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📅 Thu, 4/1 2:40PM ⌚ 1:13:33

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gangs, self control, people, gang members, delinquency, street gangs, membership, criminology, hypotheses, study, definition, victimization, peer groups, united states, group, regard, violence, paper, question, david

SPEAKERS

Jenn Tostlebe, David Pyrooz, Jose Sanchez



Jose Sanchez 00:14

Hi, everyone, welcome back. My name is Jose, I'm joined by my co-host, Jenn.



Jenn Tostlebe 00:19

Hi everyone!



Jose Sanchez 00:20

And we are the cohosts of The Criminology Academy, where we are criminally academic.



Jenn Tostlebe 00:25

In this episode we're speaking with Professor David Pyrooz about gangs and gang membership, as well as his recent paper on the relationship between gang membership and self control; one of the most widely supported theories within criminology.



Jose Sanchez 00:39

David Pyrooz is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Colorado Boulder.

He received his bachelor's and master's in criminology from California State University Fresno and his PhD in criminology and criminal justice from Arizona State University. His research interests are in the areas of gangs and criminal networks, incarceration and prisoner reentry, and developmental and life-course criminology. He was the 2015 recipient of the inaugural New Scholar Award from the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, and the 2016 recipient of the Cavan Young Scholar Award from the American Society of Criminology. He is the author of *Competing for Control: Gangs and the social order of prisons*, which recently won the 2020 Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences' Outstanding Book Award. Thank you for joining us, David, and congratulations on the award.



David Pyrooz 01:32

Thank you for having me. And thank you with regard to the award. It is the 2021 Book Award.



David Pyrooz 01:37

Oh right, it is a 2021 Book Award.



David Pyrooz 01:40

I think Barry Feld would be a little upset.



Jose Sanchez 01:44

Yes, so for the record, it is the 2021 Book Award.



Jenn Tostlebe 01:49

Yes, congrats, David. So to kind of provide a roadmap for this episode, we're gonna start off with some general questions on gangs and gang membership, really focusing more in on what is a gang and who are gang members. And then we'll transition into the empirical paper for this episode, which is authored by David and some of his colleagues on gang membership and self control. And last but not least, we'll get into some gang mythbusting, including discussing one of the most well known phrases surrounding gang membership, blood in blood out. So Jose, I'll let you start us off.



Jose Sanchez 02:28

David, one of the biggest debates that we have within gang research is that there's no agreed upon definition of gang, there's no consensus or, like one true scientific definition as to what a gang is. And this is true, whether we're talking about academics or agencies in the criminal justice system, or the general public. We often hear the I know, one when I see it, type of deal. But based on your research, what are some of the characteristics of street gangs?



David Pyrooz 03:01

Well, let's just start by saying, there's a ton of different definitions that Bjerregaard, she had that article back from 2002, I believe, where she outlines all these different academic definitions. And, you know, the table went on and on. That has changed a bit in recent years, with the advent of the Eurogang definition, which is brought about with the Eurogang program of research. And to the point where we can say there is a consensus definition, but not a unanimous definition. It's pretty hard to get any academics on board to be unanimous on anything. But it is consensus, and there is a lot of buy in. And so I do find myself, subscribing to the Eurogang definition, not necessarily a true believer, but I guess you could call me say, a sympathetic and skeptical adherent to it. So to answer your question, you know, what is or what are the characteristics of street gangs? You know, we could start with the Eurogang definition. And so when we're talking about the Eurogang definition, we're referring to a street gang as being a durable street oriented youth group whose own identity includes involvement in criminal activity or illegal activity. And so there's five main components to that. So if we're talking about characteristics of street gangs, for a group to be considered a street gang, they have to be durable across time. In other words, they can't be one off fleeting associations that are here today and gone tomorrow. So typically, we're looking at the existence, or a group to be in existence, for say, six months or more. They've also got to be street oriented. So you know, it can't be a group of people who are hiding behind keyboards, or they can't be restricted to, you know, private settings, where they are in public places. You know, place matters when it comes to street gangs, whether it's housing projects, stoops, corners, whatever it is, streets matter. Then we're also looking at their youthfulness, and then their collective identity. So, you don't typically see, you know, senior citizen street gangs, that's pretty rare. It's not out of the ordinary to find, you know, grandparents who are involved in gangs. But they're the exception, not the norm. They tend to be youthful. Then there's the collective identity. So there has to be some indication of a collective identity in a group. Typically, you're looking for a name, you're looking for signs, symbols, communication patterns, the connectedness of the group. And finally, and this is where there has perhaps been, the biggest point of dispute, is whether or not you include criminal activity in the definition. And there's sort of two camps, the one camp is saying, you know, you shouldn't include criminal activity in

the definition, this is the Jim Short camp. And why? It's because of the tautology. Criminal activity is something to be studied. It's an outcome, it's not a definer. Whereas there's another group, which I find myself in, but it's most closely associated with Matt Klein. And it's that if you don't include criminal activity in the definition, you're not going to be able to distinguish gangs from chess clubs, from other types of groups, and so on. So that's why criminal activity is included in the definition. Those would be the core defining characteristics of street gangs, at least based on the Eurogang definition.



Jose Sanchez 06:35

And you mentioned being able to differentiate between a gang, a street gang, and say something like a chess club.



David Pyrooz 06:45

That's probably a bad example.



Jose Sanchez 06:47

Yeah, but so how do you do differentiate as a street gang from, say, a delinquent peer group or an organized crime group?



David Pyrooz 06:56

Yeah, that's a good question. But I mean, delinquent peer groups on one end of the spectrum, organized crime on the other end of the spectrum, you know, gangs are different in terms of their forms and functions. So it was Joan Moore, she's written two classic books on street gangs, her book in '78. And then her follow up book in 1991, in the 1991 book, she said something along the lines of, you have this delinquent peer group continuum. And her contention was based on her observations in East Los Angeles was, the gangs are no longer on the delinquent peer group continuum altogether. And when you study gangs and delinquent peer groups, you start to see a lot of differences both in their forms and their functions. So Martin Bouchard, and Andrea Spindler, they had this really great article back from 2010, where they compared street gangs, you know, kids who were involved, or young people who were involved in street gangs versus young people who are involved in just delinquent peer group associations based on their own self definitions. And what they found was that the street gang members, they reported, at a much higher rate, that their gangs maintain these organizational features that were simply lacking in the delinquent peer groups. You have groups that have names, you have leaders, hierarchy or at least a semblance of hierarchy, rules, meetings, signs, initiation

rituals, claiming stake in a territory, and then you defend honor or your reputation. So those are things that you just, it existed within delinquent peer groups, but just not at the same rate, as you see with gangs. And, you know, observations such as those are what led Mark Warr in his classic book companions in crime to say, gangs are essentially institutionalized, delinquent peer groups. And that might be somewhat of a fair comparison. But still, there's qualitative differences between the gang and the delinquent peer group. Now, on the other end of the spectrum, when it comes to organized crime, you know, that's not what gangs are, either. And their activities are typically more geographically confined. They're more public, they're more in your face in more active presence in the street, whereas organized crime tends to be more behind the scenes, they tend to be more social than focused on economics, you know, their violence tends to be more, street gangs violence tends to be more expressive as opposed to instrumental and by expressive, it has to do with issues related to honor and reputation and threats and defensive territory. And you know, organized crime groups will do that as well, but it's just different. You know, they are more sparing with their violence. They tend to be more targeted with their violence than you see with street gangs. So you know, when I read the work of like, you know, Klaus Von Lampe or Martin Bouchard's recent article in Crime and Justice, gangs just don't fit the bill when it comes to descriptions of organized crimes. And you got to remember your typical street gang member is a young male who's around 15, 16, 17 years old. When I think of teenagers and when most people think of teenagers, they don't really think of a lot of organized activities. And so you know they're just different in that regard.



Jose Sanchez 10:29

Talking about gangs and organized crime and then kind of going back to you mentioning the Eurogang definition, it just occurred to me, could you maybe give us a little background information as to why the Eurogang definition came to be?



David Pyrooz 10:42

Yeah. I mean the origins of the Eurogang definition were, I mean it was a long time in the making, but it's a Eurogang program of research that came together as a result primarily of the efforts of Matt Klein. I mean I don't think anybody would dispute that he spearheaded the efforts to initiate the Eurogang program of research. But it was based on his observations and he talks about in his book the American Street Gang from 1995, he talks about his observations during a period of his sabbatical throughout Europe and you know visiting all these different European cities and what he observed during that time looked a lot like his observations of street gangs in the United States. A lot of Europeans were in denial at that time, especially European academics, that there was the existence

of street gangs, at least American-style street gangs, in Europe. And you know Matt Klein is fond of saying that in the United States we don't have you know these Americanized street gangs at least as it is portrayed in popular media like movies and television and so on. So a lot of the assumptions that Europeans had when it came to American street gangs was that this sort of LA or Chicago-style street gang, when that was typically the exception and it wasn't the norm of these groups and so that led Klein and others to assemble a group of interested researchers and to host some meetings in a variety of European cities, which they set out a task or as part of their task, they set out what are the goals that they sought to accomplish was to develop a working definition of a street gang. In European setting they use, and you see this and Frank Weerman's Eurogang instrument. Frank Weerman and his colleagues, they outline, they say is it a street gang or a troublesome youth group because they didn't want to use the g word because it just took on a different meaning in many European cities than it did in the United States. So that is in the definition a street gang or a troublesome youth group. Is this durable street oriented youth group whose own identity includes criminal or illegal activity. That took a couple of meetings to be able to hash it out and that was featured prominently in the first iteration of the Eurogang books; there's now been six of them, but the first one was from 2001 that was edited by Matt Klein called the Eurogang Paradox. So that's some of the background behind it and again it's consensus it's not unanimous. There have been many meetings you know we're up to i think 20 meetings now, Eurogang meetings where people have contested it in one way or the definition in one way or another.



Jenn Tostlebe 13:44

So one of the myths that Jose and I had been throwing around and we ended up not including it for this discussion later on, but I think it's important to note that gangs are prominent in other countries versus just like an American phenomenon. Would you say that they're just as common in European countries as they are in the United States or are they less common? And do they take on the same characteristics?



David Pyrooz 14:14

I mean, the best evidence comes from the international self-report delinquency surveys which, oh gosh, I can't even remember the number of countries in between the second and the third iterations of the surveys, but, and I mean they're not population representative, even age dependent. But, it shows that there are a large proportion of youth who are involved in gangs across a number of European cities. I think in Ireland the estimate was 16%, which was the highest estimate out of all of them. In the United States, based on the national longitudinal survey of youth, by emerging adulthood about 8% of young people claim that they have been affiliated with a gang. The Add health data comes out and

says about 15% in the United States, but those are those are cumulative. Whereas the ISRD is, you know, it's a cross sectional, you know, one time snapshot. So, you know, that evidence says, well yeah, gangs are pretty active or not necessarily active. I shouldn't say that. But there are a large proportion of kids who are involved in gangs in European cities. Now, when you do comparisons, though, there are differences. So, when Finn did his comparison, I think it was Finn Esbensen and David Huizenga. They did the comparison, I think it was with the Netherlands. And what they found was, you know, the kids, the gang involved kids in the United States, were involved in more delinquency and more violence, their groups tend to, they reported that their groups took on more organizational features than you saw in the Netherlands. And so that's an interesting question, an interesting, comparative question. In the meta analysis that I did with Jill Turanovic, Jun Wu, and Scott Decker, we found there were differences. Gang involvement had a larger effect on delinquency and crime in the United States than it did outside of the United States. Now, that literature outside, the international literature is still developing. So we can't say with certainty, you know, that this is, you know, a fact, the I think we need more research, especially the longitudinal research where you could look at within individual changes, when people join gangs and leave gangs, before we could reach any firm conclusions on the topic.



Jose Sanchez 16:35

And bringing it back stateside. And I know, this can vary, depending on how exactly you define gangs. But could you give us like a rough estimate or a range of how many gangs are in the United States?



David Pyrooz 16:50

Yeah, I mean, the National Youth Gang Survey from 2012, it says there's 30,000 gangs in the United States. But who knows? We don't know. That's probably the best way to describe it. Because, you know, that's for one, it's a law enforcement estimate. But for two, and perhaps most concerningly is, are these crews that we're talking about? Are these cliques? Are these different sets? How they are counted, if they're separate or not? So Jose, you know, from our own work in Denver, we've interviewed people who are in the East Side Crips, Tre Deuce Crips, Tre Tre Crips, Rolling 30s Crips, Asian Boy Crips, EBK Crips, all these different Crip sets. Does the Denver Police Department then say, Crips are just one single gang that's active in the city of Denver? Or are they going to break it out by all these sets? So and other times, I remember, you know, growing up in California, seeing as a young kid seeing there's different Norteno sets fighting Norteno, so you know, how are these different groups fighting each other, when supposedly, they're under the larger northern structure? So that's the bigger issue at hand here, when it comes to saying, you

know, as a matter of fact, there are 30,000 gangs in the United States. You know, you can't say that with a great degree of confidence, you could trust the law enforcement numbers better when it comes to gang related homicides, and perhaps to a lesser extent, gang motivated homicides. And maybe you could trust the numbers, or I would trust the numbers on the number of gang members, more so than I would on the number of gangs. But the other thing to remember is, this is from 2012. You know, we're talking almost a decade ago, since the US DOJ no longer funded the National Youth Gang Survey. So, we will get new estimates coming up in these upcoming years because Meagan Cahill over at RAND, she was awarded the funding from the National Institute of Justice, to reinstate, the National Youth Gang Survey. But again, that's going to be law enforcement, it's gonna be representative of the view of law enforcement, not representative of the view of community groups, educators, of clinicians, or the people who are actively involved in gangs themselves.



Jenn Tostlebe 19:08

Alright, so let's transition away from the gang as a whole into the individual gang members. So we know defining who a gang member is, is typically easier than defining what a gang is. And then your research you commonly discussed how self nomination is one of the most powerful ways of defining who a gang member is, but we do know from reading some of the pieces that you've written, David, that there are other ways to determine if an individual is a gang member. And so what would you say are some of the characteristics that differentiate a gang member, street gang member, from a non gang member?



David Pyrooz 19:49

Sure, yeah. I mean, we've relied on, the researchers rely on self nomination. So that's traditionally been the approach. One single measure where as law enforcement typically requires meeting two or more, you know, source items or indicators. But with the research approach relying on self nomination, it's been found to have a fair amount of reliability and validity enough to usher in an entire generation of research on gangs, that relies on that measure, and, you know, study after study across the country in multiple different places has found it has, you know, a fair degree of reliability and validity. And so that's what we use to then compare people who have either ever or actively been involved in a gang to those who have never been involved in a gang. And in terms of I mean, so we could talk generally about correlates of gang involvement. Because, you know, we'll say correlates because, you know, some of these things are causes, they occur before somebody was involved in the gang. And then once they get involved in the gang, you know, those things can change as well. So, for example, probably most closely associated

with the work of like Chris Melde, and the others who have been actively involved in the first and second evaluations of GREAT have demonstrated pretty convincingly how things like beliefs and behaviors and attitudes and experiences change when people get involved in gangs. Now, what typically distinguishes the people, the more the time stable factors are, you know, community disadvantage, concentrated disadvantage in communities is something that correlates with gang membership. Race and ethnicity is something that correlates with gang membership. Typically, you find that whites and Asians are underrepresented in gangs and Blacks and Latinos are over represented in gangs, but not to the point where it's as represented by law enforcement, it's not like 90% of Black and Latinos are gang members. Surveys don't show that. Law enforcement records show that. You do see some underrepresentation of first generation immigrants in gangs. It's the second generation that catches up with the third generation in the United States. Some differences in cognitive ability-lower cognitive ability levels, among people who are in gangs, household structure, that gang members are more likely to come from single parent households. And then there's the things that change. So the time varying characteristics, when people get involved in gangs, you can't necessarily pin it to, you know, we refer to it as a correlate because, you know, these things are already lower than the non gang kids before gang membership, but then they tend to worsen while they're involved in gangs. So things like unstructured socializing with peers, that changes a lot when people get involved in gangs, how much guilt they have for delinquency. The neutralizations that they use when they are involved in delinquency, endorsement of the code of the street, you know, educational performance, commitments to school, peer delinquency changes a lot when people get involved in gangs. And then most importantly, you see levels of delinquency, violence, and victimization change when people get involved in gangs. So I don't want to necessarily use the risk factor language, oftentimes, because it's so atheoretical, you can't sort of attach it to, you know, this theoretical tradition, which is important to do, rather than, you know, the shotgun empiricism, that's often done to try to just, you know, maximize variation explained between the gang members versus the non gang members. But the other thing to add is, you know, there's no one unique risk factor. There's no gang gene. There's a host of things that combine to elevate risk of involvement in gangs.



Jenn Tostlebe 23:49

How many gang members are there in the United States? You said, that's easier somewhat to pin down, but I know there's still a range in estimates for this.



David Pyrooz 23:58

It's somewhat easier to pin down. Not much easier to pin down than the number of groups. So you know, National Youth Gang Survey 2012, about 850,000 gang members, you know, how much stock do we place in those law enforcement estimates? So you know, when Gary Sweeten and I tried to estimate the proportion of youth who were involved in gangs, using the NLSY97 data? We came out with juveniles alone, slightly over a million juvenile gang members based on self reports. Law enforcement estimates indicated that about 40% of those, 40% to 50% of those 850,000 were juveniles. So the survey records are coming in, you know, estimates are coming in much higher than law enforcement estimates. So that's probably the law enforcement estimates are probably a pretty conservative number. Again, you have to be detected by the police to be even recorded by the police as a gang member. And the survey data is coming in much different and the survey is completely ignorant of adults, you know, we didn't look at 18 year olds are over. And what we've seen with our research in prison is that a lot of people join gangs for the first time in their life while they're incarcerated. So, you know, there's probably a big population of people who are being missed by relying solely on law enforcement records.



Jenn Tostlebe 25:22

The survey data that you mentioned, with estimates of just over a million is that based off of self nomination?



David Pyrooz 25:29

That's self nomination, that's with the NLSY97. They provide a definition of a gang that's more conservative. They actually impose organization in the definition. Eurogang doesn't Eurogang says that's a descriptor, it's not a definer. So the Eurogang definition would probably yield even higher numbers, because it tends to be more inclusive than other definitions. And in this instance, I don't think inclusivity is a positive thing.



Jose Sanchez 25:56

So we've talked about, you know, the characteristics of gangs and gang members. And, you know, if we get in our time machine and go back to 1927, Frederick Thrasher from Chicago published, probably the first empirical study of gangs, and he described them as these play groups that come together and sort of find themselves in conflict with other playgroups. How would you say if at all, that the gangs that Thrasher saw in 1927 have changed today? Yeah, they've changed at all?

D

David Pyrooz 26:33

Oh, they've changed. I mean, it's in many ways a night and day difference, not just in how the groups have changed in their forms and functions, but how, you know, we respond to gangs. So you know, the representation, you know, you can think about it that's the sort of the West Side Story view of gangs. Adolescence oriented, it's the playgroup narrative of the gang ethnographies of those times. But in the matter of a couple of decades, we started to see that shift. And that shift, you know, a gateway from the playgroup narrative or the adolescence oriented group, to more of a social problems view of gangs, you know, because gangs were engaged, I mean, you could read I mean, anybody who's read through Thrasher knows that gang members were involved in some problematic behaviors. But it's not nearly as comparable as what we see today. So beginning really in the 1960s, late 1960s, we started to see this noticeable shift in the composition, the forms, and the functions of gangs. And so what used to be fist fights, and you know, the use of knives, were soon replaced by firearms as the instruments of violence. We saw our white flight in the cities, greater racial inequality in the cities, that led to this demographic churning that occurred in you know, our large urban areas, which essentially all but eliminated the white ethnic gang, from the urban landscape. We saw the emergence of mass incarceration and that brought about really this institutionalization of gangs in prison systems throughout our country starting early in the 1970s. But really, the major growth occurred of prison gangs in the 1980s and then throughout the 1990s. And then in the 1990s, gangs are no longer an urban issue. It was no longer a core Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles issue. We started to see the growth of gangs in our suburban areas, and even our rural areas, were experiencing gang activities. You know, by the early 1990s, there were nearly 1,000 cities where you would have these informants indicating, typically law enforcement, or indicating that gangs were a problem in their cities. And so these were the surveys done by Walter Miller by Malcolm Klein, by Cheryl Maxon, and others, Dave Curry, Irving Spergel, who were documenting this proliferation of gangs across the country. But you know, perhaps most interestingly out of this is with the growth or with the shift in the narrative, the movement to the social problems narrative, the law and order popular opinion that started to begin in the Nixon era, the task of responding to gangs moves squarely into the domain of criminal justice, you know, there's no law. It's not like the Chicago area project. It's not the mobilization for youth, all of a sudden, it's the specialized gang units, a specialized prosecution units, the STG units in our prisons, and the anti gang legislation that was enacted throughout the United States. So it's very different, not just in the gangs themselves, but how we respond to the gangs as well, when we compare, you know, 1927, Thrasher versus 2020 gangs today.

J

Jose Sanchez 29:58

So we see gangs and mainly gang violence make headlines pretty often in the media and

during President Trump's presidency, we've seen him sort of go after gangs, mainly MS-13. And he calls them "animals," "savages," he has alleged that MS-13 is sort of instrumental in the international drug trade. He really talks about their violence. Do you think that the media, politicians, or the police oversensationalize gangs and the gang problem?

D

David Pyrooz 30:31

Yes. I mean, they over sensationalize it. But then they also underrepresented as well. So, you know, when the FBI is the National Gang Intelligence Center, they put out the 2011 report, 2015 report. And there's a couple of sort of tidbits of information where they're alluding to gangs being responsible for 90% of the violence in communities, which is just an absurd number, it defies belief. Gangs are rarely even responsible for 90% of the homicides in cities. Every now and then you see, like a Salinas, California, you'll see just a massive increase in violence, which could be attributed to gangs, where you'll get that proportion. But once you start, including the aggravated assaults, once you start including the sexual assaults, the robberies, I mean, there's there's just simply no, it just defies belief to get estimates of 90% of the violence being attributed to gangs. So it simply doesn't add up. And there are times when you will see, you know, the sensationalization of gangs. And I don't think we've ever seen an instance of where, you know, you have somebody who occupies a position like President Trump to call out a single gang because a group like MS-13, for example, not only are they a drop in the bucket when it comes to all forms of the total number of homicides in our country, but they're a drop in the bucket when it comes to gang homicides in our country. You know, you're talking about a couple of dozen murders. And I don't mean to sound callous in describing this, but you're talking about a couple of dozen gang related murders that are attributed to them in a given year. When if the National Youth Gang Survey numbers are to be trusted, then that means we're talking about 15% of overall homicides in our country are attributed to gangs or gang related in one way or another. So MS-13, for example, is you know, only responsible for about 2% of all the gang homicides in a given year. So that is sensationalization of the gang problem. But other people will underestimate it as well. So they'll be in a period of denial. So Ron Huff used to talk about this, he has this article back from I think it was 1989 or 1990, where he covers Columbus, Ohio, and he says, you know, they denied the significance of gangs in Ohio generally, and in Columbus specifically. And that they were in denial until the mayor's son of Columbus, and then the governor's daughter of Ohio, were subject to these gang related assaults. Then all of a sudden that got put on the map. So, you know, these things are happening simultaneously. It just varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. And this has happened internationally. So you saw this denialism of gangs in places like London, and other places as well, you know, going back to our discussion of Eurogang. In the end, it's important to be able to put gangs in their place. You know, do we need a week in September, that's devoted to the national gang violence prevention. Do we need a whole

week devoted to that, as President Trump called for? I'm not so sure about that. But do we ignore the problem altogether? To me, that's even worse. So if you came down with chest pain tomorrow, and you had trouble breathing, and you had a fever, you'd probably want to know if you have seasonal influenza, or if you have COVID-19. Right? So just like you don't want to miss diagnose illnesses, you don't want to miss diagnose violence. And that to me is, you got to get it right.



Jose Sanchez 34:09

Yeah, definitely. And yeah, to your point of people sort of diminishing their importance. I've heard politicians, sort of make this weird differentiation between like problem and issue saying we have a gang issue, but it's not a gang problem. What we have is like a homelessness problem. And you know, I just sit there and think, well, isn't issue and problem sort of the same thing, but that gets to them? It's not?



David Pyrooz 34:34

It varies. It absolutely varies.



Jenn Tostlebe 34:37

Alright, so the paper we'll be talking about today is authored by our guest David Pyrooz, as well as Chris Melde, Donna Coffman, and Ryan Meldrum. It's called "Selection, stability, and seriousness: Testing Gottfredson and Hirschi's propositions to reinterpret street gangs in self control perspective." The paper's forthcoming in the May 2021 issue of Criminology. David, it'll be online before then though, right?



David Pyrooz 35:03

Should be.



Jenn Tostlebe 35:03

Should be. Okay. So to give kind of a brief intro of the paper as well as a brief intro of self control theory. In this paper, David and his co-authors test the central propositions of Goffredson and Hirschi's theory of self control, using data on students from the second evaluation of the Gang Resistance, Education, and Training program, and a variety of analytic strategies, including multilevel structural equation modeling. For those listeners who are unfamiliar with self control theory, self control is the tendency or is when

individuals can forego temptations of the moment that may result in negative long term consequences. Those who give into these temptations, are argued to have what we call low self control, which includes a variety of characteristics, some of which include impulsiveness, being insensitive to the interests and needs of others, and acting without thinking through all of the long term consequences. Based on this theory, low self control is really the reason that individuals engage in crime and delinquency. While self control does not deny the existence of peer groups, or gangs, gangs are typically seen as artificial social constructions of people with low self control that come together, and congregate together.



Jenn Tostlebe 36:22

So to bring it back to David's paper, in this paper, they specifically examine whether people with low self control come together to form gangs due to their underlying characteristics or maybe something else, whether self control truly is stable after age 10, and whether self control is the individual level cause of crime and delinquency.



Jenn Tostlebe 36:45

So David, our first question for you is, what was the inspiration behind this paper? Why even write a paper addressing these questions?



David Pyrooz 36:55

So I've had a long interest in self control theory, and really the general theory of crime. I mean, I started as a master's student at Fresno State, studying the topic with a mentor back there, Jason Kissner. And so I've had this long interest in it. And you know, it's a masterful book. I mean, this is, you know, a classic book in our field, you know, every student who is in doctoral programs, studying criminology, you know, it's an obligatory read. You have to cover it. And it's evolved over the years. But you know, it's 30 years old by now. And, you know, there are a lot of really provocative statements that are made in this book that would reorient the way people think about crime, the way we conduct research design, and the policies and practices for which we're advocating. So it has major implications. And to the extent that Gottfredson and Hirschi are correct, the evidence would suggest that we should be following their views on crime and criminal justice. But you know, so I wrote a paper back in 2009, on this topic, which was for my master's thesis, based on interviews that we conducted with people who were incarcerated in the Fresno County Jail. But this is something I've sat on for a long time. And I've just been generally surprised by the disinterest from the criminology, criminal

justice, academic community, in what we call in the paper, the Forgotten chapter, the organization and crime chapter, people just really haven't studied what Gottfredson and Hirschi have proposed. But they make these two really provocative claims about gangs based on their read of the literature. They're, you know, they're 1990 read of the literature, and that's important going forward here. You know, for one, it's that gangs are simply youth with low self control who live in close proximity to each other. So that's a really provocative claim. Number two is that all the attention afforded to gangs was a product of what they call "politics and romance" and not rigorous research. Again, another really provocative claim. Now, sure, they're fair claims to make in 1990. But a lot of things have changed in the recent years and in the interim years. So even back in 2009, there wasn't a lot of research on this topic. Dana Peterson, she had a good article on this topic. Trina Hope and Kelly Damphousse had an article on this topic, but there wasn't much. And so Jason Kissner and I, we did an initial test, can self control theory differentiate people who were active in gangs and former gang members from those who are not. And then when I was at Arizona State in graduate school, I sort of dabbled with the idea. I started this paper in this sort of cool sequence of courses that I took, you know, Travis Pratt did this theory course. And Mike Reisig did this methods course. And I started to advance this idea of initially collaborating with them looking at gangs centrality: can self control distinguish who's more core in the gang versus at the periphery of the gang? Lewis Yablonski and others made some interesting claims with regard to the people who are at the core of the gang with regard to like psychopathy and other things. But we ended up writing a paper, it got rejected, we just really didn't have the right data to be able to test the idea. And so the idea went dormant at the time, but I still kept thinking about it. And then Ryan Meldrum reached out to me just out of the blue, like Ryan and I crossed paths a few times at ASC, you know, said hello, cordial and everything, but we weren't, you know, close colleagues, by any means. And he reached out and said, hey, I've got this cool data. In the Florida Youth Survey. You know, it's cross sectional, I've got measures of self control and measures of gang membership. It's a large sample, you're talking like 100,000 kids in the data set. So it was a great data set. But it wasn't really fit to be able to test those questions. Like the selection question, the stability question, or the spuriousness questions. And so that led me to reach out to Chris Melde, because the second evaluation of GREAT, that data wasn't available yet. And it wasn't on ICPSR. So it's not like, we could just go download it and conduct the analysis. But you know, Chris is, you know, a very gifted analyst, but you know, this even pushed, you know, some of his capabilities. And he reached out to Donna Coffman about it. Because as great as Chris is, when it comes to analysis, I mean, Donna's, you know, even greater. Sorry, Chris, if you ever listen to this. I don't think I'd be upset about that, though. But, yeah, so we had all these issues that we needed to deal with, with a data set that has to do with like missing data and multi level mediation and non random selection into gangs simultaneously, to be able to test these questions. So you know, these are ideas that we sat on for a long time, really a decade

and wanted to be able to execute those ideas to see if Gottfredson and Hirschi were right. You know, are they right? Should we be reinterpreting gangs in self control perspective. So that's the background to the paper.

J

Jose Sanchez 42:04

So you have a nifty set up for this paper. And the first part of your paper is broken up into three main sections, and you include your hypotheses in these three sections. And so that's sort of how we're going to guide this discussion. You mentioned selection, stability, and seriousness. So Part One is selection. And selection is basically the birds of a feather flock together type of argument, where gangs, like you mentioned, according to Gottfredson and Hirschi, is really just kids with low self control that are coming together, you could argue that it's because they make terrible friends. So really, like the only people that they can hang out with is each other. Could you tell us what your hypotheses were for the selection proposition? And did your findings support your hypotheses?

D

David Pyrooz 42:56

Well, I mean, let's first start by giving Gottfredson and Hirschi the credit that they deserve. Because the reason why the setup is clean here is because they presented such clear hypotheses that allowed us to be able to develop them and test them. So you know, kudos to them for being able to specify with such clarity, these propositions, and one of their propositions, you know, as you just said, is that people who are involved in gangs, should have lower self control than people who are not involved in gangs. So that's the number one question and you know, theoretically, what the argument is, it has to do with, you know, the nature of the gang. So if you know, if self control, as you know, defined in classical perspective, are these individual differences in this tendency to forego the temptations of the moment, that can result in these negative long term consequences. So, you know, the people who select into gangs should have lower self control. And the people who don't select into gangs, they should be able to see that the gang doesn't offer members, their members, these long term benefits. There's not the credentialing involved in gangs. It's not like you could take your gang membership and put it on your resume and employers are going to look at that and value it. You know, gangs don't offer those long term benefits. But you also realize, you know, when you ask people about, you know, how and why they leave gangs, they always allude to being sold a bill of goods, the gang doesn't protect you from victimization. The gang doesn't offer you economic returns. The gang does afford some companionship and belonging, but there's a lot of stitching that goes on, there's a lot of not having each other's back when you expected people to do that. And so, people with higher self control should be able to see that. Now, when you look at the nature of the gang itself, you know, life in the gang is very loose, and it's very

unstructured, and it's very weakly defined, and it's very undisciplined. So people with lower self control, they seek out that type of environment that doesn't have those high discipline and expectation and supervision of their behaviors and people constantly regulating them. That's the culture of the group. And that's very consistent with what Gottfredson and Hirschi describe with regard to the characteristics of people, the nature of low self control, and the people with those characteristics. So the selection hypothesis is, you know, people with lower self control should end up in gangs. And then the alternative hypothesis, you know, again, as I said before, there's the 1990 reading that Gottfredson and Hirschi conducted. Well, there's also these last 30 years of research, and we can't ignore that. So we offer the alternative hypotheses that's guided by these last three decades. And not only the general theories of crime that have been applied to selection into gangs that are inconsistent with Gottfredson and Hirschi's take, but also the specialized theories like Diego Vigil's theory, like Jane Wood and Emma Alleyne, the developmental life course theory put forth by Arlen Egley and Buddy Howell, and say, look, gang members should be distinguished by factors other than self control as well. So there should be other things that matter other than self control.



Jose Sanchez 46:20

And what were your findings for these hypotheses?



David Pyrooz 46:23

I mean, there's some support for Gottfredson and Hirschi's take. So people who end up in gangs, so we studied this prospectively. So we measured their self control before people joined a gang and then measured who ended up joining gangs. This was a between person comparison. And what we found studying this prospectively over the course of six waves of data, panel data in the second evaluation of GREAT, what you do find is yes, self control is predictive of self selection into gangs. So there's a direct relationship from self control to gang membership. But there's also an indirect relationship that operates through delinquency, which is consistent of Terry Thornberry and his colleagues hypotheses with regard to delinquency as a source of selection into gangs as well. So they're partially right, in the sense that self control is predictive. They're incorrect in the sense that there are a host of other factors that differentiate people prospectively who join gangs as well.



Jenn Tostlebe 47:22

Which makes sense to me.



David Pyrooz 47:24

Yes.



Jenn Tostlebe 47:25

You know, why would it be the one thing you know?



David Pyrooz 47:28

Yeah, I mean, if they were 100% accurate? I mean, this would change the game entirely.



Jenn Tostlebe 47:32

It would, it would very much though. Yeah. Alright, so that was part one. So selection.



David Pyrooz 47:39

And that's where there's the most support. Moving to the next ones, the story starts to change pretty remarkably.



Jenn Tostlebe 47:45

Yes. So Part two was stability, which I'm going to try and do a quick overview of your theoretical arguments for this section, but feel free to elaborate. So the stability proposition in self control really suggests that self control is socialized, or not, by the family by the age of 10. So after the age of 10, you either have some higher level of self control or it's not as well developed, and you have lower self control. And then relative to other people, at that point, one's level of self control will remain stable over time. However, we see based off of this 30 years of research, in particular, I mean, the last five or so years, research has really started to show that self control can improve, as well as worsen after age 10. So this leads to a lot of questions about the sources of instability, which is really one of the main things that you and your co-authors were looking at in this paper. And so can you lay out or elaborate on the theoretical argument and then lay out your hypotheses for this stability proposition?



David Pyrooz 48:58

Yeah, I mean, part of the motivation for this, for one, it's just a, as I said before, a

provocative claim to make that self control is rank ordered stable after age 10. And when we conducted our early work on self control in 2009, you know, there hadn't been a lot of tests of the stability hypothesis, but we knew that gang membership can change attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and so on. And so our argument back from 2010, and Hope and Damphousse made the same claim as well. So we weren't the first to say this, you need longitudinal data to study this. But, what was really interesting was Na and Paternoster. They had this study in Crim that found that an upwards of 40% of their sample experienced reductions in self control during their adolescent years and they said, you know, what are the sources of these reductions? You know, whether they're exogenous or not exogenous to self control, what are they? And so, you know, we drew on, you know, Tom Dishion's idea of deviancy training, highlighted the work with differential association and social learning theory more generally to say, you know, there are socialization processes in the gang, and normative orientations that encourage risk taking behavior, impulsive behavior, ignoring the interests of others, all of these things are consistent with lower self control. Now, what we don't do in this paper is make a claim, like to stake a claim, to say that this is a capacity argument because we don't think that necessarily, you know, gang membership will change your capacity to exercise self control. But we do find the strength based argument that you know, self control as a muscle, and it could get depleted over time, and it needs to be worked up, because everything about life in the gang is testing someone's self control. Walking down the street can put somebody at risk, you know, going to your school and crossing rival gang neighborhoods can put you at risk, going to the mall and the potential that this is a convergent space can put you at risk. That eventually wears on somebody. So that's the strength based side. But then there's also the willingness space side is something that Tittel and his colleagues have made arguments about. And that's everything I just described with regard to the risk taking in the impulsivity. So that was our case, to say that while people are active in gangs, self control could worsen. So the Gottfredson and Hirschi hypothesis is that just about nothing, especially nothing social, should lower levels of self control. The alternative hypothesis that we develop in the paper is that gang membership should lower self control.



David Pyrooz 51:41

And I think your next question is going to be the finding, right?



Jenn Tostlebe 51:45

Yes.

D

David Pyrooz 51:46

And of course, that's what we found is that levels of self control were worsened during active periods of gang membership. Now, we can't say that it has to do with capacity, much less strength based, much less willingness, but we put our money on a strength based argument or willingness argument over capacity. So it's one of the few findings with regard to the sources of downward influences on self control. There were some findings with regard to delinquent peer groups generally. But again, you can't take findings from delinquent peer groups and impute them or translate them to the gang because they're different.

J

Jose Sanchez 52:25

All right. And now we're gonna get into Part three, and this is the last big section of your paper, and this is the spuriousness argument. And as we understand it, spuriousness is two variables that are correlated with each other. But this is either by coincidence, or because there's a third variable that we haven't observed for one reason or another. And so self control would argue that when you look at gang membership to delinquency, when you look at that relationship, self control should be the driving force of delinquency, not necessarily gang membership. However, we have seen in the research that that isn't quite true, and that gang membership does seem to have its own influence on delinquency, even when you take theoretical variables into account. So again, could you describe to us what the hypotheses and what your findings were, for spuriousness?

D

David Pyrooz 53:25

Sure, yeah. I mean, the empirical support for the relationship between self control and delinquency is extensive. I mean, multiple meta-analyses have confirmed, you know, moderate effect sizes. And then the empirical support for gang membership in delinquency is just as extensive, if not more at this point, or at least when we conducted our meta analysis back in 2016, there were 179 studies on the topic, which was one of the largest meta analyses in criminology, and we found effect sizes that were comparable to Travis Pratt and Frank Cullen's meta analysis on self control back from 2000. But, you know, one of the things that we found in that meta analysis was, you know, the bivariate effect sizes, in the relationship between gang membership and delinquency, were much greater than the multivariate effect sizes. And that completely makes sense, right? Because, you know, somebody identifying as a gang member should not have a causal effect on crime. It should be all of these other influences, and all of these other changes that are brought about with identifying as a gang member. Which, you know, the gang researchers point to the group processes of the gang, these situational and interactional factors that are social and psychological, that give rise to delinquency and a whole host

of other outcomes. But, you know, the gang researchers are attributing causal significance to gang membership. Gottfredson and Hirschi, while their new book from 2019, pushes back against the sort of, you know, all crimes at all times and is the single predictor of criminal behavior, they push back against that. And they say, sure, there's going to be other predictors of criminal behavior. But there shouldn't be. A group should not influence criminal behavior. And they are, they are abundantly clear about that. And not only in their 1990 writings, but also in their 2019 writings, there's little doubt about that. So self control, if gang members, or if gangs are little more than loose confederations of youth with low self control, if you take into account self control, you control for self control, there should no longer be an association between gang membership and delinquency. It's very clear in their writings about that. And that's the Gottfredson and Hirschi hypothesis of spuriousness, that association is coincidental or because you've ignored these extraneous influences, the confounders, like self control.

D

David Pyrooz 56:07

Now, our hypothesis had to do with a group process. Again, all of these decades of research on gangs, there should be an effect of gang membership on delinquency net of self control. And lo and behold, that's what we find. Both of self control and gang membership matter. But we study this intra-individually, comparing people as they move into gangs and as they move out of gangs, so active periods of active gang membership to periods of prospective or former gang membership. While we use the stabilized inverse propensity weights to control for non-random selection into gangs, not just self control, but all of these other characteristics that we know are associated with selection into gangs as well. So we found both self control and gang membership are predictive of delinquency. So they both matter. It's just that, you know, gang researchers don't claim that self control is irrelevant, whereas Gottfredson and Hirschi would claim that gang membership is irrelevant to delinquency.



Jenn Tostlebe 57:10

Alright, so modest support then for Gottfredson and Hirschi's claims on selection, not much support for stability or spuriousness? Basically none.

D

David Pyrooz 57:23

Yeah, I mean, the overall conclusion to reach here is that, you know, Gottfredson and Hirschi are on the board, but they missed the bullseye. And they miss it pretty badly. I mean, they got like a triple one on the bullseye here, but they are on the board overall.



Jenn Tostlebe 57:37

Okay. So knowing these findings that came out of this study, in the paper, at the end, you discuss a whole host of criminological implications for these results. Could you elaborate a little bit on some of the implications that may be most relevant to like the general public and political sphere, as well as the academic community?



David Pyrooz 58:00

Sure. Yeah. I mean, in the end, if Gottfredson and Hirschi are right, I mean, if they were correct here, because the implications, actually, I mean, in terms of public policy and programming, we're not advocating necessarily for anything new. I mean, self control does matter, at least, it should be a risk factor that is targeted when it comes to gang prevention. So you should be looking at things related to impulsivity and risk taking and self centeredness and so on, with regard to selection into gangs. That should be built into prevention efforts. But you know, the biggest implication has to do with Gottfredson and Hirschi's contentions in the first place. You know, the entire argument is that if they are correct, all of these efforts to focus on gangs, you know, we shouldn't be focusing on gang prevention, we should be focusing on instilling higher levels of self control. We don't need to intervene with gang members, because gang membership doesn't have a causal effect on crime, we should be trying to change people's levels of self control. But all of this anti-gang legislation, all this policy, the legal armament, everything related to the specialized treatment of gangs, is a big waste of money. And it's a big waste of time, and effort. And that would mean all of our efforts should be shifting upstream to be focusing on self control. So the entire academic and criminal justice enterprise related to gangs should be disbanded, if they're correct. But that's just not what we found. And if anything, what we found largely justifies the special attention that is afforded to gangs. So in the end, we can't reinterpret gangs in self control perspective. Instead, what this means is there is continued value in focusing on cultural, psychological, and structural variables and perspectives more generally, with regard to gangs.



Jenn Tostlebe 59:57

That's a good thing for you. I'm just kidding. It would have been kind of crazy to see it the other way.



David Pyrooz 1:00:05

And 6000 other works that have been published on gangs and gang centers and all of this other work that's out there. I mean, I won't say it justifies all of it. But I will say it does

justify the focus.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:00:18

Yeah.



Jose Sanchez 1:00:19

Yeah. I can't imagine having to switch my research interests at this point.



David Pyrooz 1:00:25

And in the end, it's one study. I mean, we got to be clear here, this is one study. And if we've learned anything over the years, with regard to the reproduction and replication, we want to see this reproduced, not just with GREAT 2, but we also want to see it replicated with other data sets that are capable of being able to test these questions. And I just don't consider what we've done the final word on the matter, I think it's a very good first step, but not the final word. And there's other hypotheses to be tested from Gottfredson and Hirschi's perspective on gangs with regard to organization, with regard to sociality, and so on.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:01:00

And those are all things you talked about in your paper too, which I really like to see, I think more people, which I think nowadays, the replication is becoming more important, but just seeing that acknowledged by authors more and more is nice for me to see. Because I think that's important as well.



David Pyrooz 1:01:18

It is, I mean, I think it should be a greater priority in our field. And it's interesting to see, I mean, it's not just null hypothesis significance testing, it's are you getting effect sizes that are comparable to what we observed in our paper?



Jose Sanchez 1:01:32

We want to spend the last few minutes of this episode, David, sort of doing some, what we call myth busting. And gangs are, as we discussed, one of those things that get can get over sensationalized. And there are a lot of myths surrounding gangs. And so this first one

you kind of touched upon earlier. But it's this phrase that we hear, "blood in blood out," and we hear it, we've heard it in the movie, Blood In, Blood Out. But we've also seen this concept be applied in other movies like American Me and Westside Story. And that's this idea that once you're in the gang, you're in for life. How much truth is there to that? I know you hinted at that people do leave, but is that a common occurrence?

D

David Pyrooz 1:02:18

Yeah, the myth far exceeds the reality. I mean, far exceeds it. So we've got James Densley and I have recent article, we summarized the work with regard to the duration, the number of years somebody is involved in a gang, from all these different longitudinal studies. So you know, the Seattle Social Development Study with Karl Hill, Terry Thornberry, Mark Krohn in Rochester, the Denver Youth Study, and looking at studies in Europe, as well. But there's, you know, an upwards, I think we summarize 10 to 12 studies. And the modal number of years someone's involved in a gang in these longitudinal studies is one. You see a small minority about five to 10%, who are involved in gangs for over four years, five years, or more. So that's from the longitudinal--those are the panel studies that track people over time. Now, those are the prospective studies, the retrospective studies tell a bit of a different story. So in, and some of this could be just selecting on the dependent variable. So like, in my own work, when we interviewed gang members with the Google Ideas Studies, that was like a five city study in Fresno and Los Angeles and Phoenix and Cleveland and St. Louis, as well as in the LoneStar Project, where we interview prison gang members, you know, we ask them to report when they join a gang and, you know, when they left the gang, if they have, and, you know, typically, you know, you're observing about 10 years on average with the retrospective studies. So there's a little bit of disconnect, methodologically. But if you were to ask law enforcement about this, I mean, the portrayal is that these are lifelong commitments. But the thing is, you know, we've interviewed hundreds of gang members who have left their gangs, and you find that not only is it possible, but that's the norm as opposed to the exception. Now, of course, you know, some people do experience violent exits. They undergo, you know, these ceremonial hostile exits, where they either get jumped out, they get beaten, they get threatened, you know, some people get killed, but that is not the norm. Most people leave, and they leave on their own terms, and they leave without physical altercations. And we do find that this happens pretty regularly in prison, not just the street.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:04:41

Myth busted.



David Pyrooz 1:04:43

Busted. Broken.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:04:46

Alright, the second one, which you have mentioned earlier on in this episode, but it's this idea that gangs deliver on their promises of protection, family, monetary rewards from being in a gang. How much truth is there to that?



David Pyrooz 1:05:04

The greater truth is found in the area of belonging, status, companionship, you know some of the functional benefits of getting involved in a gang. More on, I guess, more of the normative side because one of the big motivations for why people join a gang is because their friends or their family or people in their neighborhood are involved in gangs and so it takes on a more normative aspect. But when it comes to people who seek out the gang for protective or economic reasons, you don't see a lot of support for that. The recent work that Megan Augustyn and Jean McGloin and I did on the economic returns, it came out in 2019 issue of Criminology was we just didn't see a huge benefit associate. You saw on the illicit side an initial influx of gains in earnings but that quickly went away. So on the economic side, I will say the literature is not as developed. We don't have a great deal of certainty on that because there's just been a couple of studies to look at the economic returns. On the illicit economic returns and on the legal economic returns you don't see a lot of changes that occur when people get involved in gangs. Now on the protective side there's very little evidence to say that gang membership protects you from victimization. If anything, levels of victimization increase and there's been a pretty good amount of studies on this topic partly because there was some controversy in the literature. There was a comment and response in Justice Quarterly between Chris Gibson and his colleagues, who found selection was the story. In other words once you account for these pre existing risk factors that put people at risk for victimization there was no longer an effect on victimization. Ozer and Engle came back with a response that said, yeah there are these victimizations, so they tried to replicate the Gibson work. Overall both of those studies had some pretty serious methodological flaws but the rest of the literature on the topic shows when you study people inter-individually you do find increases in victimization. Chris Melde had this great study in Criminology back from 2009 titled "I got your back" and what they found in that study was that the sources of victimization were more predictable as opposed to these random sources of victimization. So you knew who was going to target you and it made you less fearful of victimization knowing that the gang also has your back and even though your levels of risk associated with victimization

are going to increase it was more of a controlled source of victimization that they observed in that study. So gang membership is not protective, you know, Jenn, we found you know levels of homicide victimization associated with gang membership. We see homicide victimization risk at almost 1,000 per 100,000 gang members. It's pretty rare you talk about homicide victimization in single digit percentage points, but that's what we observed at least with black male gang members in St. Louis.



Jose Sanchez 1:08:12

Yeah that's a good paper by the way. It's pretty wild seeing those numbers.



David Pyrooz 1:08:17

Discouraging. Very discouraging to see that, which it just ups the stakes for developing, implementing, evaluating these violence intervention efforts that do have a focus on gangs.



Jose Sanchez 1:08:31

So the last myth that we want to talk to you about, David, is this idea that gangs are 100% bad or evil and they have no positive contributions whatsoever to the communities that you find them in. Does that hold true?



David Pyrooz 1:08:48

There's variation in this regard. So for one I think it's pretty clear for people that we could say you know with a fair degree of, with a strong degree of confidence that we could say that gangs are not universally bad or evil and, you know, they lack no sort of moral compass. I don't think, when we're talking about individuals that would be a pretty bad way to describe gangs. Now from the broader community perspective there's a fair degree of variation and I just am relying on the ethnography for this because it's really hard to quantify something like this. But there is a fair degree of variation where you look at like Mary Pattillo's work and you know you do see the upsides of services that gangs provide to communities. Not to the point where they replace non government organizations, much less government, but gangs do provide forms of governance and opportunities and resources for communities. It's just that you have to be willing to look the other way when the violence goes down or when there's drug dealing and so this speaks to some of the cultural relativism that you see in some of these communities. Which you know harkens back to Shaw and McKay, that you observe these culturally heterogeneous communities, as opposed to this sort of, you know, homogenous universal

value system in communities. So that's a very nuanced question. And nuance doesn't do very well when it comes to myth busting.



Jose Sanchez 1:10:20

Yeah. And I know there's some of the ethnographic research in Central America that will show that sometimes gangs do serve some function in in their neighborhoods.



David Pyrooz 1:10:34

There's trade offs.



Jose Sanchez 1:10:36

Yeah, definitely. Alright, so that brings us to the end of this episode. Thank you again, David, for joining us. Is there anything that you'd like to plug anything coming up? I know, we briefly mentioned, but you do have that paper with Jenn in Homicide Studies that came out this year as well.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:10:56

And Preventive Medicine.



David Pyrooz 1:10:58


Yeah, we're trying to determine, you know, these mortality risks associated with gang membership and apply broader lens to it than just thinking about them solely in terms of violence. So looking at mortality risks, generally. And, you know, parsing out the causes of death, premature death among gang members. But I guess if there was one thing that I wanted to plug, James Densley, Scott Decker, and I just submitted a monograph to Temple University Press, which we have titled, On gangs, which is aiming to be the most comprehensive and authoritative and integrative text on gangs. So that's what I'm really excited about. 402 pages over to the publisher and we hope to have that out by the end of 2021.




Jenn Tostlebe 1:11:47


Congrats on submitting it.

 David Pyrooz 1:11:49
That was a lot of work.


 Jose Sanchez 1:11:52
yeah. And you and James were discussing it at Eurogang last year.


 David Pyrooz 1:11:58
That's right.

 Jose Sanchez 1:11:59
Mapping out what the chapters were gonna look like.

 David Pyrooz 1:12:02
And it took a while to put together but we got a lot of writing done this year. There are some upsides to a pandemic, not a lot, but one of the upsides was cancellation of a lot of travel, which permitted a lot of writing to get done. At least when my kids went running in the room and yelling at me.

 Jose Sanchez 1:12:23
And where can people find you David, Twitter, researchgate, Google Scholar, that sort of stuff.

 1:12:29
Yeah, Google Scholar, I post every preprint article on researchgate, so it could be accessible to the general public. On Twitter occasionally, @dpyrooz. And email David.Pyrooz at Colorado.edu

 Jose Sanchez 1:12:46
And are there any last parting words that you'd like to leave us with?

 David Pyrooz 1:12:50



Nope, thanks for having me on.



Jose Sanchez 1:12:52

Awesome.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:12:52

Thank you



Jose Sanchez 1:12:52

It was great having you.



David Pyrooz 1:12:53

Yeah.



Jose Sanchez 1:12:54

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