

PENNSSTATE



# Hanging Out and Up to No Good:

## The Link Between Time Use and Delinquency, And Its Implications for Youth Programs

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# Views of Time Use & Delinquency

- “Idle hands” or “Involvement”
  - Being busy keeps you out of trouble
  - But busy doing what and for how long . . . ?
- Activities of “deviant subculture”
  - “Pool halls,” “street corners,” etc.
  - Effect of activity or who is there?
- A routine activity alternative
  - Shift focus to activities and opportunities for delinquency

# Routine Activity Perspective

- Shifts attention:
  - From the person
  - To situations and opportunities
- Opportunities arise in everyday life.
- Most research has emphasized:
  - Group differences in victimization
  - Time trends in aggregate crime rates

# Routine Activity Perspective

- Necessary elements for crime to occur
  - Potential Offender
  - Suitable Target
  - Absence of Capable Guardians
- Situational Motivation
  - Rewards of offending inherent in the act & situation
  - Openness to deviance, not motivation for deviance
- Premise: More time in situations conducive to deviance, more offending.

# What Activities Bring Opportunities for Trouble?

- Spending time with peers
  - Can provide assistance
  - An appreciative audience
- In the absence of authority figures
  - People obligated to respond to trouble
  - Leisure activities away from adult family members
- Engaged in unstructured activities
  - That leave time available for deviance

# Examples of Unstructured Socializing: “Hanging Out”

- How often do you:
  - Ride around in a car (or motorcycle) just for fun
  - Get together with friends, informally
  - Go to parties or other social affairs
- During a typical week, on how many evenings do you go out for fun and recreation?
- Hours per week hanging around with friends, not doing anything in particular, where no adults are present

# Examples of Unstructured Socializing: “Hanging Out”

- Roaming typical of serious offenders
  - Far & wide, for long hours, even among young
- Gangs: Hanging out as a primary activity
  - Set space
  - Activities as predictor and consequence of joining
- “Life is a party” criminal life style

# Activities that Don't Bring Risk (or Directly Reduce It Either)

- Laying around the house
- Structured socializing
- Organized activities
  
- Why? The limited trade off in time use
  
- Aren't some of these better for kids than others? Yes! But . . .

# Relationship of Activities & Problem Behavior



# Unstructured Socializing & Problem Behavior

- Found by at least 17 studies
- Holds for:
  - Ages 9 to 26
  - Males and females
  - Majority and minority ethnicity
  - Varieties of illegal and problem behaviors
    - Crime & delinquency
    - Alcohol Use
    - Illicit Drugs
    - Dangerous Driving

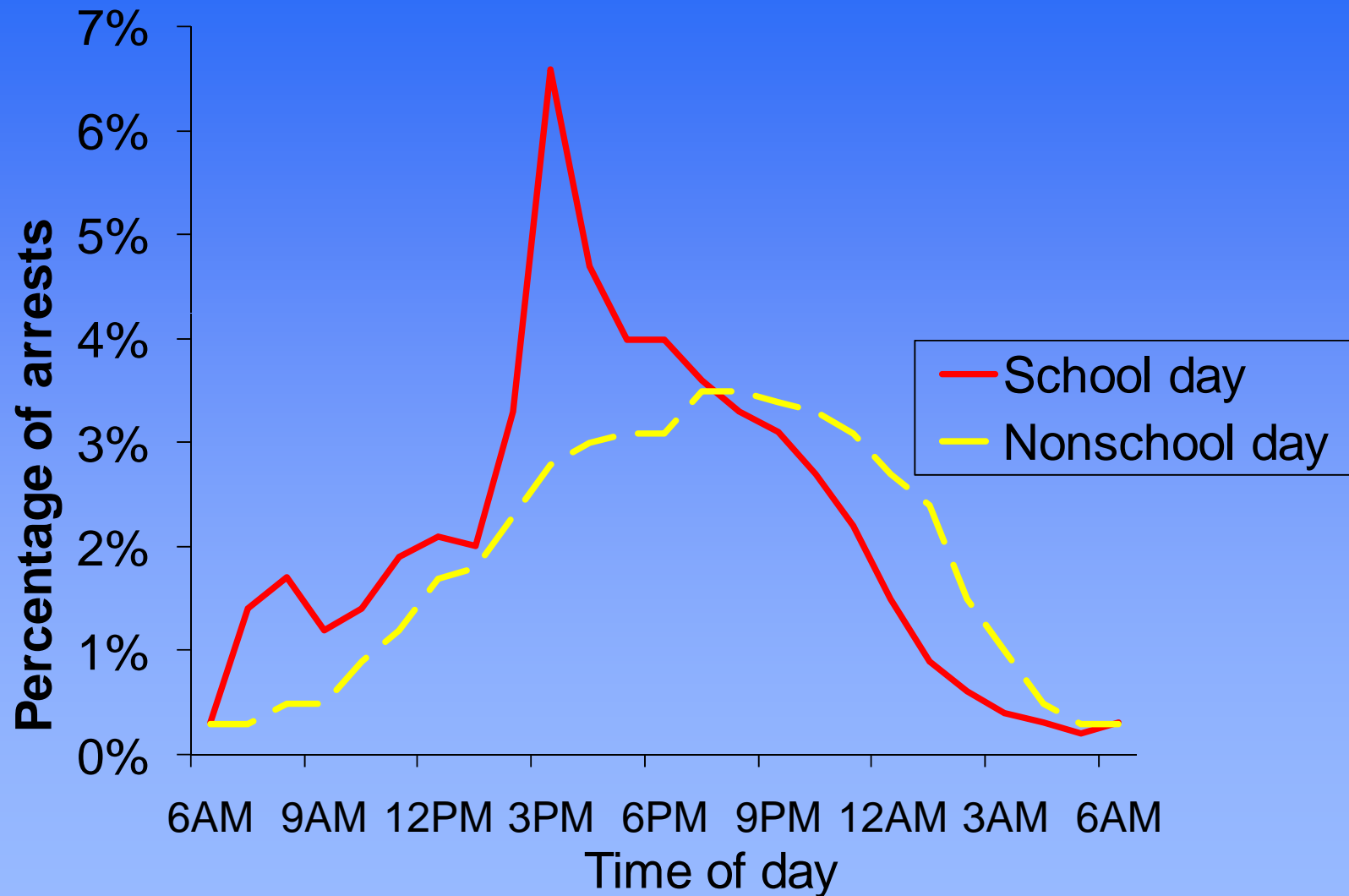
# Kinds of Evidence

- Qualitative and quantitative methods
- High and low risk populations
- International: many Western nations
- Cross-cultural
  - Variation across 50 pre-literate cultures

# What Time Will Delinquency Occur?

- When are kids hanging out with their peers, doing nothing in particular?
- Will curfews solve the problem?

# Juvenile Arrests for Aggravated Assault by Time of day



Adapted from Snyder, H. & Sickmund, M. 1999: 65

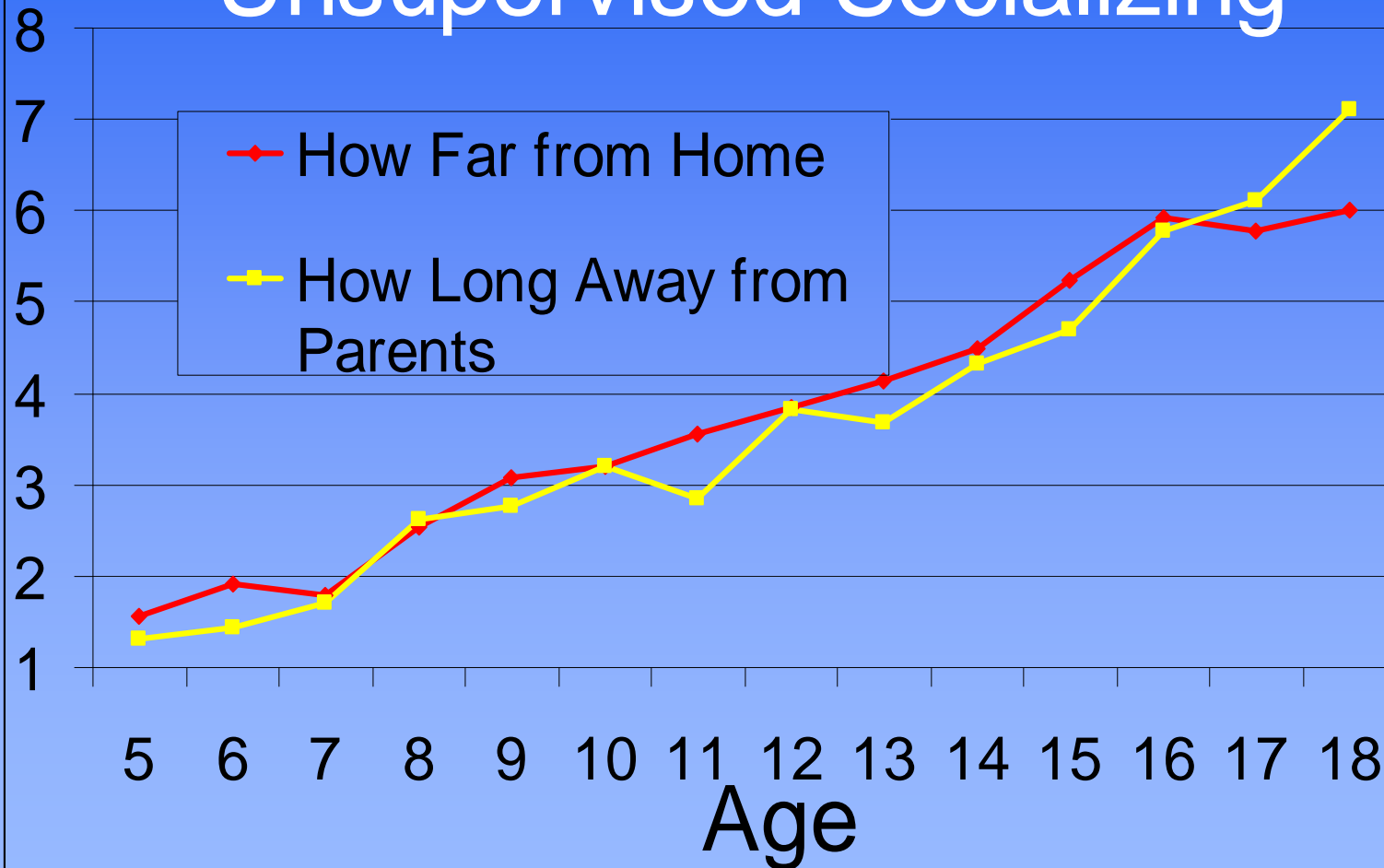
# Why 3:00 in the Afternoon?

- Schools bring kids together, and then turn them loose together
- Self report results a little different:
  - More delinquency DURING school
  - And lots of substance use Friday & Saturday nights

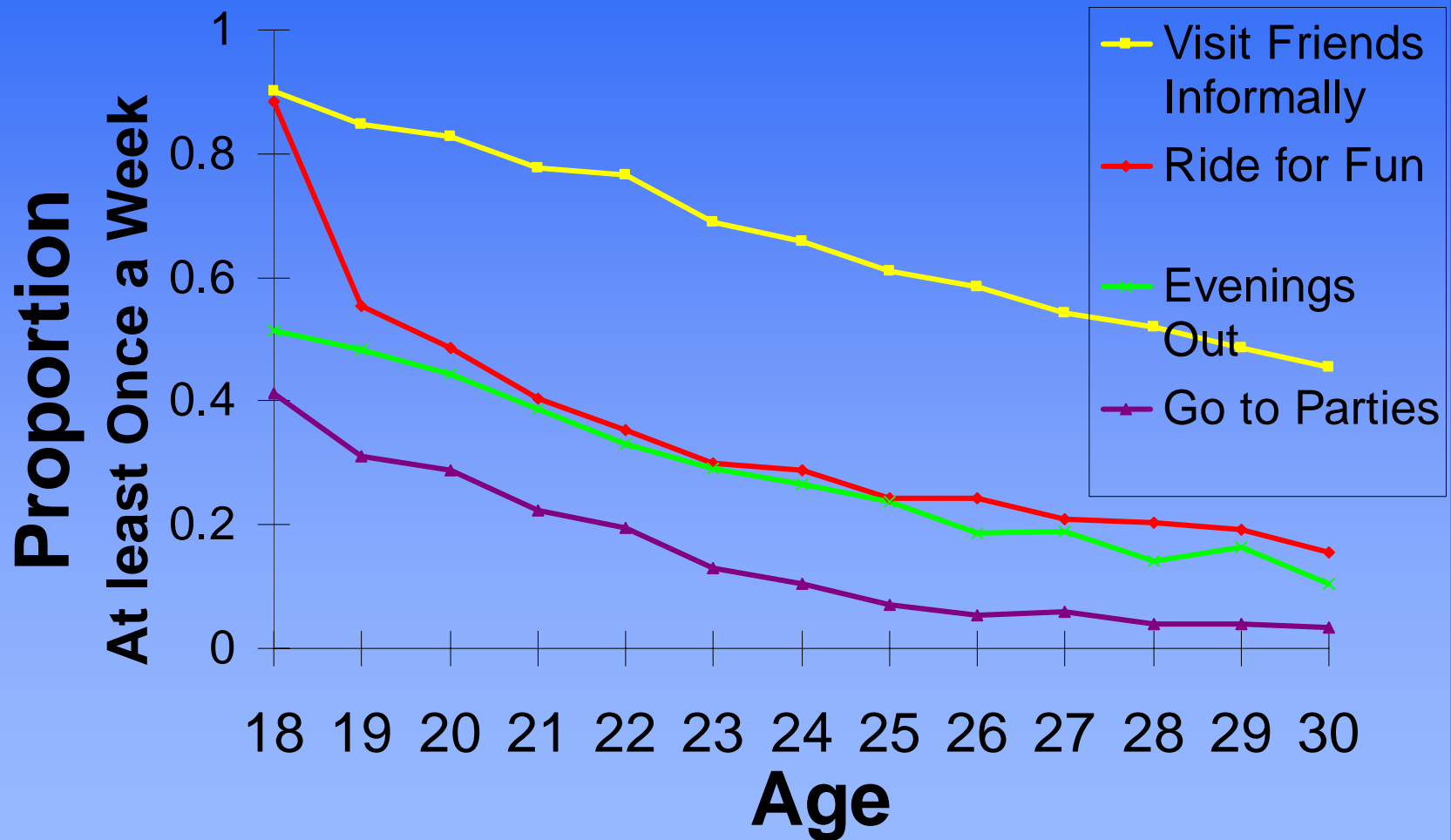
# Unstructured Socializing as Normal Teen Behavior

- Increases through adolescence
  - Response to growth in skills and judgment
  - Less concern for safety and guidance
  - Anticipation of independence
- Decreases with transition to adulthood
  - Growing responsibilities leave less time available
  - Shifting leisure preferences
- Normal to a degree . . .

# Parent's Limits on Unsupervised Socializing



# From Teen to Adult



# Does It Matter Who Your Friends Are?

- Bad friends rather than risky time use?
- Does time use only matter when its with bad friends?
- Their combined consequences
  - Haynie & Osgood, 2005
  - Independent measure of peer delinquency
    - Both matter separately; & even more jointly
    - Minor versus serious delinquency

# Effects of Hanging Out for High Versus Low Risk Kids

- Unstructured socializing affects all
  - Unstructured socializing is normal behavior
  - Broad appeal of being wild/pushing limits
- But consequences greater for high risk
  - Risk factors multiply
  - Serious delinquency requires combinations
  - Some other major risks: Personality, parenting, school, friends, . . .

# Other Factors Tied to Activities and Delinquency

- Gender
  - Males hang out more
- Social Class
  - Higher class kids out and about more (!)
- Teen employment
  - Brings more (!) unstructured socializing
- Marriage
  - Less time hanging out with friends

# The Larger Context of Hanging Out

- School/Neighborhood rates of delinquency and unstructured socializing
  - Individual effect
  - Context effect
- Origin of group differences in hanging out?
  - Strong context effect of parental monitoring
  - Reason that parenting programs have broad effects?

# Activities & Youth Programs: What Not to Do 1

- Don't bring kids together for unstructured activities
  - Swedish youth center example
  - Unstructured activities offered as alternative to the streets
  - Frequent participation goes with increased delinquency
- Be sure the activities you offer are low risk
  - Supervising, structured, and/or solitary

# Activities & Youth Programs: What Not to Do 2

- Don't inadvertently create more unstructured socializing
  - What activity does program replace?
    - Partly a matter of who it attracts
  - How does program alter other time use?
    - Such as traveling to and from
  - Does program expand social networks?
  - Midnight basketball as hypothetical example

# Programs that Address Teens' Time Use

- Enhance adult control over teen time use
  - Most needed and difficult for high risk kids
  - Multisystemic therapy; treatment foster care
- Programming to improve time use skills
  - TimeWise program, Linda Caldwell, Penn St.
  - School based prevention program
  - Promotes positive youth development via improved leisure choices

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