DANGEROUS PLACES: GANGS AND GUN VIOLENCE

16TH ANNUAL YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION CONFERENCE

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Disadvantage
Poverty – 41%
Unemployment – 23%
< H.S. – 40%
Introduction

- Most of the existing research on gangs has been done at the individual level.
  - Considerable work has been done on the consequences of gang involvement, but little is known how gangs affect community well-being.
  - Further, gang neighborhoods do not exist in isolation (Hope, 1995).
  - Among a sample of gun owners, individuals who also reported being a gang member were over two times as likely to discharge the weapon in the last year (Watkins, Huebner, Decker 2008).

- Central focus on homicide as an outcome.
  - Eight percent of all violent crime involves a firearm. Non-fatal firearm injuries outnumber fatal firearm injuries 3 to 1 (BJS, 2012).
  - In St. Louis, gang youth are six times more likely to get shot at than non-gang youth.

- We add to this line of research by considering how residential gang membership contributes to violence, specifically gun assaults, in local and surrounding communities.
Theoretical Frameworks

- The literature on communities and crime has paid less attention to gangs as a part of the neighborhood fabric.
- **Structural control perspectives** see gangs as a proxy for disorganization.
  - Gangs emerge as a result of ineffective community social control, and disadvantaged neighborhoods have less capacity to control gangs (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Kornhauser, 1978).
  - No independent effect on crime rates.
- **Structural adaptation perspectives** hold that gangs emerge as a response to the social landscape.
  - Gangs help youth achieve status in communities where guns and violence are persuasive (Anderson, 1999; Wilson, 2009).
Gangs and Neighborhood Violence

- **Opportunity theory** suggests that crime will be higher in areas with motivated offenders, suitable targets, and an absence of capable guardians (Cohen and Felson, 1979).
  - Gang members spend a considerable amount of time socializing in unstructured social settings.
  - Offenders often commit violence close to their home, but the nature of gang territories are fluid and supersede official designations.
  - Retaliatory violence also broadens the scope of gang-related violence.
We Don’t Have Gangs!

WHY ARE GANGS IMPORTANT
Gang Membership Variable

- Rate of gang membership in a tract (per 1,000 residents) from 1998-2002.
- Official St. Louis Police Department and Department of Corrections gang database.
- Definition of a Gang
  - A group of three or more persons, identified by a common name symbol or sign, which engages in a pattern of criminal activity.
- Individual Adult (17+) Gang Identification
  - Three of the four criteria must apply –
    - Admits to membership
    - Has gang tattoos or wears clothing specific to a gang
    - Arrested for participation in criminal acts with know gang members
    - Documented close association with gang members (photos, prison letters, etc.)
  - Individual removed from the database if they have been inactive for 5 years.
First 24 hours, I was overwhelmed. Had a feeling of like euphoria, you know. For a minute I was like, you know, for a few minutes I was out of control. For a few minutes. Stemming from that, that sense of freedom, it’s overwhelming.

And the first thing I did, was something that I wasn’t supposed to do, that was stipulated. The first thing I did was I ran and got a beer. You know, the very first thing. And uh, then I had like a down feeling cause I knew I’d messed up. Now, now I’m trippin on, if I com in are they going to do the breathalyzer, are they gonna make me drop urine, you know. And I made it through that day, and reality kind of set in too.

It kind of dawned on me that, wasn’t gonna be no godfather thing, wasn’t gonna be a bunch of people out here in a line, bearing gifts, welcome back you know, we got this for you. You know, so that made me kind of apprehensive. I knew it was gonna be hard. You know. It went against the fantasy, you know, when you’re in prison. And all you thinking, boy I can’t wait to get out. But you’re never think about, you know, the reality of getting out.
Gang-related meaning like, the neighborhood I grew up in, we all know each other. **We don’t pick no extra friends**, we just deal with nothing but our neighborhood. We got a big neighborhood so it’s a lot of us.

No, no, see, we don’t have a problem with society. One thing about gangs is that it’s not a problem about society at all. People don’t just run up and “oh ok” and rob her, or “oh, she has nice things in her house” and break in. It’s not like that. The problem that we have is not amongst each other, as far as us, but amongst different neighborhoods. **So that’s the difference.** Really, it’s been going on for like 20 years and sometimes things start and they don’t stop for 10, 20 years. That’s how it is. It’s like a war.
PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- RJ: I’m really not sure what’s a nightmare because where I come from; my every thought and dream probably would be a nightmare. I did know how to challenge what is normal. When you come up in crime like I came up in crime in crime infested neighborhoods when I came up. Somebody getting shot and killed or you shooting and killing somebody in your dream it’s kind of like not a nightmare to me but it’s totally is a nightmare.
Density of Gang Members Across St. Louis*

Legend

Kernal Density Function:
Gang Members per Square Mile

- 0 - 9
- 10 - 17
- 18 - 26
- 27 - 35
- 36 - 43
- 44 - 52
- 53 - 61
- 62 - 70
- 71 - 78
- 79 - 87
- 88 - 96
- 97 - 104
- 105 - 113
- 114 - 122
- 123 - 130
- 131 - 139
- 140 - 148
- 149 - 157
- 158 - 165
- 166 - 174
- 175 - 183
- 184 - 191
- 192 - 200
- 201 - 209
- 210 - 217

*Average Nearest Neighbor Test Indicates Significant Clustering (p<.01)

Source: REJIS Gang Tracking System, St. Louis, MO
Current Study

• Hypothesis
  o Gun assault will increase with the prevalence of gang members in communities, net of crime guns, social disorganization, and drugs.
  o The effect may be influenced by the level of gang members in surrounding communities.

• Data
  o St. Louis Missouri – 110 census tracts
  o Data culled from the St. Louis Police Department, St. Louis Gang Database, 2000 US Census, and the St. Louis Medical Examiner.
  o All data points are geocoded and presented at the census tract level.

• Dependent Measure
  o Aggravated Assaults with a Gun (count between 2002-2004)
    • 40% of all assaults during this period involved a gun
Methods

- Negative Binomial Regression modeling the incidence of gun assaults across census tracts.

- Spatially lagged measure of gun assaults.
  - Data at the incident level were mapped and aggregated to the census tract using ArcGis.
  - Tracts sharing common lines or borders are deemed neighbors.
  - The spatial weights were estimated in GeoDa and imported into Stata.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gun Assault Incidents</td>
<td>Avg. annual gun assault count between 2002-2004</td>
<td>1,541</td>
<td>14.01</td>
<td>12.89</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illicit Drug-Positive Deaths per 1,000 (Ln)</td>
<td>Number of decedents from 2000-2002 who had drug or alcohol toxicity reported as primary or secondary cause of death</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated Disadvantage</td>
<td>Standardized index of the following Census 2000 indicators:</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent households vacant</td>
<td>17.61</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>38.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent households female-headed</td>
<td>23.63</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68.05</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>13.39</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>58.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent living below poverty</td>
<td>26.48</td>
<td>13.73</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>65.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent households receiving public assistance</td>
<td>17.61</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>49.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent Black population</td>
<td>56.34</td>
<td>37.43</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration of Crime Guns</td>
<td>Number of guns confiscated by police/neighborhood pop. (per 1,000 residents)</td>
<td>3,751</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>34.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration of Gang-Involved Residents</td>
<td>Number of gang members and affiliates residing in NH that came to the attention of police between 1998-2002 (per 1,000 residents)</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. The geographic distribution of gang membership and gun assault incidents in St. Louis (N = 110)

Legend

Number of Gang Members (per 1,000 residents)
Standard Deviations (Mean = 2.14, SD = 1.93)

- < -0.50 Std. Dev.
- 0.50 - 0.50 Std. Dev.
- 0.50 - 1.5 Std. Dev.
- > 1.5 Std. Dev.

Gun Assault Incidents
Standard Deviations (Mean = 14.01, SD = 12.89)

- < -0.50 Std. Dev.
- 0.50 - 0.50 Std. Dev.
- 0.50 - 1.5 Std. Dev.
- 1.5 - 2.5 Std. Dev.
- > 2.5 Std. Dev.

- Neighborhood Excluded
Figure 2. Average gun assault rate by level and spatial proximity to gang-involved residents.

- Neighborhoods in Proximity to Low Gang Neighborhoods
  - Low Level of Resident Gang Involvement: 1.35 (n = 41)
- Neighborhoods in Proximity to High Gang Neighborhoods
  - High Level of Resident Gang Involvement: 8.55 (n = 37)
  - Low Level of Resident Gang Involvement: 5.44 (n = 24)
  - High Level of Resident Gang Involvement: 4.82 (n = 8)
| Table 3. Negative Binomial Regressions of Gun Assaults in St. Louis Neighborhoods (N = 110) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | Model 1         | Model 2         | Model 3         |
| **Illicit Drug-Positive Deaths per 1,000 (Ln)** | .04             | .05             | .06             |
|                                 | (.14)           | (.13)           | (.13)           |
| **Residential Stability**       | .28*            | .27*            | .25*            |
|                                 | (.06)           | (.06)           | (.06)           |
| **At Risk Population**          | --.00           | --.00           | --.00           |
|                                 | (.01)           | (.01)           | (.01)           |
| **Temporal Lag of Violent Crime Rate** | .00*            | .01*            | .01*            |
|                                 | (.00)           | (.00)           | (.00)           |
| **Concentrated Disadvantage**   | .66*            | .58*            | .53*            |
|                                 | (.07)           | (.08)           | (.08)           |
| **Concentration of Crime Guns (per 1,000 residents)** | .02             | .01             | .01             |
|                                 | (.01)           | (.01)           | (.01)           |
| **Concentration of Gang-Involved Residents** | .07*            | .06*            | .06*            |
|                                 | (.03)           | (.03)           | (.03)           |
| **Proximity to Gang-Involved Residents** |               |                 |                 |
|                                 |                 |                 |                 |
| **Constant**                    | --6.38*         | --6.44*         | --6.59*         |
|                                 | (.21)           | (.20)           | (.22)           |
| **Model Diagnostics and Fit**   |                 |                 |                 |
| **Dispersion (alpha)**          | .09*            | .07*            | .07*            |
|                                 |                 |                 |                 |
| **Full Log Likelihood**         | --315.07*       | --312.34*       | --310.34*       |
|                                 |                 |                 |                 |
| **AIC**                         | 648.14          | 644.69          | 642.68          |
| **Mean VIF Score**              | 2.45            | 2.58            | 2.95            |

Note: Unstandardized coefficients reported with standard errors in parentheses. *p < .05
The Moderating Effect of Neighborhood Gang Membership on the Relationship between Gun Assault and the Number of Gang Members in Surrounding Neighborhoods
Summary

- Neighborhood levels of gang membership exert moderately strong effects on a community’s rates of gun assault.
  - This effect spills over to nearby communities.
- Including gang membership reduces the effect of disadvantage.
  - Including both measures of gang involvement reduces the effect of disadvantage by 39%.
Conclusions

- The results support a need to better integrate gang behaviors and processes into the study of neighborhoods and violence.
  - Community gang involvement has effects on gun crime separate from disadvantage.

- Communities are not islands unto themselves
  - Neighborhoods with high levels of gang membership create a geographically broad landscape of gun violence risk.

- Communities with concentrations of gangs, guns, and social and economic disadvantage are dangerous places.
Policy Implications

- Implement “total community” interventions in bordering areas.
  - Assist communities in developing social control.
  - Like Tita and Ridgeway (2007), scholars can continue to identify gang territories that supersede official neighborhood locations.

- Pulling Levers –
  - Narrowly targeting interventions in areas where gang members are most prevalent.
    - **Hot Communities – Hot People**
      - We need to focus on dangerous individuals in violent communities.
  - Broaden Partnerships – Prosecutor
Milwaukee Homicide Review Model

- [http://city.milwaukee.gov/hrc#.V2MxnrsrLIU](http://city.milwaukee.gov/hrc#.V2MxnrsrLIU)
- Designated as an “effective” intervention by CrimeSolutions.gov
- Epidemiological perspective – NFS extension in Indiana
  - Systematic case review with a comprehensive team of criminal justice professionals.
  - Look at linked cases and people – victim offender overlap
  - Bi-monthly meetings to review cases identified by the team.
  - Information presented on victim, offenders, witnesses, place.
  - Critical incident documentation.
- Implementation Challenges
  - Discussion of ‘mistakes’
Victim and Witness Cooperation
- 88% of Non-Fatal Shooting Incidents have at least one witness.
  - Among offenses with witnesses, 54% of NFS witnesses.
- At the prosecution phase, victim availability as a barrier
  - Over 50% of cases are dropped because of uncooperative witnesses
- The victim was vague in where the incident occurred. He said he was walking down the street when he heard multiple shots being fired. He said he feared for his safety and ran to a convenience store where he realized he'd been shot. He then contacted a cousin, who he refused to identify to police, to drive him to the hospital. He claims he did not see what direction the shots were fired from or who shot him.
- Approximately 6 weeks after the current incident; the victim murdered someone per. The homicide is gang-related and one in a series of retaliatory gang homicides in 2014 and 2015. (1502269601)