)</td>
<td>.161** .432 (.146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment to School</td>
<td>-.182*** -.225 (.032)</td>
<td>-.156*** -.194 (.037)</td>
<td>-.133** -.174 (.062)</td>
<td>-.284*** -.351 (.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>.077** .027 (.009)</td>
<td>.058^ .019 (.010)</td>
<td>.074 .026 (.018)</td>
<td>.124* .050 (.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Disadvantage</td>
<td>.181* .117 (.050)</td>
<td>.225* .135 (.053)</td>
<td>.328* .173 (.075)</td>
<td>.098 .089 (.159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Term-GPA*Disadv.</td>
<td>-.158** -.020 (.009)</td>
<td>-.197* -.023 (.009)</td>
<td>-.258* -.026 (.013)</td>
<td>-.095 -.018 (.028)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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