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1 AN OVERVIEW OF CRIME AND CRIMINOLOGY

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<div style="background:#2aa8c4; color:white; text-align:center; font-weight:bold;">LEARNING OBJECTIVES</div>

1.1 Describe the difference between the disciplines of criminology and criminal justice.

1.2 Identify the difficulties attached to defining crime.

1.3 Explain the difference between crime and criminality.

1.4 Describe the legal process required to "officially" become a criminal.

1.5 Discuss how thinking about crime and criminology is time and culture bound.

1.6 Examine the relationship between theory and policy in criminology.

1.7 Assess the role of ideology in criminology.

1.8 Explain the connection between criminological theory and social policy.

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IN 1996, Iraqi refugees Majed Al-Timimy, 28, and Latif Al-Husani, 34, married the daughters, aged 13 and 14, of a fellow Iraqi refugee in Lincoln, Nebraska. The marriages took place according to Muslim custom and everything seemed to be going well until one of the girls ran away and the concerned father and her husband reported it to the police. At this point American and Iraqi norms of legality and morality clashed head-on. Under Nebraska law, people under 17 years old cannot marry, so both grooms and the girls' father and mother were arrested and charged with a variety of crimes from child endangerment to statutory rape.

According to an Iraqi woman interviewed by the police (herself married at 12 in Iraq), both girls were excited and happy about the wedding. The Iraqi community was shocked that these men faced up to 50 years in prison for their actions, as would have been earlier generations of Americans who were legally permitted to marry girls of this age. The men were sentenced to 4 to 6 years in prison and paroled in 2000 with conditions that they have no contact with their "wives." Thus, something legally and morally permissible in one culture can be severely punished in another. Were the actions of these men child sex abuse or simply unremarkable marital sex? Which culture is right? Can we really ask such a question? Is Iraqi culture "more right" than American culture given that marrying girls of that age was permissible here too at one time? Most importantly for our purposes, how can criminologists hope to study crime scientifically if what constitutes a crime is relative to time and place?

WHAT IS CRIMINOLOGY?

The 19th-century American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne (2003:1) opens his famous book *The Scarlet Letter* with these words of wisdom: "The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison." Hawthorne is reminding us of two things we cannot avoid—death and human wickedness—and that we must make provisions for both. Perhaps because criminals reveal humanity's dark side, endless movies and television shows indicate that people have a fascination with exploring the darker side of human nature (ask your friends if they would rather read a book about the 10 most evil serial killers in history or the 10 holiest saints in history). It is this dark but fascinating side of the human character that criminology explores.

Criminology is an interdisciplinary science that gathers and analyzes data on various aspects of criminal, delinquent, and general antisocial behavior. It is different from the discipline of criminal justice, which is concerned with how the criminal justice system investigates, prosecutes, and controls/supervises individuals who have committed crimes. Criminology examines why those individuals committed crimes that got them ensnarled in the criminal justice system in the first place. As with all

scientific disciplines, the goal of criminology is to understand its subject matter and to determine how that understanding can benefit society. In pursuit of this understanding, criminologists ask questions such as these:

- Why do crime rates vary from time to time and from culture to culture?

- Why are some individuals more prone to committing crime than others?

- Why do crime rates vary across different ages, genders, and racial/ethnic groups?

- Why are some harmful acts criminalized and not others?

- What can we do to prevent crime?

By a *scientific* study of crime and criminal behavior we mean that criminologists use the scientific method, the greatest intellectual invention of humanity, to try to answer the questions they ask rather than just philosophize about them from their armchairs. The scientific method is a tool for separating truth from error by demanding evidence for any conclusions criminologists arrive at. Evidence is obtained by formulating hypotheses derived from theory that are rigorously tested with data in such a way that others following the same method can replicate the study. By following the scientific method, criminologists hope to build a body of verified knowledge that may help policy makers and police and correctional officials in their battle against crime.

WHAT IS CRIME?

The term *criminal* can and has been applied to many types of behavior, some of which nearly all of us have been guilty of at some time in our lives. We can all think of acts that we feel *ought* to be criminal but are not or acts that should not be criminal but are. The list of things that someone or another at different times and at different places may consider to be crimes is very large, with only a few being defined as criminal by the law in the United States at this time. Despite these difficulties, we need a definition of crime to proceed. The most often quoted definition is that of Paul Tappan (1947:100), who defined crime as "an intentional act in violation of the criminal law committed without defense or excuse, and penalized by the state." A crime is thus an *act* in violation of a *criminal law* for which a *punishment* is prescribed; the person committing it must have *intended* to do so and must have done so without legally acceptable *defense* or *justification*.

Tappan's definition is strictly a legal one that reminds us that the state, and only the state, has the power to define an act as criminal. Hypothetically a society could eradicate crime tomorrow simply by canceling all of its criminal statutes. Of course, this would not eliminate the behavior specified by the law as crimes; in fact, the behavior would doubtless increase since the behavior could no longer be officially punished. While it is absurd to think that any society would try to solve its crime problem by eliminating its criminal statutes, legislative bodies are continually revising, adding to, and deleting from their criminal statutes.

Crime as a Moving Target

Almost every vice is somewhere and at sometimes a virtue. There are numerous examples of acts defined as crimes in one country being tolerated and even expected behavior in another, as demonstrated in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter. We might congratulate ourselves for protecting young girls from the kind of fate that befell the 13- and 14-year-old girls in the vignette, but in 1885 no state in the United States had an age of consent above 12 (Friedman, 2005). Laws also vary within the same culture from time to time as well as across different cultures. Until the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914, there were few legal restrictions in the United States on the sale, possession, or use of most drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Following the Harrison Act, many drugs became controlled substances, the sale and possession of drugs became a crime, and a brand-new class of criminals was created overnight.

Crimes pass out of existence also, even acts that had been considered crimes for centuries. Until the United States Supreme Court invalidated sodomy (anal or oral sex) statutes in *Lawrence v. Texas* in 2003, sodomy was legally punishable in many states, even between consenting spouses in some states. Likewise, burning the American flag had serious legal consequences until 1989 when the Supreme Court ruled anti-flag burning statutes unconstitutional in *Texas v. Johnson.* What constitutes a crime, then, can be defined in or out of existence by the courts or by legislators. As long as human societies remain diverse and dynamic, there will always be a moving target of activities with the potential for nomination as crimes, as well as illegal activities nominated for decriminalization.

If what constitutes crime differs across time and place, how can criminologists hope to agree on a scientific explanation for crime and criminal behavior? Science is about making universal statements about stably defined phenomena. Atoms, the gas laws, DNA, the laws of thermodynamics, photosynthesis, and so on are not defined or evaluated differently by scientists around the globe according to local customs or ideological preferences. But what we call "crime" keeps moving around, and because it does, some criminologists have declared it impossible to generalize about what is and is not "real" crime.

These criminologists are saying that crime is a socially constructed phenomenon that lacks any "real" objective essence and is defined into existence rather than discovered. Of course, in a trivial sense everything is socially constructed. Nature does not reveal herself to us sorted into ready-labeled packages, so humans must do it for her as in, for instance, the elements in the periodic table. The elements had the same structure and relationship to one another for billions of years before they were named and categorized. *Social construction* means nothing more than humans have perceived a phenomenon, named it, and categorized it according to some classificatory rule that makes note of the similarities and differences among the things being classified. Most classification schemes are not arbitrary; if they were, we would not be able to make sense of anything. Categories have empirically meaningful referents and are used to impose order on the diversity of the world and of human experience. Thus, while some crimes are legislatively defined in and out of existence, some behaviors are nearly universally condemned, such as the unjustified killing of others and the nonconsensual taking of property belonging to others. Criminal statutes prohibiting these acts are obviously warranted the world over.

Crime as a Subcategory of Social Harms

So, what *can* we say about crime; how *can* we conceive of it in ways that most people would agree are logical, consistent, and correspond with everyday reality? When all is said and done, crime is a subcategory of all harmful acts that range from simple things like smoking to very serious things like murder. Some harmful acts such as smoking tobacco and drinking to excess are not considered anyone's business other than the actor's if they take place in private or even in public if the person indulging in those things creates no annoyance to others. Socially (as opposed to private) harmful acts are acts deemed to be in need of regulation (e.g., health standards, air pollution) but not by the criminal law except under exceptional circumstance. Private wrongs (such as someone reneging on a contract) are socially harmful but not sufficiently so to require the heavy hand of the criminal law. Such wrongs are regulated by the civil law in which the wronged party (the plaintiff) rather than the state initiates legal action and the defendant does not risk deprivation of his or her liberty if the plaintiff prevails.

Further along the continuum we find a category of harmful acts considered so socially harmful that they come under the scope of the criminal law. Even here we are still confronted with the problem of human judgment in determining what goes into this subcategory. But this is true all along the line; smoking was once actually considered rather healthy, and air pollution and other unhealthy environmental conditions were simply facts of life about which nothing could be done. Categorization always requires a series of human judgments, but that does not render the categorizations arbitrary.

BOX 1.1 MALA IN SE OR MALA PROHIBITA?

The Cannibal and His Willing Victim

We have said that the litmus test for a mala in se crime is that no one would want to be a victim of such a crime. You would think that killing, butchering, and eating another human being would certainly pass such a test. But what if the cannibal's dinner was a willing victim and the country in which the cannibal and his victim lived had no law forbidding cannibalism? This strange state of affairs existed in Rotenburg in central Germany in 2001. Germany's own Hannibal Lecter, one Armin Meiwes, had advertised online seeking volunteers for "slaughter and consumption." Among the over 200 replies Meiwes received was an email from Bernd-Jurgen Brandes (a successful software engineer) stating, "I am your meat." Meiwes and Brandes videotaped their agreement, and Meiwes taped the subsequent killing and butchering of Brandes. Brandes stated on the tape that being eaten would be the "fulfillment of my dream."

The prosecution in this case argued for a conviction of murder and "disturbing the peace of the dead," which would have gotten Meiwes a life sentence. The defense argued that Meiwes had simply assisted Brandes in his suicide, which carried a 5-year sentence. The panel of judges hearing the case agreed that Meiwes could not be convicted of murder and handed Meiwes an 8.5-year prison sentence in January 2004. However, the prosecution appealed the case, and on retrial Meiwes was convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In common law countries such as the United States, Meiwes would have been convicted of murder because one person cannot give another the consent to kill him or her—people can give their consent to many things, but not this. What Meiwes committed was clearly a mala in se crime, and Brandes's consent doesn't change that at all. The behavior of both men was obviously bizarre, and just because we find instances in which people do want to be victimized by acts that 99.99% of their fellow humans would find repugnant does not change the inherent badness of those acts.

The harm caused by criminal activity is financially and emotionally costly. The emotional pain and suffering borne by crime victims is obviously impossible to quantify, but many estimates of the financial harm are available. Most estimates focus on the costs of running the criminal justice system, which includes the salaries and benefits of personnel, and the maintenance costs of buildings (e.g., offices, jails, prisons, stations) and equipment (e.g., vehicles, weapons, uniforms). Added to these costs are the costs associated with each crime (the average cost per incident multiplied by the number of incidents as reported to the police). All these costs combined are estimates of the *direct* costs of crime.

The *indirect* costs of crime must also be considered as part of the burden. These costs include all manner of surveillance and security devices, protective devices (e.g., guns, alarms, security guards) and insurance costs, medical services, and the lost productivity and taxes of incarcerated individuals. From a variety of government sources, McCollister, French, and Fang (2010) estimate that each year crime results in approximately $15 billion in economic losses to the victims and $179 billion in government expenditures on police protection, judicial and legal activities, and corrections. The tangible and intangible financial cost per murder is estimated at $8,982,907, and per rape it is $240,776. These figures do not reflect the severe psychological and emotional costs to victims and their families that can far exceed any dollar amount.

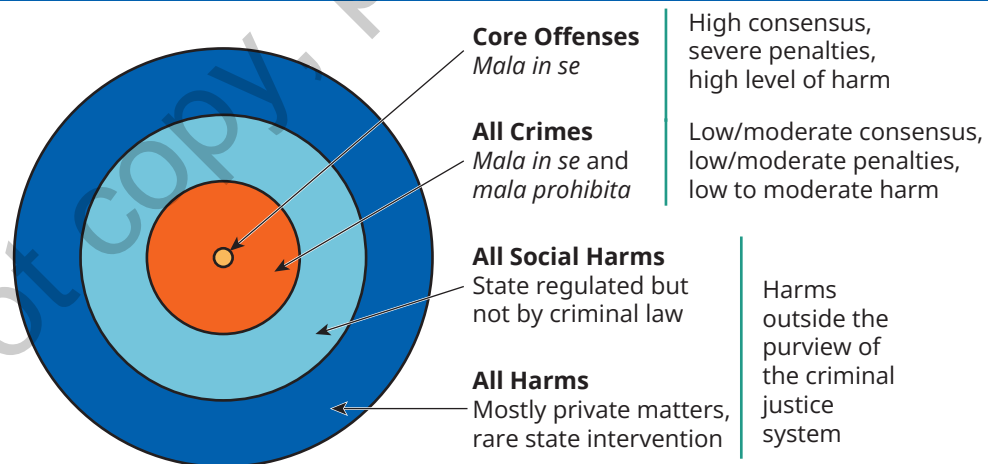### Beyond Social Construction: The Stationary Core Crimes

Few people would argue that an act is not arbitrarily categorized or is not seriously harmful if it is universally condemned--that is, if there is a core of offenses defined as wrong at almost all times and in almost all cultures. Some of the strongest evidence in support of the stationary core perspective comes from the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), headquartered in Lyon, France. Interpol serves as a repository for crime statistics from each of its 188 member nations. Interpol's data show that such acts as murder, assault, rape, and theft are considered serious crimes in every single country (Walsh & Ellis, 2007). Individuals or groups may differ on the ordering of the seriousness of these crimes, but they are still universally condemned. There are societies in which so-called honor

killings are culturally accepted, but this does not contradict the contention that murder is inherently wrong. Even in countries in which the practice exists, honor killing is contrary to the law, although it is rarely prosecuted or is treated leniently if it is. Honor killings typically involve families murdering their daughters, mostly because they have "dishonored" the family by engaging in an unsanctioned (nonmarital) sexual relationship or because they are romantically involved with someone the family's culture deems undesirable.

Criminologists call these universally condemned crimes **mala in se** ("inherently evil"). Crimes that are time and culture bound are described as **mala prohibita** ("evil because they are prohibited"). But how can we know that an act is inherently bad? The litmus test for determining a mala in se crime is that no one except under the most bizarre of circumstances would want to be victimized by one (see Box 1.1). While millions of people seek to be "victimized" by prostitutes, drug dealers, and bookies, how many of us want to be murdered, raped, robbed, or have their property stolen? Being victimized by such actions evokes physiological reactions (e.g., anger, helplessness, sadness, depression, a desire for revenge) in all cultures and would do so even if the acts were not punishable by law or custom. Mala in se crimes engage these emotions not because some legislative body has defined them as wrong but because they hammer at our deepest concerns and offend us to the core. Evolutionary scientists propose that these built-in emotional mechanisms exist because mala in se crimes threatened the survival and reproductive success of our distant ancestors (the ultimate concerns of all sexually reproducing animals) and that they function to strongly motivate people to try to prevent such acts from occurring and punishing them if they do (O'Manique, 2003; Walsh, 2000).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the relationship of core crimes (mala in se) to acts that have been arbitrarily defined (mala prohibita) as crimes and all harmful acts that may potentially be criminalized. The figure is inspired by John Hagan's (1985) effort to distinguish between "real" crimes and "socially constructed" arbitrary crimes by examining the three highly interrelated concepts of consensus (the degree of public agreement on the seriousness of an act), the severity of penalties attached to an act, and the level of harm attached to an act.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Mala in Se and Mala Prohibita Crimes as Subsets of All Harms

Core Offenses
Mala in se

High consensus, severe penalties, high level of harm

All Crimes
Mala in se and *mala prohibita*

Low/moderate consensus, low/moderate penalties, low to moderate harm

All Social Harms
State regulated but not by criminal law

All Harms
Mostly private matters, rare state intervention

Harms outside the purview of the criminal justice system

CRIMINALITY

We can avoid altogether the problem of defining crimes by studying individuals who commit predatory *harmful* acts, regardless of the legal status of the acts. Criminologists do this when they study crime as a behavior, or criminality. **Criminality** is a clinical or scientific term rather than a legal one and one that can be defined independently of legal definitions of crimes. **Crime** is an intentional act of commission or omission contrary to the law and is a property of society; *criminality* is a property of individuals that signals the willingness to commit crimes and other harmful acts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Criminality is a trait that lies on a continuum ranging from saint to sociopath and is composed of a

mixture of other traits such as callousness, low empathy, impulsiveness, and negative emotionality that also vary greatly among people. People can use and abuse others for personal gain regardless of whether the means used have been defined as criminal; it is the propensity to do this that defines criminality independent of the labeling of an act as a crime or of the person being legally defined as a criminal.

Defining criminality as a continuous trait acknowledges that there is no sharp line separating individuals with respect to this trait—it is not a trait that one has or does not have. Just about everyone at some point in life has committed an act or two in violation of the law, perhaps even a mala in se act. We all fall somewhere on this continuum. But that doesn't make us all criminals; if it did, the term would become virtually synonymous with being human. The point is, we are all situated somewhere on the criminality continuum, just as our heights range from the truly short to the truly tall. Some are so extreme in height that any reasonable person would call them tall. Likewise, a small number of individuals have violated so many criminal statutes over such a long period of time that few would question the appropriateness of calling them chronic criminals. Thus, both height and criminality can be thought of as existing along a continuum, even though the words we use often imply that people's heights and criminal tendencies come in discrete categories (tall/short, criminal/noncriminal). In other words, just as height varies in fine gradations, so too does involvement in criminal behavior. Let us not make the mistake of calling everyone who has ever transgressed the law a criminal.

The Legal Making of a Criminal

Regardless of any criminal traits, no one is "officially" a criminal until he or she has been defined as such by the law, which makes it necessary to briefly discuss the process of arriving at that definition. The legal answer to the question "what is a criminal?" is that he or she is someone who has committed a crime and has been judged guilty of having done so. Before the law can properly call a person a criminal, it must go through a series of actions governed by well-defined legal rules guiding the serious business of officially labeling a person a criminal. This section shows the processing of a suspect in the American criminal justice system from arrest to trial and beyond, illustrated in Figure 1.2.

What Constitutes a Crime?

Corpus delicti is a Latin term meaning "body of the crime" and refers to the elements of an act that must be present to legally define it as a crime. All crimes have their own specific *elements*, which are the essential constituent parts that define the act as criminal. In addition to their specific elements, all crimes share a set of general elements or principles underlying and supporting the specific elements. Five principles must be satisfied before a person is "officially" labeled a criminal, but in actuality, it is only necessary for the state to prove actus reus and mens rea to satisfy corpus delicti. The other principles are typically automatically proven in the course of proving *actus reus* and *mens rea*.

Actus reus means guilty act and refers to the principle that a person must commit some forbidden act or neglect some mandatory act before he or she can be subjected to criminal sanctions. In effect, this principle of law means that people cannot be criminally prosecuted for thinking something or being something, only for *doing* something. This prevents governments from passing laws criminalizing statuses and systems of thought they don't like. For instance, although drunken *behavior* may be a punishable crime, *being* an alcoholic cannot be punished because "being" something is a status, not an act.

Mens rea means guilty mind and refers to whether the suspect had a wrongful purpose in mind when carrying out the actus reus. For instance, although receiving stolen property is a criminal offense, if someone were to buy a stolen television set from an acquaintance without knowing it had been stolen, he or she would have lacked mens rea and would not be subject to prosecution. If one were to be prosecuted, the state would have to prove that he or she knew the television was stolen. Negligence, recklessness, and carelessness that results in harmful consequences, even though not intended, *does not* excuse such behavior from criminal prosecution under mens rea. Conditions that may preclude prosecution under this principle are self-defense, defense of others, youthfulness (a person under 7 years of age cannot be held responsible), insanity (although being found insane does not preclude confinement), and extreme duress or coercion.

FIGURE 1.2 ■ Sequence of Events Leading to a Person Being Labeled a Criminal
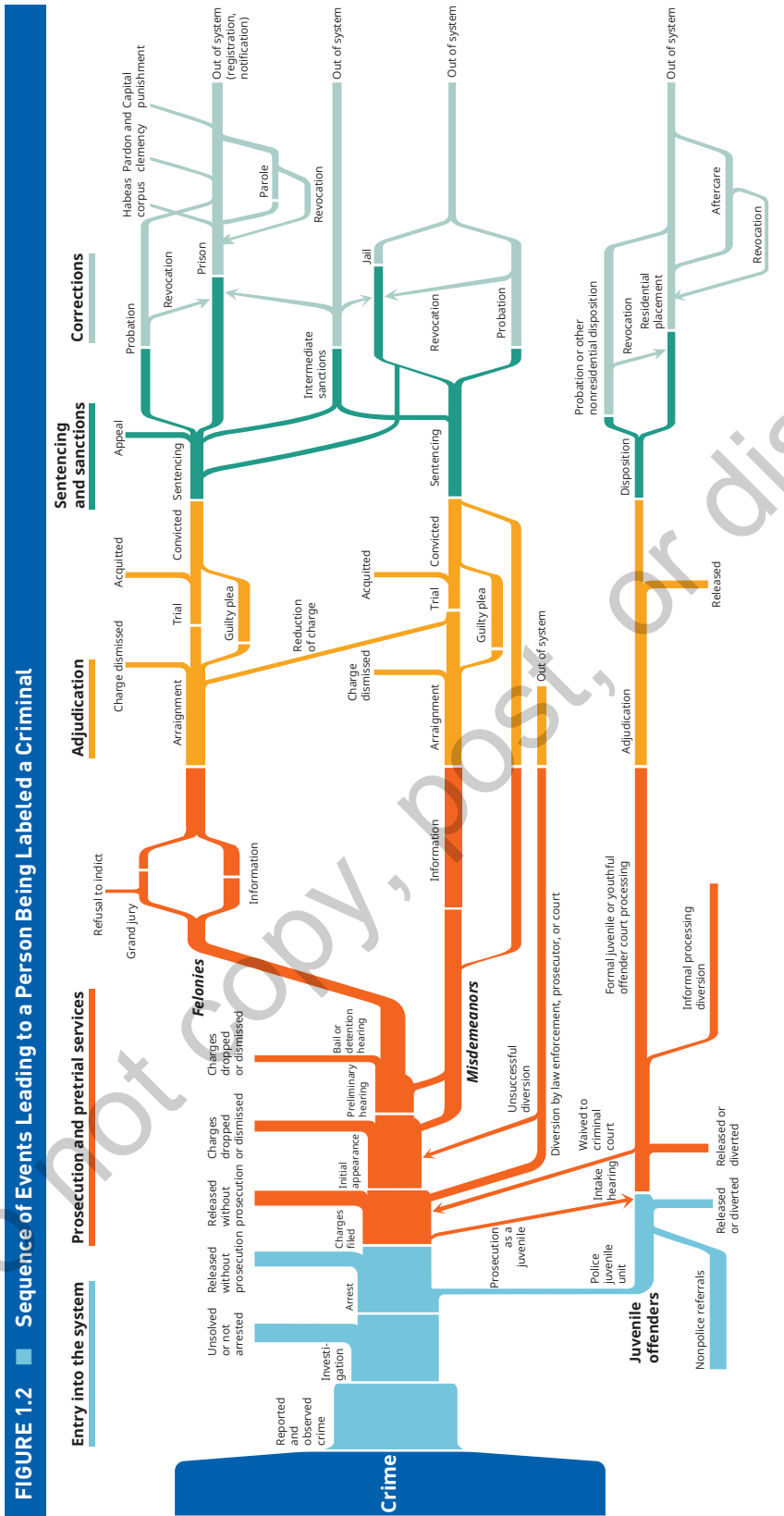
Note: This gives a simplified view of cashflow through the criminal justice system. Procedures vary among jurisdictions. The weight of the lines are not intended to show actual size of caseloads.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2010b).

Concurrence means that the act (actus reus) and the mental state (mens rea) concur in the sense that the criminal intention actuates the criminal act. For instance, if John sets out with his tools to burglarize Mary's apartment and takes her TV, he has fused the guilty mind with the wrongful act and has therefore committed burglary. However, assume John and Mary are friends who habitually visit each other's apartment unannounced. One day John decides to visit Mary, finds her not at home, but walks in and suddenly decides that he could sell Mary's TV for drug money. Although the loss to Mary is the same in both scenarios, in the latter instance John cannot be charged with burglary because he did not enter her apartment "by force or fraud," the crucial element needed to satisfy such a charge. In this case, the concurrence of guilty mind and wrongful act occurred after lawful entry, so he is only charged with theft, a less serious crime.

Causation refers to the necessity to establish a causal link between the criminal act and the harm suffered. This causal link must be proximate, not ultimate. Suppose Tony wounds Frank in a knife fight. Being macho, Frank attends to the wound himself. Three weeks later, the wound becomes severely infected and results in his death. Can Tony be charged with murder? Although the wounding led to Frank's death (the ultimate cause), Frank's disregard for the seriousness of his injury was the most proximate cause of his death. The question the law asks in cases like this is, "What would any reasonable person do?" This is known as the objective reasonableness standard. Most people would agree that the reasonable person would have sought medical treatment. This being the case, Tony cannot be charged with homicide; the most he could be charged with is aggravated assault.

Harm refers to the negative impact a crime has either to the victim or to the general values of the community. Although the harm caused by the criminal act is often obvious, the harm caused by many so-called victimless crimes is often less obvious, although some such crimes can cause more social harm in the long run than many crimes with obvious victims. The conundrum of prohibiting "victimless" crimes such as smoking pot or purchasing a prostitute becomes apparent when comparing the harms associated with these offenses to the harms caused by legal activities such as drinking alcohol or duping people out of their money in multilevel marketing schemes.

AN EXCURSION THROUGH THE AMERICAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The best way to explain the process of becoming a legal criminal is to follow the processing of felony cases from arrest to trial and beyond. There are many points at which the arrested person may be shunted off the criminal justice conveyor belt via the discretionary decisions of a variety of criminal justice officials. This process varies in some specifics from state to state, but the principles underlying the specifics are uniform. Presented here are the stages and procedures that are most common among our 50 states' court systems.

Arrest. A felony suspect first enters the criminal justice system by **arrest**. When a person has been legally detained to answer criminal charges, he or she has been arrested. Some arrests are made based on an *arrest warrant*, an official document signed by a judge based on evidence presented by law enforcement indicating that the person named in the warrant has probably committed a crime. The warrant authorizes the police to make an arrest, although the great majority of arrests are initiated by the police without a warrant. A police officer making a warrantless arrest is held to the same legal constraints involved in making application for a warrant. To make a legal felony arrest the officer must have *probable cause.* Probable cause means that the officer must possess a set of facts that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the arrested person had committed a crime. Although a person can be stopped based on an officer's suspicion and frisked for a weapon, he or she cannot be arrested based on suspicion alone. It is only after an arrest that the Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination comes into play.

Preliminary Arraignment. After arrest and booking into the county jail, the suspect must be presented in court for the preliminary arraignment before a magistrate or judge at the earliest opportunity. The preliminary arraignment has two purposes: (1) to advise suspects of their constitutional

rights and of the charges against them and (2) to set bail. The suspect may be released on monetary bail on his or her "own recognizance." If bail is denied, it is usually because of the gravity of the crime, the risk the suspect poses to the community, or the risk that the suspect might flee the court's jurisdiction. There is no constitutional right to bail. The Eighth Amendment only states that "excessive bail shall not be required." The traditional assumption has been that bail is only designed to assure the suspect's appearance at the next court hearing and that "excessive" means the amount set should be within the suspect's means.

Preliminary Hearing. The preliminary hearing is a proceeding before a magistrate or judge in which three major matters must be decided: (1) whether a crime has actually been committed, (2) whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the person before the bench committed it, and (3) whether the crime was committed in the jurisdiction of the court. These matters determine if the suspect's arrest and detention is legal. The onus of proving the legality of the suspect's arrest and detention is on the prosecutor, who must establish probable cause and present the court with evidence pertinent to the suspect's probable guilt. This is usually a relatively easy matter for the prosecutor since defense attorneys rarely cross-examine witnesses or introduce their own evidence at this point, their primary use of the preliminary hearing being only to discover the strength of the prosecutor's case.

The Grand Jury. If the prosecutor is successful, the suspect is bound over to a higher court for further processing. Prior to the suspect's next court appearance, prosecutors in some states must seek an indictment (a document formally charging the suspect with a specific crime or crimes) from a grand jury. The **grand jury**, so called to distinguish it from the "petit" or trial jury, is nominally an investigatory body and a buffer between the awesome power of the state and its citizens, but some see it as an historical anachronism that serves only prosecutorial purposes. The grand jury is composed of citizens chosen from voter or automobile registration lists and numbers anywhere from 7 to 23 members.

A police officer takes a suspect into custody. A felony suspect enters the criminal justice system by arrest.

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Arraignment. Armed with an indictment (or an *information* in states not requiring grand jury proceedings), the prosecutor files the case against the accused in felony court (variably called a district, superior, or common pleas court), which sets a date for **arraignment**. The arraignment proceeding is the first-time defendants have the opportunity to respond to the charges against them. After the charges are read to the defendant, he or she must then enter a formal response to them, known as a plea. The plea alternatives are guilty, not guilty, or no contest. A guilty plea is usually the result of a plea bargain agreement concluded before the arraignment. About 90% of all felony cases in the United States are settled by plea bargains in which the state extends some benefit to defendants, such as reduced charges, in exchange for their cooperation. By pleading guilty, defendants give up their right to be proven guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt," their right against self-incrimination, and the right to appeal. A not-guilty plea results in a date being set for trial; a guilty or no contest plea results in a date being set for sentencing.

The Trial. A trial by a jury of one's peers is a Sixth Amendment right and is an examination of the facts of a case by a judge or a jury for the purpose of reaching a judgment. The trial is an adversarial process pitting the prosecutor against the defense attorney, with each side trying to "vanquish" the other. There is no sense that each side is interested in seeking truth or justice in this totally partisan process. It is the task of the judge to ensure that both sides play by the rules. The prosecution's job is a little more difficult than the defense's since it must "prove beyond a reasonable doubt" that the accused is indeed guilty. Except in states that allow for nonunanimous jury decisions, the defense need only plant the seed of reasonable doubt in the mind of one stubborn juror to upset the prosecution's case. However,

the processes of our adversarial system are stacked in the prosecutor's favor given that defense attorneys are commonly overworked and underprepared to adequately represent their clients. There have been cases where defense attorneys have shown up to court drunk or have even fallen asleep during trial.

Having heard the facts of the case, and having been instructed by the judge on the principles of law pertaining to it, the jury is charged with reaching a verdict. The jury's verdict may be guilty or not guilty, or if it cannot reach a verdict (a "hung" jury), the judge may declare a mistrial. A hung jury results in either dismissal of the charges by the prosecutor or in a retrial. If the verdict is guilty, in most cases the judge will delay sentencing to allow time for a presentence investigation report (PSI) to be prepared. At the point of conviction (or entering a plea of guilty), the person officially becomes a criminal.

Probation. PSIs are prepared by probation officers and contain a variety of information about the crime and the offender's background (e.g., criminal record, education and work history, marital status, substance abuse, attitude). Based on this information, the probation officer offers a sentencing recommendation. The most important factors influencing these recommendations are crime seriousness and the defendant's criminal history. A judge may place the offender on probation, the most common sentence in the United States today. A probation sentence is a suspended commitment to prison, and if at any time during their probationary period offenders do not abide by the imposed probation conditions (consisting of a variety of general and offender-specific conditions), they may face revocation of probation and the imposition of the original prison sentence. Probation officers supervise and monitor offenders' behavior and assure that all conditions of probation are adhered to. Probation officers thus function as both social workers and law enforcement officers, sometimes conflicting roles that officers may find difficult to reconcile.

Incarceration. If the sentence imposed for a felony conviction is some form of incarceration, the judge has the option of sentencing the offender to a state penitentiary, a county jail, or a county work release program. The latter two options are almost invariably imposed as supplements to probation orders.

Parole. Parole is a conditional release from prison granted to inmates prior to the completion of their sentences. An inmate is granted parole by an administrative body called a parole board, which decides for or against parole based on such factors as inmate behavior while incarcerated and the urgency of the need for cell space. Once released on parole, parole officers, whose job is almost identical to that of probation officers, supervise parolees. In many states, probation and parole officers are one and the same. The primary difference between probation and parole is that probationers are under the supervision of the courts and parolees are under the supervision of the state Department of Corrections. Revocation of probation is a judicial function; revocation of parole is an executive administrative function.

Many people turn to divine explanations for events and behaviors ranging from natural disasters, to criminality, to the outcome of the Super Bowl.

iStockPhoto/gorodenkoff

A SHORT HISTORY OF CRIMINOLOGY

The Supernatural Era

Criminology is a young discipline, although humans have probably been theorizing about crime and its causes ever since they first made rules and observed others breaking them. What and how people thought about crime and criminals (as well as all other things) in the past was strongly influenced by the social and intellectual currents of their time. This is no less true of what and how modern criminologists think about crime and criminals. In prescientific days, explanations for bad behavior were often of a religious nature. Disastrous natural events such as famines and floods were seen as divine punishment for some

transgression, and criminals were considered to be possessed by evil spirits. The standard of innocence for an accused person was the survival of some sort of ordeal, such as being bound hand and feet and thrown into a river. If the accused survived the ordeal (which few, if any, ever did), he or she was considered under God's protection and therefore innocent. At other times, survival was viewed as a sign of evil (the devil's protection), and the person was executed (Drapkin, 1989). It may seem as though this type of thinking no longer applies in modern times, but that is not necessarily the case. Spiritualism is common among indigenous tribes and lesser-developed nations. It would therefore be misguided to assume that the belief in spiritual explanations for crime and victimization are no longer prevalent in modern society.

The Renaissance

The Renaissance was a period lasting approximately between 1450 and 1600 that saw a change in thinking away from the pure God-centered supernaturalism of the Middle Ages to more human-centered naturalism. *Renaissance* literally means "rebirth" and refers to the rediscovery of the thinking traditions of the ancient Greeks. The sciences and arts were becoming important, the printing press was invented, and Christopher Columbus "discovered" America during this period. In short, the Renaissance began to mold human thinking away from the absolute authority of received opinion and toward a way that would eventually lead to the modern scientific method. Many during this period believed that the human character and personality are transparent in physical appearance. Such folk wisdom was systematized by an Italian physician named Giambattista della Porta, who developed a theory of human personality called physiognomy in 1558. Porta claimed that the study of physical appearance, particularly of the face, could reveal much about a person's personality and character. Thieves, for instance, were said to have large lips and sharp vision.

The Enlightenment

Another major thrust toward the emergence of the modern world was the Enlightenment, a period approximately between 1650 and 1800 where scientific and rational thought bloomed. It might be said that the Renaissance provided a key to the human mind and the Enlightenment opened the door. Whereas the Renaissance is associated with advances in art, literature, music, and philosophy, the Enlightenment is associated with advances in mathematics, science, reason, and the dignity and worth of the individual as exemplified by a concern for human rights. This concern led to reforms in criminal justice systems throughout Europe, a process given a major push by Cesare Beccaria's work *On Crime and Punishment* (1963) that ushered in the so-called classical school. The classical school emphasized human rationality and free will in its explanations for criminal behavior. Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker (2018) argues that enlightenment values are the core cause of the progress in human flourishing we experience today. Humanity is far less violent now than it was historically; poverty is decreasing rapidly worldwide; and we live longer, healthier, and happier lives because of enlightened thinking.

The Industrial Revolution and the Age of Science

Modern criminology began to take shape in the 19th century with the increasing belief that science could provide answers for everything. This period saw the harnessing of the forces of nature to build and operate the great machines that drove the Industrial Revolution and the strides made in biology by Charles Darwin's work on evolution. Criminology saw the beginning of the so-called *positivist school* during this period where positivist scholars attempted to explain human behavior scientifically in the vein of chemists and physicists using science to explain the physical world. Theories of character, such as phrenology, abounded. The basic idea behind phrenology was that cognitive and personality functions are localized in the brain and that the parts regulating the most dominant functions were bigger than parts regulating the less dominant ones. Criminals were said to have large bumps on parts of the skull thought to regulate craftiness, brutishness, or moral insensibility and small bumps in such "localities" as intelligence, honor, and piety. The biggest impact during this period, however, was made by Cesare Lombroso's theory of atavism, or the born criminal. Criminologists from this point on were obsessed with measuring, sorting, and sifting all kinds of data about criminal behavior. The main stumbling block to criminological advancement during this period was the inadequacy of its research.

One of Giambattista della Porta's illustrations. Physiognomists were fascinated by the apparent similarities of some people's faces with animals.

U.S. National Library of Medicine

The intricacies of scientifically valid research design and measurement were not appreciated, and statistical techniques were truly primitive by today's standards. In short, early positivist criminologists of the day were ahead of their time, and the appropriate scientific tools had yet to be developed. The early classical and positivist thinkers are discussed at length in Chapter 4.

The Progressive Era

The so-called Progressive Era (about 1890 to 1920) ushered in new social ideologies and new ways of thinking about crime. It was an era of liberal efforts to bring about social reform as unions, women, and other disadvantaged groups of people struggled for recognition. Criminology largely turned away from what was disparaged as "biological determinism," which implied that nothing could be done to reform criminals, to cultural or social determinism. If behavior is caused by what people experience in their environments, it was thought that all we had to do to change their behavior was to change their environment. It was during this period that sociology became the disciplinary home of criminology. Criminology became less interested in why individuals commit crime from biological or psychological points of view to a concern with aggregate-level data (e.g., social structures, neighborhoods, subcultures, poverty); that is, where is crime most prevalent and among what groups? It was during this period that the so-called structural theories of crime (discussed in Chapter 6), such as the Chicago school of social ecology, were formulated. Anomie/strain theory was another structural/cultural theory that emerged somewhat later (in 1938). This theory was doubtless influenced strongly by the American experience of the Great Depression and of the exclusion of African Americans from many areas of American society.

The 1950s through the early 1970s saw considerable dissatisfaction with the strong structural approach, which many viewed as proceeding as if individuals were almost irrelevant to explaining criminal behavior. Criminological theory moved toward integrating psychology and sociology during this period and strongly emphasized the importance of socialization. Control theories were highly popular at this time, as was labeling theory; these are addressed in Chapter 7.

The Critical Period

Because the latter part of this period was a time of great civil unrest in the United States (the anti-Vietnam War, civil rights, women, and gay rights movements), it also saw the emergence of several theories, such as conflict theory, highly critical of American society. These theories extended to earlier works of Marxist criminologists, who tended to believe that the only real cause of crime was capitalism. These theories provided little new in terms of our understanding of criminal behavior, but they did spark an interest in white-collar crime and how laws were made by the powerful and applied against the powerless. These theories are addressed in Chapter 8. Perhaps in response to these theories, and perhaps because of a new conservative mood in the United States, theories with the classical taste for free will and rationality embedded in them reemerged in the 1980s. These were rational choice and routine activities theories, discussed in Chapter 5.

The Modern Period

The late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed a resurgence of biosocial theories. These theories view behavior as the result of biological factors interacting with the past and present environments. Biosocial theories have been on the periphery of criminology since its beginning but have been hampered by perceptions of it as driven by an illiberal agenda and by the inability to "get inside" the mysteries of hereditary and the workings of the brain. The truly spectacular advances in the observational techniques (e.g., brain scan methods, $10 cheek swabs to test DNA) in genetics and neuroscience (various brain scanning techniques) over the last three decades have made these things less mysterious, and social scientists are increasingly realizing there is nothing illiberal about recognizing the biosocial basis of human nature. During the past decade, biosocial research into the causes of crime has expanded exponentially, and the findings derived from such research have contributed immensely to our understanding of the causes of and solutions to crime.
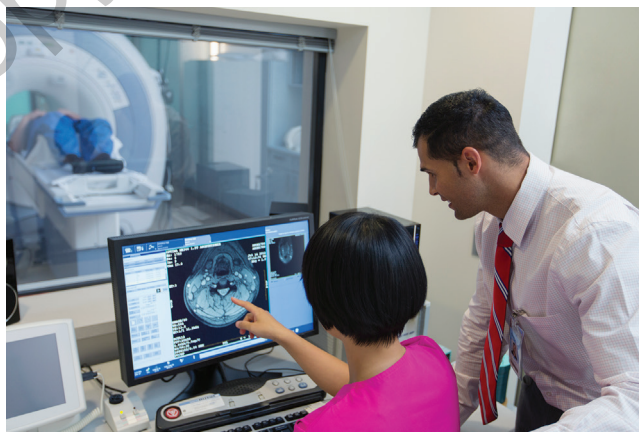
Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) machines can tell us a lot about the functioning of the brain and how that functioning is related to behavior.

iStockphoto.com/Sidekick

Lilly, Cullen, and Ball (2007) note that the most dramatic developments in science come most often from new observational techniques rather than from new developments in theory. No science advances without the technology at its disposal to plumb its depths. Many chemists in the late 19th century refused to accept the existence of atoms, but chemistry advanced by leaps and bounds when the

discipline as a whole finally accepted the atomic theory of matter (we are even able to see atoms with a scanning tunneling microscope, invented in 1981). Criminology is in a similar position today to that of chemists 150 years ago. The concepts, methods, and measuring devices available to us today may do for the progress of criminology what physics did for chemistry, what chemistry did for biology, and what biology is doing for psychology. Exceptionally ambitious longitudinal studies carried out over decades in concert with medical and biological scientists, such as the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study (Moffitt, 1993), the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Udry, 2003), and the National Youth Survey (Menard, Mihalic, & Huizinga, 2001) are able to gather a wealth of genetic, neurological, and physiological data as well as psychological and sociological data. Paus (2010) discusses four evolving long-term studies that are brain imaging 400 to 2,000 subjects at a time and collecting large volumes of behavioral and cognitive data (e.g., socioeconomic status, maternal smoking and drinking, stressful life events, antisocial behavior, IQ, personality profiles). Three of these four studies also collect DNA data. Integrating these hard data into criminology will no more rob it of its autonomy than physics robbed chemistry or chemistry robbed biology. For those who agree with this assessment, this is an exciting time to study criminology!

THE ROLE OF THEORY IN CRIMINOLOGY

When an FBI agent asked the Depression-era bank robber Willie Sutton why he robbed banks, Sutton replied, "Because that's where the money is" (Sutton & Linn, 1976:120). In his witty way, Sutton was offering a theory explaining bank robbery: If we put a certain kind of personality and learning together with opportunity and coveted resources, we get bank robbery. This is what theory making is all about: trying to grasp how all the known factors related to (or correlated with) a phenomenon such as crime are linked together in noncoincidental ways to produce an effect. In short, theory opens the black box of causality.

Just as medical scientists want to find out what causes disease, criminologists are interested in finding out factors that cause criminal behavior. Just as there are risk factors related to becoming ill, a variety of risk factors may lead to criminal behavior. The first step in a long chain leading to the detection of causes is to discover correlates related to the phenomenon of interest. To discover if two things (we call them factors or variables) are co-related, we have to determine if they vary together, that is, if one of the variables changes (goes up or down) when the other variable changes (goes up or down).

Take gender, the most thoroughly documented correlate of criminal behavior ever identified. Literally thousands of studies throughout the world, some European studies going back five or six centuries, consistently report strong gender differences in criminal behavior, and the more serious the crime, the greater the difference (Ellis, Beaver & Wright, 2009).

In other words, as we move from one category of the gender variable (female to male), the prevalence and incidence of crime rises dramatically. However, establishing *why* gender is such a strong correlate of crime is the real challenge. Of course, variables can vary together coincidentally rather than causally. When we consistently find correlations between criminal behavior and some other factor it is tempting to assume that something causal is going on, but a correlation *suggests* causation; it does not establish it. Resisting the tendency to jump to causal conclusions from correlations is the first lesson of statistics. Establishing *causal* connections between and among correlates is the business of theory.

RESEARCH SNIPPET

Criminology's Performance Review

Criminologists are in the business of explaining criminal behavior. This begs the question: How well do criminologists explain crime? Noted scholars David Weisburd and Alex Piquero sought to answer this question. Weisburd and Piquero (2008) examined all empirical tests of the various criminological theories published in *Criminology* (the discipline's top journal) between 1968 and

2005. They estimated the explanatory power of criminological theories by assessing how much criminal behavior they can account for. The study found that, overall, extant criminological theory accounted for only a small portion of the criminal behavior observed, leaving as much as 80% of criminality unaccounted for or unexplained. The study also found that individual-level theories perform more poorly than macro-level theories and that theories have not become better at explaining or predicting crime over the decades. These findings suggest that criminologists still have a lot of work to do and need to think outside the box of traditional theorizing to address the large portion of unexplained criminal behavior.

What Is Theory?

A **theory** is a set of logically interconnected propositions explaining how observed facts within a domain of interest are related and from which a number of hypotheses can be derived and tested. Theories should provide logical explanations of an area of interest by fitting the discovered facts into a coherent pattern. Not only should they be capable of making sense of relevant empirical facts so far discovered, but also they should provide practical guidance for researchers looking for yet undiscovered facts. The best example of such a theory is one people have all seen on the walls of classrooms across the nation in the form of the periodic table. This powerful icon of science rests on the atomic theory of matter. Chemists knew about the properties of many of the elements displayed on these charts for centuries, but their relationship was not known until the chemist Dmitri Mendeleev placed them into a logical order in 1869. Mendeleev arranged the known elements at the time (63) in order of their atomic number, which is the number of protons in the core of the element, increasing from top to bottom and left to right, starting with hydrogen. Mendeleev also noticed that some elements had similar characteristics to others and grouped these in columns and found that they fit into regular intervals (periods) of eight, hence the name periodic table.

In addition to looking backward to fit current facts into a harmonious pattern, theories must also be forward looking, telling researchers where they might look to fill in the gaps in our knowledge. Knowing that there had to be other elements yet undiscovered, Mendeleev left gaps in his table that indicated to chemists that there had to be other elements that fit the properties of others in its group. Chemists have done so, and the table has been adjusted to fit the additional 55 elements that have since been discovered or synthesized in labs. Thus, good scientific theories are always open to adjustment as new facts are discovered. Of course, we don't have anything in criminological theory as neat and precise as the periodic table, nor will we ever. If we could fit humans into the kind of tidy categories found in the periodic table, we would be little more than automatons. The discussion is meant only to illustrate the ideal of scientific theorizing.

What is more, the word *theory* tends to have a different meaning for scientists than for members of the general public. In the public discourse generally, the word *theory* is commonly used to mean "guess" or "hunch." In science, this is absolutely not the case. A theory is much more than a simple fact. Every domain of science is littered with facts which don't mean much in isolation. Facts are like jigsaw pieces, and theories are about how to fit the pieces together. When uninformed people say things such as, "Darwin's theory of evolution is just a theory," they imply that Darwin's brilliant and elegant theory is nothing more than a guess, which it is not. Platitudes such as this show the scientific ignorance of those who mutter them. Students of criminology, or of any science for that matter, should know how scientists use the word *theory* and that it is not just a guess or hunch, but that it is so much more meaningful. After all, Newton's theory of gravity isn't "just a theory"; try jumping off 20-story buildings and the survivors will know it's a brutal fact.

Looking to fill the gaps in our knowledge takes the form of a series of statements that can be logically deduced from the theory called **hypotheses**, which are statements about relationships between and among factors we expect to find based on the logic of our theories. Theories provide the raw material (the ideas) for generating hypotheses, and hypotheses support or fail to support theories by exposing them to empirical (based on experiment and observation) testing. Criminological theories are devised

to try to explain how a number of different correlates may actually be causally related to criminal behavior rather than simply associated with it.

When we talk of causes, we do not mean that when *X* is present *Y will* occur in a completely prescribed way. Rather, we mean that when *X* is present *Y* has a certain *probability* of occurring and perhaps only then if *X* is present along with factors *A, B,* and C. Criminologists have never uncovered a necessary cause (a factor that *must* be present for criminal behavior to occur and in the absence of which criminal behavior has never occurred) or a sufficient cause (a factor able to produce criminal behavior without being augmented by some other factor).

We all use theory every day to fit diverse facts together. A detective confronted with a number of facts about a mysterious murder must fit them together, even though their meaning and relatedness to one another is ambiguous and perhaps even contradictory. Using years of experience, training, and good common sense the detective constructs a theory linking those facts together so that they begin to make some sense, to begin to tell their story. An initial theory derived from the available facts then guides the detective in the search for additional facts in a series of "*if* this is true, *then* this should be true" statements (this is what scientists call hypotheses). There may be many false starts as our detective misinterprets some facts, fails to uncover others, and considers some to be relevant when they are not. Good detectives, like good scientists, will adjust their theory as new facts warrant; poor detectives and poor scientists will stand by their favored theory by not looking for more facts or by ignoring, down-playing, or hiding contrary facts that come to their attention.

What Is a Good Theory?

The physical and natural sciences enjoy a great deal of agreement about what constitutes the core body of knowledge within their disciplines and thus have few competing theories, especially at the most general levels. Within criminology, and the social/behavioral sciences in general, there is lit-tle agreement about the nature of the phenomena we study, and so we suffer an embarrassment of theories. Criminology is a science, however, in that it attempts to develop general principles about phenomena derived from empirical observations, but even it is fraught with theoretical squabbles. Given the number of criminological theories, students may be forgiven for asking which one is true. Scientists never use the term *truth* in scientific discourse; rather, they tend to ask which theory is most useful. Within criminology, there is no one true or right theory where all competing theories are untrue or wrong. All theories have a kernel of truth to them, but not all theories are created equal. There are more useful theories and less useful theories, especially in terms of explaining cer-tain crimes rather than explaining crime generally. The value of any theory, however, is based on its empirical merit. The following criteria for judging the merits of a theory are from Ellis, Hartley, and Walsh (2010:298-300).

1. *Predictive accuracy.* A theory must not only be backward looking in the sense that it harmoniously fits known facts together, but also it must be forward looking, telling researchers where they should find new facts. That is, a theory has merit and is useful to the extent it accurately predicts what is later observed; it has generated a large number of research hypotheses that support it. This is the most important criterion.

2. *Predictive scope.* This refers to the scope or range of the theory and thus the scope or range of the hypotheses that can be derived from it. That is, how much of the empirical world falls under the explanatory umbrella of Theory A compared to Theory B. As the predictive scope of a theory widens, it tends to get more complicated.

3. *Simplicity.* If two competing theories are essentially equal in terms of the first two criteria, then the less complicated one is considered more "elegant."

4. *Falsifiability.* A theory is never proven true, but it must have the quality of being falsifiable or disprovable. If a theory is formulated in such a way that no amount of evidence could possibly falsify it, then the theory is of little use.

How to Think About Theories

You will be a lot less concerned about the numerous theories in criminology if you realize that different theories deal with different levels of analysis. A **level of analysis** is that segment of the phenomenon of interest that is measured and analyzed. We can ask about causes of crime at the levels of whole societies, subcultures, neighborhoods, families, or individuals. If the question asks about crime rates in societies (such as in Japan versus the United States), the answer must address sociocultural differences among different societies or in the same society at different times. Conversely, if crime rates are found to be related to the degree of industrialization or racial/ethnic diversity in societies, this tells us nothing about why some people or groups in an industrialized and racially heterogeneous society commit crimes and other people and groups in the same society do not. To answer questions about individuals and groups, we need theories about individuals and groups. Generally speaking, questions of cause and effect must be answered at the same level of analysis at which they were posed; thus, different theories are required at different levels. This is not to say, however, that we do not have theories that attempt to span multiple levels of analysis.

To span different levels of analysis, we have to understand how factors included in different levels interact (how each is both affected by and affects the other). Crime rates can change drastically from time to time without any corresponding change in the gene pool or personalities of the people in the population. Because causes can only be sought among factors that vary, changing sociocultural environments must be the only causes of changing crime rates. What environmental changes do, however, is raise or lower individual thresholds for engaging in crime, and some people have lower thresholds than others. People with weak criminal propensities (or high prosocial propensities) require high levels of environmental instigation to commit crimes, but some individuals engage in criminal behavior in the most benign of environments. Whether an individual crosses the threshold to commit criminal acts depends on where his or her personal thresholds are set interacting with where environmental thresholds are set. At this level, then, we need to have a firm grasp both on individual characteristics and how they interact with a variety of environmental conditions.

In sum, there is no grand unified theory in criminology that adequately explains all criminal behavior at multiple levels of analysis. Instead, a theory may be plucked from the current criminological repertoire that is most useful in accomplishing a certain task. To use a metaphor, it is better to approach theorizing with a handful of grapes rather than a single grapefruit. The grapefruit is the nonexistent grand unified theory of criminology whereas each grape in the handful represents one of the many theories discussed in the following chapters. Students should learn how to pick a theoretical grape that is most useful in asking a certain research question or explaining certain antisocial phenomena.

IDEOLOGY IN CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORY

As well as criminological theorizing being linked to the social and intellectual climate of the times, it is also strongly linked to ideology (see Table 1.1). **Ideology** is a way of looking at the world, a general emotional picture of "how things should be." It is often so strongly held that it narrows the mind and inflames the passions, leading to a selective interpretation and understanding of evidence rather than an objective and rational evaluation of it. Ideology forms, shapes, and colors our concepts of crime and its causes in ways that lead to a tendency to accept or reject new evidence according to how well or poorly it fits our ideology.

A criminological theory is at least partly shaped by ideology, and those who feel drawn to a particular theory owe a great deal of their attraction to it to the fact that they share the theory's vision (Cullen, 2005). This observation reminds us of the Indian parable of the six blind men feeling different parts of an elephant. Each man describes the elephant according to the part of its anatomy he felt, but each fails to appreciate the descriptions of the others who felt different parts. The men fall into dispute and depart in anger, each convinced of the utter stupidity of the others. The point is that ideology often leads criminologists to "feel" only parts of the criminological elephant and then to confuse the parts with the whole, even questioning the intelligence and motives (e.g., having some kind of political

TABLE 1.1 ■ Theories Favored by Criminologists Cross-Tabulated by Self-Reported Political Ideology					
	Political Ideology				
Theory Favored*	**Conservative**	**Moderate**	**Liberal**	**Radical**	**Total**
Social learning (2,6)	1	22	22	5	50
Life course/developmental (n/a,11)	3	8	28	3	42
Social control (1,1)	0	14	27	1	42
Social disorganization (7,14)	0	11	26	3	40
Self-control (n/a,2)	3	6	15	0	24
Biosocial (n/a,12)	5	5	11	0	21
Rational choice	2	7	11	1	21
Conflict (n/a,4)	0	2	8	6	16
Critical (10,18)	0	0	8	8	16
Differential association (4,3)	1	4	10	1	16
Age-graded developmental	1	5	7	0	13
Strain (n/a,8)	0	3	9	0	12
Dual-pathway developmental (n/a,5)	1	0	10	0	11
Routine activities (n/a,9)	1	2	8	0	11
General strain	0	2	4	1	7
Institutional anomie	0	1	5	0	6
Interactional	0	1	5	0	6
Opportunity (5,15)	1	2	2	0	5
Ecological (n/a,23)	1	1	2	0	4
Labeling (6,17)	0	1	2	1	4
Psychological	0	1	3	0	4
Classical (n/a,20)	0	3	0	0	3
Feminist (n/a,10)	0	0	2	1	3
Anomie (9,6)	0	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	20	102	226	31	379

$\chi^2 = 134.6$, p < 0.001

*Numbers in parentheses represent ranking of theories in the Ellis and Hoffman (1990) and Walsh and Ellis (2004) surveys. Theories without ranking or designated n/a (not applicable) were not represented in those earlier surveys.

Source: Cooper, Walsh, & Ellis (2010).

agenda) of others who have examined different parts of the criminological elephant. Criminology is, however, slowly moving toward the realization that criminal behavior must be examined at all levels from neurons to neighborhoods if it is ever to come to terms with the whole.

According to economist and philosopher Thomas Sowell (1987), two contrasting visions have shaped thoughts about human nature throughout history, and these visions are in constant conflict with each other. The first of these visions is the **constrained vision**, so called because believers in this vision view human activities as constrained by an innate human nature that is self-centered and largely

unalterable. The **unconstrained vision** denies an innate human nature, viewing it as formed anew in each different culture. The unconstrained vision also believes that human nature is perfectible, a view scoffed at by those who profess the constrained vision. A major difference between the two visions is that the constrained vision says, "this is how the world *is*," and the unconstrained vision says, "this is how the world *should be*." For instance, unconstrained visionaries might ask what causes crime or poverty, but constrained visionaries would ask the opposite questions—what causes a well-ordered society and wealth? Note that this implies that unconstrained visionaries believe that crime and poverty are deviations from the norm and need to be explained. Constrained visionaries see crime and poverty as historically normal and inevitable (albeit, regrettable) and believe that what has to be understood are the conditions that prevent them. The major fault line in criminology lies in these visions. Theories broadly classified as social learning theories see crime as caused, and theories broadly classified as social control theories see crime as an inevitable unless steps are taken to prevent it.

The evidence that ideology is linked to what theories criminologists favor is strong. Cooper, Walsh, and Ellis (2010) surveyed 379 criminologists and asked them which theory best explained serious criminal behavior. As illustrated in Table 1.1, 24 theories were represented. Obviously, they cannot all "best explain serious criminal behavior," so something other than evidence led criminologists to their choices, and the best predictor was their self-reported ideology, divided into conservative, moderate, liberal, and radical. The "$\chi^2 = 134.6$, p < 0.001" notation means that such a result could be found by chance in less than one time in 1,000 similar samplings. We can thus be quite confident that the finding can be generalized beyond the sample to other criminologists, especially since this study repeated a previous study of a different group of criminologists with the same results (Walsh & Ellis, 2004). When reading this text, try to understand where the originators, supporters, and detractors of any particular theory being discussed are "coming from" ideologically as well as theoretically.

CRITICAL THINKING

The legal drinking age in America is 21 years. It is illegal for people under the age of 21 to drink alcohol. However, this is a very common offense, especially on college campuses. Underage drinking is obviously a mala prohibita crime, but the penalty for underage drinking can be quite steep and burdensome for the underage starving student. However, no such penalty is incurred by the student of legal drinking age. In fact, drinking is a widely participated and even celebrated pastime. Does something significant, if not magical, occur in students' brains the moment they turn 21 that makes them responsible enough to drink? Is the drinking age arbitrary? What is the legal drinking age in other countries? Are there legitimate reasons for having the legal drinking age be 21? What should the legal drinking age be, and what penalties should violators face?

CONNECTING CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORY AND SOCIAL POLICY

Theories of crime imply that changing the conditions the theory holds responsible for causing crime can reduce it and even prevent it. In that sense, policy is theory in action. We say *imply* because few theorists are explicit about the public policy implications of their work. Scientists are primarily concerned with gaining knowledge for its own sake; they are only secondarily concerned with how useful that knowledge may be to practitioners and policy makers. Conversely, policy makers are less concerned with hypothesized "causes" of a problem and more concerned with what can be done about the problem that is politically, practically, and financially feasible.

Policy is simply a decided course of action designed to solve a selected problem from among alternative courses of action. Solving a social problem means attempting to reduce the level of the problem currently experienced or to enact strategies that try to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Social science findings can and have been used to help policy makers determine which course of action

to follow to "do something" about the crime problem, but policy makers must consider many other concerns that go beyond maintaining consistency with social science theory and data. The question of "what to do about crime" involves political and financial considerations, the urgency of other problems competing for scarce financial resources (e.g., schools, highways, environmental protection, public housing, national defense), and a host of other major and minor considerations deemed important by various segments of the population.

Policy choices are, at bottom, value choices, and as such only ideologically palatable policy recommendations are likely to be implemented. Given all of these extra theoretical considerations, it would be unfair to base judgment of a theory's power solely by its impact on public policy. Even if some aspects of policy are theory based, unless all recommendations of the theory are fully implemented, the success or failure of the policy cannot be considered evidence of theoretical failure any more than a baker can blame a recipe for a lousy cake if he or she neglects to include all the ingredients it calls for.

Connecting problems with solutions is a tricky business in all areas of government policy making, but nowhere is it more difficult than in the area of criminal justice. No single strategy can be expected to produce significant results, and a strategy may sometimes make matters worse. For example, President Johnson's "war on poverty" was supposed to have a significant impact on the crime problem by attacking what informed opinion of the time considered its "root cause." Programs and policies developed to reduce poverty currently involve 126 federal programs (in addition to state programs) that have spent almost $15 trillion over the past 40 years (Tanner, 2012). However, reducing poverty had no effect on reducing crime; in fact, crime rose to record levels as poverty fell during the latter period of the 20th century (Walsh & Ellis, 2007). Another high-profile example of failed policy is the Volstead Act of 1919 that prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol in the United States. Although based on a true premise (alcohol is a major factor in facilitating violent crime), it failed because it ushered in a wild period of crime as gangs fought over control of the illegal alcohol market. Similarly, the current war on drugs has had similar negative consequences. Policies attempting to control human behavior often have effects that are unanticipated by policy makers or by the theories that may have driven their policies.

CRIMINOLOGY IN POP CULTURE

Buyer Beware

Popular culture often misleads the public and dupes people into believing things that are not true or at least not entirely accurate. This is especially the case regarding crime and justice. Crime TV shows like *Blue Bloods, Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, or *CSI*; podcasts like *Serial*; and crime movies are typically not accurate reflections of reality. Even "true crime" shows like *Making a Murderer* are not reflections of reality because they are heavily edited and scripted to add drama and suspense. Also, important pieces of information are often left out of the script and superfluous tidbits are put in. That said, these programs are incredibly popular and can warp our perceptions of crime and justice. Consumers of crime-related media should be aware of this and simply enjoy the entertainment value of such programming.

Nevertheless, every theory has policy implications deducible from its primary assumptions and propositions. The deep and lasting effects of the classical theories on legal systems around the world has long been noted, but the broad generalities about human nature contained in those theories offer little specific advice on ways to change criminals or to reduce their numbers. Although we caution against using the performance of a theory's public policy recommendations as a major criterion to evaluate its power, the fact remains that a good theory *should* offer useful practical recommendations, and we discuss a theory's policy implications going forward.

SUMMARY

- Criminology is the scientific study of crime and criminals. It is an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary study, although criminology has yet to integrate these disciplines in any comprehensive way.

- The definition of crime is problematic because acts that are defined as criminal vary across time and culture. Many criminologists believe that because crimes are defined into existence, we cannot determine what real crimes and criminals are. However, a stationary core of crimes is universally condemned and always has been. These are predatory crimes that cause serious harm and are defined as mala in se, or "inherently bad," crimes, as opposed to mala prohibita—"bad because they are forbidden" crimes.

- A person is not "officially" a criminal until such time as he or she has been found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of having committed a crime. To prove that he or she did, the state has to prove corpus delicti ("the body of the crime"), which essentially means that he or she committed a criminal act (actus reus) with full awareness that the act was wrong (mens rea—guilty mind). Other basic principles—concurrence, harm, and causation—are proven in the process of proving corpus delicti.

- The history of criminology shows that the cultural and intellectual climate of the time strongly influences how scholars think about and study crime and criminality. The Renaissance brought more secular thinking, the Enlightenment more humane and rational thinking, the Industrial Revolution more scientific thinking, and the Progressive Era a reform-oriented criminology reminiscent of the classical school.

- Advances in any science are also constrained by the tools available to test theories. The ever-improving concepts, methods, and techniques available from modern genetics, neuroscience, and other biological sciences should add immeasurably to criminology's knowledge base in the near future.

- Theory is the "bread and butter" of any science, including criminology. Many contending theories seek to explain crime and criminality. Although we do not observe such theoretical disagreement in the more established sciences, the social/behavioral sciences are young, and human behavior is extremely difficult to study.

- When judging among the various theories we have to keep certain things in mind, including the predictive accuracy, scope, simplicity, and falsifiability. We must also remember that crime and criminality can be discussed at many levels (society-wide, subcultural, family, or individual) and that a theory that does a good job of predicting crime at one level may do a poor job at another level.

- Theories can also be offered at different levels of analysis—whole societies, subcultures, neighborhoods, families, and individuals. They may focus on the evolutionary history of the species, the individual's subjective appraisal of a situation, or any other temporal level in between. A full account of an individual's behavior may have to take all these levels into consideration because any behavior arises from an individual's propensities interacting with the current environmental situation as that individual perceives it. This is why we approach criminology from social, psychosocial, and biosocial perspectives.

- Ideology plays a role in the development of criminological theories. The main ideological dividing line in criminology is between constrained visionaries (primarily conservatives who tend to favor explanations of behavior that focus on the individual) and unconstrained visionaries (mostly liberals who tend to favor structural or cultural explanations).

● All theories have explicit or implicit recommendations for policy since they posit causes of crime or criminality. Removing those alleged causes should reduce crime if the theory is correct, but the complex nature of crime and criminality make policy decisions based on them risky indeed. Policy makers must consider many other issues demanding scarce resources, so the policy content of a theory should never be used to pass judgment on the usefulness of theory for criminologists.

EXERCISES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following 11 acts do you consider mala in se crimes, mala prohibita crimes, or no crime at all? Defend your choices.
   1. drug possession. 2. vandalism. 3. drunk driving. 4. collaborating with the enemy. 5. sale of alcohol to minors. 6. fraud. 7. spouse abuse. 8. adult male having consensual sex with underage person. 9. prostitution. 10. homosexual behavior. 11. pornography.

2. Why are new observational techniques such as DNA testing and brain scans useful to criminologists?

3. Discuss the relationships between theories, facts, and hypotheses.

4. Why is it important to consider ideology when evaluating criminologists' work? Is it possible for them to divorce their ideology from their work?

5. Large-scale policies aimed at reducing crime (think of Prohibition and the war on poverty) rarely have the desired effect. Can you think of any good reasons why this is so?

6. Go to https://www.lsus.edu/offices-and-services/community-outreach/the-journal-of-ideology for the online journal *The Journal of Ideology.* Click on Archives and find and read "Ideology: Criminology's Achilles' Heel." What does this article say about the "conflict of visions" in criminology?

KEY TERMS

Actus reus

Arraignment

Arrest

Causation

Concurrence

Constrained vision

Corpus delicti

Crime

Criminality

Criminology

Grand jury

Harm

Hypotheses

Ideology

Level of analysis

Mala in se

Mala prohibita

Mens rea

Policy

Theory

Unconstrained vision

2 MEASURING CRIME AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

2.1 List the primary sources of criminologists' crime data.

2.2 Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR).

2.3 Compare the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) with the UCR.

2.4 Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of crime victimization survey data.

2.5 Identify areas of agreement between the UCR and National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS).

2.6 Describe the strengths and weaknesses of self-report crime surveys.

2.7 Explain how geography can influence crime.

2.8 Explain how criminologists measure white-collar crimes committed by organizations.

2.9 Identify the dark figure of crime and the types of crimes unlikely to be reported to the police.

2.10 Produce examples of how different sources of crime data can resolve criminological arguments.

A WEARY ENGLISH BOBBY (a popular nickname for British police officers) patrolling his foot beat on a chilly November night hears the unmistakable sounds of sexual activity from the dark entranceway of a closed greengrocer's shop. He smiles to himself and tiptoes toward the sound. When he reaches the entranceway, he switches on his flashlight and booms out the favorite line of the stereotypical bobby: "What's goin' on 'ere then?" The squeaking couple immediately come to attention and adjust their dress before the young man—obviously still in a state of arousal—stammers, "Why, nothing, constable." The officer recognizes the woman as a local "slapper" (prostitute) and vaguely recognizes the man (more of a boy of around 17 really) as a local supermarket worker. The constable reasons that he should arrest both parties for public indecency, but that would entail about an hour of paperwork (an hour in the warm police station with a nice cup of tea sounds good though) and lead to the profound embarrassment of the poor boy. He finally decides to give the boy some sound advice about sexually transmitted diseases and a stern warning to the woman and sends them both on their way.

This short story illustrates that official statistics measure police behavior as much as crime. Sir Josiah Stamp, director of the Bank of England in the 1920s, cynically stated this criticism: "The government are very keen on amassing statistics. They collect them, raise them to the nth power, take the cube root and prepare wonderful diagrams. But you must never forget that every one of these figures comes in the first instance from the village watchmen, who just puts down what he damn pleases" (in Nettler, 1984:39). We don't recommend this kind of cynicism, but we do counsel that you keep a healthy skepticism about statistics as you read this chapter.

CATEGORIZING AND MEASURING CRIME AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

When attempting to understand, predict, and control any social problem, including the crime problem, the first step is to determine its extent. Gauging the extent of the problem means discovering how much of it there is, where and when it occurs most often, and among what social categories it occurs most frequently. It also helps our endeavors if we know the patterns and trends of the problem over time. Note that we did not address *why* questions (why does crime occur, why is it increasing or decreasing, who commits it and why, and so on); such questions can only be adequately addressed after we have reliable

data about the extent of the problem. However, all social statistics are suspect to some extent, and crime statistics may be the most suspect of all. They have been collected from many different sources in many different ways and have passed through many sieves of judgment before being recorded.

There is a wide variety of data provided by government and private sources to help us come to grips with America's crime problem, all with their particular strengths and weaknesses. The major data sources can be grouped into three broad categories: *official statistics, victimization survey data*, and *self-reported data*. Official statistics are those derived from the routine functioning of the criminal justice system. The most basic category of official statistics comes from the calls made to police by victims or witnesses and by crimes the police discover on patrol. Other major categories of official crime data consist of information about arrests, convictions, and correctional (jail, prison, probation/parole) populations.

UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS: COUNTING CRIME OFFICIALLY

Until 2021, the primary source of official crime statistics in the United States was the annual **Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)** published under the title *Crime in the United States* compiled by the FBI via their Summary Reporting System (SRS), which collects basic summary crime data from participating law enforcement agencies. The UCR reported crimes known to the nation's police and sheriff's departments and the number of arrests made by these agencies; federal crimes were not included. Offenses known to the police were recorded whether or not an arrest is made or if an arrested person was subsequently prosecuted and convicted. This means that the crimes made known to police are a product of the willingness of the public to report crimes to police and the discretion of the police to officially record a crime, and not all crimes witnessed by the public or discovered by police are officially recorded. This "dark figure" of crime is discussed later in the chapter. Participation in the UCR reporting program was voluntary, and thus all agencies did not participate. Even for the agencies that did participate, they did not report their crime data to the FBI completely or consistently throughout the year. This is unfortunate for anyone hoping for comprehensive crime data. In 2017, law enforcement agencies active in the UCR program represented more than 310 million inhabitants of the United States—98.4% of the total population (FBI, 2018a). This means that crimes committed in the jurisdictions of agencies representing about 1.6% of the population (about 10.1 million people) were not included in the UCR data that year. The situation is worse now that the UCR as we used to know it is no longer with us, as we will see when we discuss its replacement, the NIBRS.

The UCR reported the number of each crime reported to the police as well as the rate of occurrence. The rate of a given crime is the actual number of reported crimes standardized by some unit of the population. We expect the raw number of crimes to increase as the population increases, so comparing the number of crimes reported today with the number reported 30 years ago, or the number of crimes reported in Texas with the number reported in Wyoming, tells us little without considering population differences. For instance, California reported 2,231 murders to the FBI in 2022, and Louisiana reported 740. In which state is one most likely to be murdered? We can't say unless we take the states' respective populations into consideration. To obtain a **crime rate**, we divide the number of reported crimes in a state by its population and multiply the quotient by 100,000, as in the following comparison of California and Louisiana rates.

The J. Edgar Hoover building, headquarters of the FBI, in Washington, D.C. Up until 2020, annual UCR was compiled by the FBI after local, county, and state criminal justice agencies sent in their annual crime data.

iStockPhoto/jimfeng

CA murders = 2,231
CA population = 39,029,342

$$Rate = \frac{2,231}{39,029,342} = 0.000057 \times 100,000 = 5.7 \; per \; 100,000 \; residents$$

LA murders = 740
LA population = 4,590,241

$$Rate = \frac{740}{4,590,241} = 0.000161 \times 100,000 = 16.1 \; per \; 100,000 \; residents$$

Thus, a person in Louisiana is at almost 3 times the risk (16.1 versus 5.7 murders per 100,000 population) of being murdered than he or she is in California. This statement is based on the statewide rates; the actual risk will vary widely from person to person based on such factors as age, race, sex, socio-economic status (SES), neighborhood, and urban versus rural residence. In other words, some people in some places in California will be at much higher risk of being murdered than some people in some places in Louisiana.

The UCR separated crimes into two categories: **Part I offenses (or index crimes)** and **Part II offenses**. Part I offenses include four violent (homicide, assault, forcible rape, and robbery) and four property offenses (larceny-theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson). Notice that these are all universally condemned mala in se offenses and correspond with what most people think of as "serious" crime. Part II offenses are treated as less serious offenses and are recorded based on arrests made rather than on cases reported to the police. Part II offense figures understate the extent of criminal offending far more than do Part I figures because only a very small proportion of these crimes resulted in arrest.

The FBI's famous crime clock is presented in Figure 2.1. The clock shows how often on an average day one of the index crimes was reported in 2022; these are only rough estimates and should not be taken literally because many crimes are not reported.

FIGURE 2.1 ■ The 2022 FBI Crime Clock

2022 CRIME CLOCK STATISTICS

A Violent Crime occurred every	**25.6 seconds**
One Murder every	24.8 minutes
One Rape every	3.9 minutes
One Robbery every	2.4 minutes
One Aggravated Assault every	35.3 seconds
A Property Crime occurred every	**4.8 seconds**
One Burglary every	35.1 seconds
One Larceny-theft every	6.7 seconds
One Motor Vehicle Theft every	33.5 seconds

Note: Most recent data available at publication.
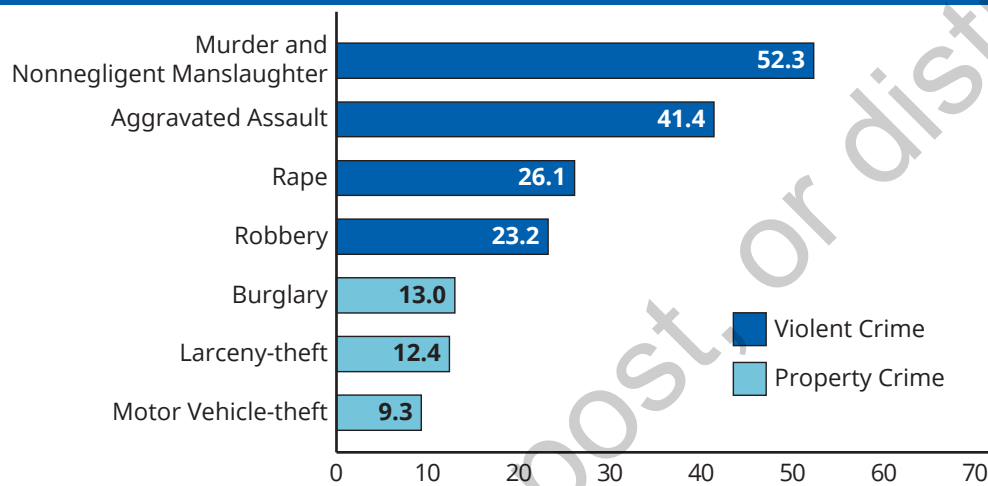
Source: FBI (2023).

Cleared Offenses

If a person was arrested and charged for a Part I offense, the UCR recorded the crime as cleared by arrest, or a **cleared offense.** A crime may also be cleared by *exceptional means* when the police have identified a suspect and have enough evidence to support arrest but he or she could not be taken into custody immediately, or at all. Such circumstances exist when the suspect dies or is in a location where the police cannot presently gain custody. For instance, he or she is in custody on other charges in another jurisdiction or is residing in a country with no extradition treaty with the United States. In 2022, police cleared 36.7% of violent crimes and 12.1% of property crimes. As can be seen in Figure 2.2, only 52.3% of the murders were cleared, which is the lowest clearance rate for homicide on record, and homicide has a much higher clearance rate than other crimes. By way of contrast, homicide clearance rates have remained steady in Western Europe for many years, ranging from an average of 98%

in Finland to 80% in Sweden (Liem et al., 2019). Because of low participation of police departments in NIBRS (only 53% of agencies participated in 2021, with the largest departments such as NYPD and LAPD not participating), the NIBRS-based clearance rates should be viewed with caution. Some states, including California and Florida, sent virtually no data. We know much less about overall crime in the United States for 2021 than we did with the UCR from prior years (Hanson, 2022). For 2022, the FBI collected NIBRS data from 70.4% of agencies, which covered 76.9% of the population. This is a drastic improvement from 2021, but still not good. To overcome the lack of NIBRS participation from law enforcement agencies, the FBI accepted SRS data from agencies that did not submit NIBRS data for 2022. The SRS collects more basic and less detailed information than NIBRS. An additional 12.9% of agencies covering 16.6% of the population submitted SRS data. In total, 83.3% agencies covering 93.5% of the population submitted either NIBRS or SRS data to the FBI for 2022, which gives us much more confidence in the 2022 reported crime statistics than the ones reported for 2021.

FIGURE 2.2 ■ Percentage of Crimes Cleared by Arrest or Exceptional Means in 2022

Source: FBI (2023).

Table 2.1 is a page from the UCR (2023) listing all Part I and II crimes broken down by sex and percentage change in crime rates from 2013 to 2022. This provides us the male/female differences in arrests (and the increases or decreases in their respective rates of offending) and provides interesting discussions in Chapter 8 of why these differences exist. Part II crimes are all those listed as "other assaults" and all offenses listed after that.

Crime Trends

One thing about the UCR is that it was very useful for tracking crime and arrest trends. It is much easier to note that crime increased or decreased by some percentage over a specified period than it is to explain why it did so, however. Despite the accumulation of tons of factual data, it is difficult to arrive at a sturdy conclusion that fit them together to everyone's satisfaction because facts only describe events, they do not explain them. Any explanation for major fluctuations in crime rates requires that we have an understanding of the historical, social, political, economic, and demographic processes unfolding around the same time that increases or decreases in crime are recorded and how those processes interact. The effects of any particular process on crime may be immediate, such as a series of riots and general mayhem following some perceived injustice, or it may only be felt a decade or so down the road, such as an economic policy decision that later affects job creation. Whatever process or alleged cause we examine, we should keep in the forefront of our minds that just as there is no single cause of crime or criminality, there is no single explanation of crime trends.

Examine the previous UCR violent and property crime rates per 100,000 for 1963, 1993, 2003, and 2017 (see Table 2.2) and ask yourself whether crime has gone up or down. If we compare 1993 with 2003, we conclude that crime dropped significantly, but if we take 1963 as our beginning year

TABLE 2.1 ■ Ten-Year Arrest Trends for Part I and Part II Crimes by Sex, 2013 and 2022

Offense charged	Male						Female					
	Total			Under 18			Total			Under 18		
	2013	2022	Percent change	2013	2022	Percent change	2013	2022	Percent change	2013	2022	Percent change
TOTAL[1]	5,926,157	3,676,172	-38.0	555,728	228,977	-58.8	2,126,687	1,358,290	-36.1	224,722	104,112	-53.7
Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter	6,844	7,704	+12.6	503	808	+60.6	916	990	+8.1	68	53	-22.1
Rape[2]	13,999	13,800		2,176	2,070		297	406		104	101	
Robbery	62,466	36,176	-42.1	13,204	6,572	-50.2	9,611	6,703	-30.3	1,420	946	-33.4
Aggravated assault	204,429	189,930	-7.1	16,583	12,162	-26.7	60,981	57,620	-5.5	5,708	4,352	-23.8
Burglary	153,140	70,441	-54.0	27,753	6,644	-76.1	31,564	16,733	-47.0	3,644	1,119	-69.3
Larceny-theft	509,783	252,436	-50.5	80,835	20,524	-74.6	386,330	158,114	-59.1	55,991	11,836	-78.9
Motor vehicle theft	37,659	44,481	+18.1	7,168	6,660	-7.1	9,302	12,507	+34.5	1,510	1,401	-7.2
Arson	5,951	5,256	-11.7	2,129	752	-64.7	1,479	1,598	+8.0	383	162	-57.7
Violent crime[3]	287,738	247,610	-13.9	32,466	21,612	-33.4	71,805	65,719	-8.5	7,300	5,452	-25.3
Property crime[3]	706,533	372,614	-47.3	117,885	34,580	-70.7	428,675	188,952	-55.9	61,528	14,518	-76.4
Other assaults	583,252	460,063	-21.1	67,404	43,554	-35.4	223,443	200,047	-10.5	38,557	30,018	-22.1
Forgery and counterfeiting	27,318	14,331	-47.5	527	264	-49.9	16,318	6,432	-60.6	211	58	-72.5
Fraud	61,213	35,917	-41.3	2,205	1,104	-49.9	40,590	18,618	-54.1	1,044	557	-46.6
Embezzlement	6,171	3,661	-40.7	195	163	-16.4	5,761	3,335	-42.1	105	137	+30.5
Stolen property; buying, receiving, possessing	52,616	47,848	-9.1	6,256	4,711	-24.7	14,337	12,649	-11.8	1,212	821	-32.3
Vandalism	114,701	89,390	-22.1	27,885	13,342	-52.2	28,773	26,666	-7.3	5,109	3,250	-36.4
Weapons; carrying, possessing, etc.	93,863	114,267	+21.7	13,325	11,896	-10.7	8,623	12,130	+40.7	1,497	1,185	-20.8

Prostitution and commercialized vice	12,861	4,964	-61.4	112	29	-74.1	26,602	6,839	-74.3	491	34	-93.1
Sex offenses (except rape and prostitution)	38,154	17,006	-55.4	6,493	2,438	-62.5	3,090	993	-67.9	810	283	-65.1
Drug abuse violations	851,458	470,558	-44.7	68,540	22,531	-67.1	225,089	163,018	-27.6	15,177	9,479	-37.5
Gambling	3,955	620	84.3	520	16	-96.9	514	248	-51.8	7	2	-71.4
Offenses against the family and children	50,586	21,608	-57.3	1,060	754	-28.9	18,257	11,520	-36.9	680	703	+3.4
Driving under the influence	550,192	369,776	-32.8	3,713	2,408	-35.1	180,633	127,102	-29.6	1,215	788	-35.1
Liquor laws	175,632	41,181	-76.6	25,518	5,780	-77.3	70,041	20,096	-71.3	16,359	4,229	-74.1
Drunkenness[4]	259,986	11,357	-95.6	3,967	62	-98.4	59,406	2,828	-95.2	1,450	28	-98.1
Disorderly conduct	227,302	119,465	-47.4	41,979	14,153	-66.3	86,478	48,851	-43.5	22,069	8,937	-59.5
Vagrancy	15,956	7,229	-54.7	478	18	-96.2	4,260	2,240	-47.4	139	2	-98.6
All other offenses (except traffic)	1,774,577	1,223,254	-31.1	103,107	46,109	-55.3	601,476	438,357	-27.1	37,246	21,981	-41.0
Suspicion[5]	414	52	-87.4	46	0	-100.0	104	10	-90.4	7	0	-100.0
Curfew and loitering law violations	32,093	3,453	-89.2	32,093	3,453	-89.2	12,516	1,650	-86.8	12,516	1,650	-86.8

[1]Does not include suspicion.

[2]The 2013 rape figures are based on the legacy definition, and the 2022 rape figures are aggregate totals based on both the legacy and revised UCR definitions. For this reason, a percent change is not provided.

[3]Violent crimes are offenses of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes are offenses of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

[4]The 2013 drunkenness figures were submitted by agencies that reported via Summary and NIBRS. As of 2021, drunkenness is no longer a separate offense in NIBRS, but it is included with All Other Offenses (except traffic) category.

[5]Figures for suspicion include only data submitted by Summary reporting agencies because suspicion is not collected as a crime via NIBRS.

*Note:* Most recent data available at time of publication.

Source: FBI (2023).

TABLE 2.2 ■ Violent and Property Crime Rates, 1963–2017		
Year	Violent	Property
1963	168.2	2,021.1
1993	747.1	4,740.0
2003	475.8	3,591.2
2017	382.9	2,362.2

and compare it with 2017, we would conclude that crime has gone up significantly. Whether crime has "gone up" or "gone down" thus depends on what years we choose to look at. Interpretations of crime trends should be read with caution because the author may have chosen a beginning and ending year to support his or her favored explanation. So before we begin to congratulate or berate ourselves because the crime rate has gone up or down, it is wise to ask, "Compared to what year?" Whenever we are assessing crime data, crime trends, or a piece of crime-related information we must contextualize that information by asking ourselves, "Compared to what?" We must take the new piece of information we are interested in and compare it to tidbits of other relevant information. Only then will we be able to more accurately grasp what that information is telling us.

Take also the murder rate trends from 1900 to 2017 presented in Figure 2.3. The graph looks like a rugged mountain range with peaks and troughs, indicating that at some points in American history murder rates were more than twice as high as they were at other points. The 1900 rate of 1.0 per 100,000 is highly suspect given the descriptions of life in such cities as New York and Boston at the turn of the century, as well as the still semicivilized condition of much of the western United States. We should never take national statistics at face value unless we are sure of their quality, and national reporting of crime statistics was in a terrible state in the early part of the 20th century.

FIGURE 2.3 ■ Murder Rates in the United States 1900 to 2017
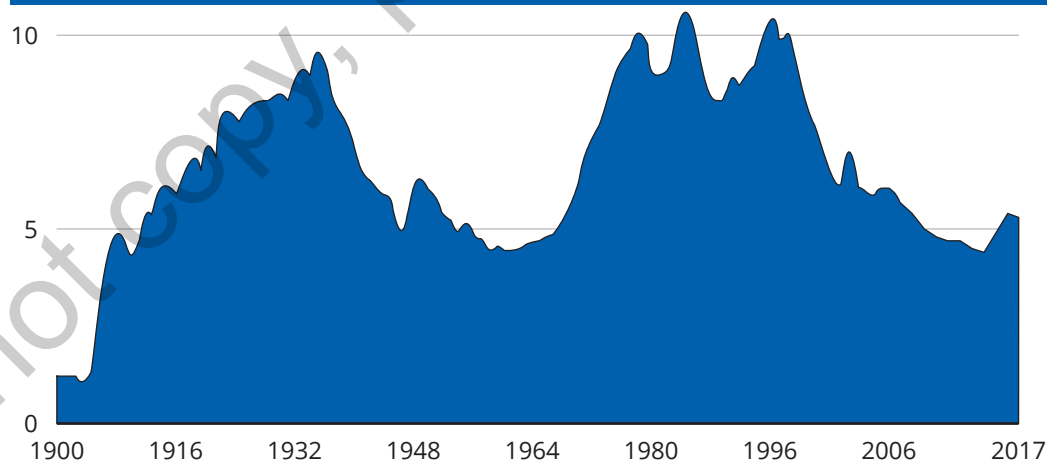
Source: FBI (2018a).

With the advent of the UCR in 1930, national data became somewhat more reliable. The homicide rate started a steep climb after the Volstead Act prohibiting the production and sale of alcohol was passed in 1920 as gangs fought over the lucrative and illegal alcohol market. The rate started to fall with the repeal of the Volstead Act in 1933, which effectively removed criminals from the alcohol business. It dropped even further during World War II when most young men (young men commit the lion's share of crime) were in uniform and overseas, showed a sharp rise when they returned, and then settled into a relatively peaceful period during the 1950s and early 1960s. Murder rates then started a precipitous rise beginning in the late 1960s.

The late 1960s through the mid-1970s saw tumultuous changes in American society. Opposition to the Vietnam War combined with the civil rights and feminist movements led to the widespread questioning of many of the fundamental values of American society that treated some groups of people as second-class citizens. When values and norms are questioned, they become weaker in their ability to regulate behavior. The weakened power of traditional social norms to control behavior led to all kinds of experimentation with alternative lifestyles, including the use of drugs. The emergence of crack cocaine in the early 1980s led to a period of gang wars over sales territory, just like the gang wars over alcohol did in the 1920s. Crack cocaine is easier to make, conceal, and sell than barrels of beer or bottles of whiskey, so crack dealing was more of an "equal opportunity" enterprise than supplying illegal alcohol. Numerous young "gang-bangers" took advantage of the opportunity for easy money in places where jobs were scarce, sparking a decade-long street war with other like-minded individuals.

The decrease in the homicide rate in the early 1990s can be attributed to several factors including a large decrease in the crack market and in gang warfare as territories became consolidated by the strong pushing out the weak. Severe penalties for sale and possession of crack and the danger from others trafficking in the same market may have also driven out many dealers. Other popular explanations for the great crime decline of the 1990s include the population of young adults who are most crime prone aging out of their criminal propensities, the booming tech economy, the ban on leaded gasoline (which can lead to neurological problems) almost two decades prior, and even the availability of legal abortion nationwide after *Rowe v. Wade* in 1973.

Problems With the UCR

UCR data had limitations that restricted their usefulness for criminological research, particularly research seeking to uncover causes of crime. Some of the more serious of these limitations are outlined here.

- The UCR data significantly underrepresented the actual number of criminal events in the United States each year. According to a nationwide victim survey, only 41.5% of victims of violent crime and 31.8% of victims of property crime indicated that they reported their victimization to the police (Thompson & Tapp, 2023). Victims are more likely to report violent crimes if injuries are serious and are more likely to report property crimes when losses are high. Females are more likely than males to report violent victimization; males and females are about equally as likely to report property victimization.

- Costly white-collar crimes such as stock market fraud, hazardous waste dumping, tax evasion, and false claims for professional services are not included.

- Crimes committed in the jurisdictions of nonparticipating law enforcement agencies are not included in the data. Even with full voluntary compliance, all departments would not be equally as efficient and thorough (or honest) in their record keeping.

- Crime data may be falsified by police departments for political reasons. The National Center for Policy Analysis (1998) reports that police departments in Philadelphia, New York, Atlanta, and Boca Raton, Florida, had underreported and/or downgraded crimes in their localities (and these are just the departments we know about).

- The UCR even underreported crimes that are known to the police because of the FBI's hierarchy rule. The **hierarchy rule** requires police to report only the highest (most serious) offense committed in a multiple-offense single incident to the FBI and to ignore the others. For instance, if a man robs five patrons in a bar, pistol-whips one patron who tried to resist, locks the victims in the beer cooler, and then rapes the female bartender, only the rape is reported to the FBI. Arson is the sole exception to this rule. If some other violent or property crime is committed in conjunction with an arson, both offenses are reported.

- Because UCR data are a function of reporting crimes, it should be noted that there are differences in the likelihood that a crime gets officially recorded, which may partially distort some of the crime trends observed. For example, research shows that the race of both the

victim and offender influence the likelihood that a crime gets reported to the police by a member of the public (see generally, Xie & Lauritsen, 2012). Additionally, the victim's wishes (in which demographic characteristics also matter) have long been noted to play a role in police discretion and their decision to informally handle a situation or to formally handle it and file a police report (Smith, Visher, & Davidson, 1984). These facts help contextualize racial disparity in UCR data.
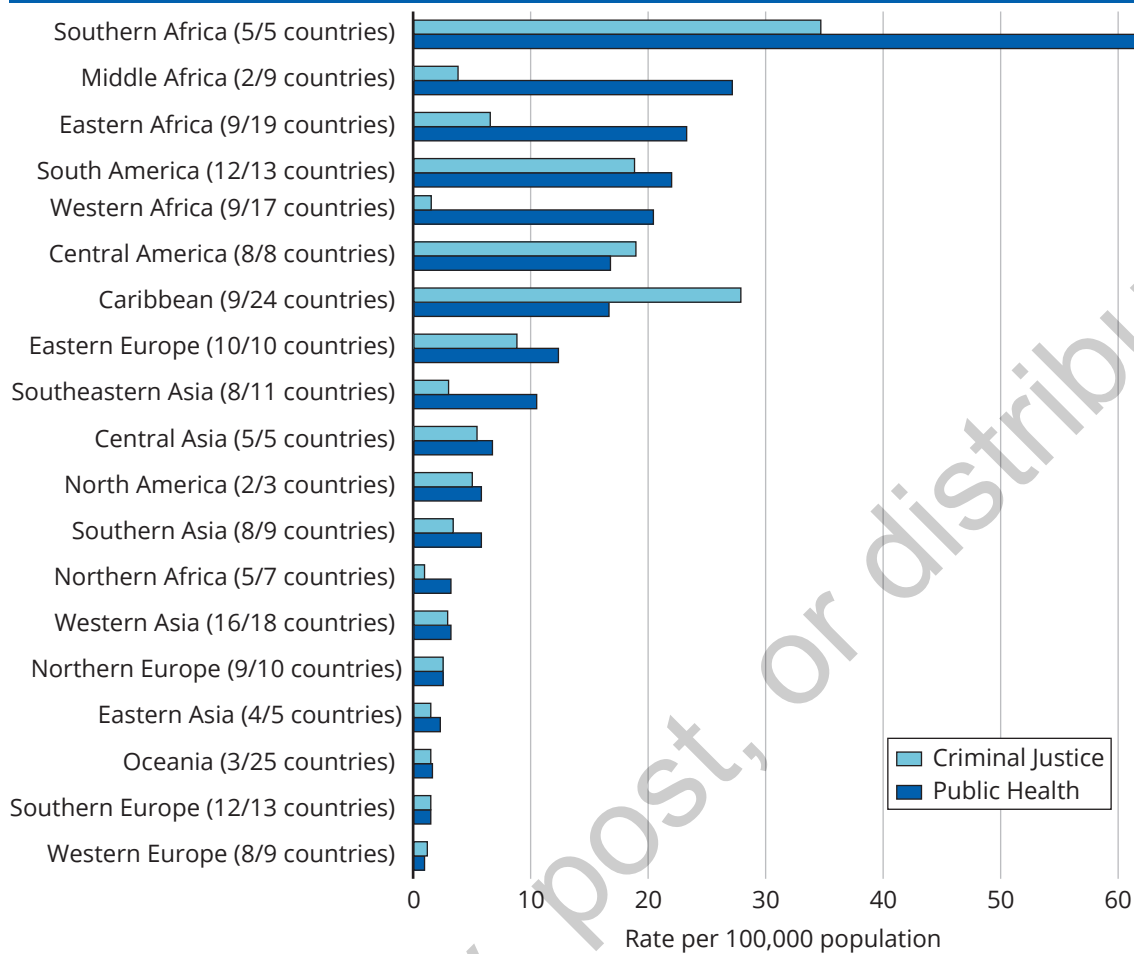
Problems With Comparing International Crime Rates

Problems such as the hierarchy rule and the different ways in which different nations record and define crime make it extremely difficult to compare crime rates across nations. For instance, which two nations have the highest rate of recorded kidnappings in the world: (A) Australia and Canada or (B) Colombia and Mexico? The answer is A. According to United Nations figures for 2012, Australia had 17 kidnappings per 100,000 population and Canada 12.7, compared with 0.6 in Colombia and 1.1 in Mexico (Alexander, 2013). If you are skeptical, you have learned the lesson of the opening vignette. According to Alexander (2013), these differences are simply a matter of how the different countries define kidnapping. In Australia or Canada, "If a divorced parent takes a child for the weekend, and the other parent objects and reports it to the police, the police will record the incident as a kidnapping." In most countries, "real" kidnapping is unlawfully seizing and carrying away a person by force or fraud and detaining that person against his or her will with the purpose of committing some other crime (e.g., rape, slavery, a ransom demand).

Another example is Sweden's rape rate, which is officially the highest in the world, but is it really? The Swedes record every incident of sexual violence separately, so if a woman goes to the police and tells them that her partner raped her at least once a month over the last year, the police will record 12 separate events (Alexander, 2013). In the United States it would be recorded as a single incident—one case of rape. So, it is not just the village watchman who "puts down what he damn pleases" that confounds our efforts to make comparisons but also legal peculiarities of each country or changing emphases on different crimes and changing police practices.

Another example shows how people can make a fool of themselves if they throw around statistics without knowing how they are recorded. A TV news reporter in Cincinnati reported that in the United Kingdom in 2012 there were 2,034 violent crimes per 100,000 people while in the United States the figure was 466 violent crimes per 100,000; the reporter claimed the United Kingdom was 5 times more violent than the United States (Bier, 2013). Because these startling figures reflect fundamentally different ways of recording violent crime, comparing them is not like comparing apples to oranges but more like comparing apples to pork chops. The vast majority of crimes recorded as violent in the United Kingdom include such relatively innocuous offenses as simple assault without injury such as slapping and spitting, harassment, "possession of an article with a blade or point," and causing "public fear, alarm, or distress." The United Kingdom also reports as sexual offenses everything from rape to groping and flashing. In contrast, in the United States the FBI recorded only the truly injurious crimes of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault as violent crimes (let's also not forget the FBI's UCR hierarchy rule, which is not followed in the United Kingdom, further boosting its crime count vis-à-vis that of the United States).

Then there is the problem of the efficiency, accuracy, capacity, and/or honesty of the police in various countries in recording and reporting their crimes, especially homicides. Figure 2.4 compares rates of homicides reported by countries in various subregions of the world by the criminal justice system and by various health agencies such as the World Health Organization (Harrendorf, Heiskanen, & Malby, 2010). Note in general that in the less developed countries, the homicides recorded by public health agencies greatly outnumber those recorded by the police, and that in both reporting methods, homicides are much higher than in developed countries. Also note that in the more developed regions, there is hardly any discrepancy between criminal justice and public health sources of data. Although imperfect, homicide is the crime that is the most accurately measured. So when comparing nations, it is best to compare homicide rates to get a general sense of which countries are more criminal and dangerous than others. Using homicide rates is also useful for inference since homicide rates correlate with rates of overall violence and overall rates of violence correlate with rates of property crime.

FIGURE 2.4 ■ **Average Subregion Homicide Rates According to Criminal Justice and Public Health Data**

Horizontal bar chart. X-axis: "Rate per 100,000 population" from 0 to 60. Two series: Criminal Justice (light blue) and Public Health (dark blue).

Subregion	
Southern Africa (5/5 countries)	
Middle Africa (2/9 countries)	
Eastern Africa (9/19 countries)	
South America (12/13 countries)	
Western Africa (9/17 countries)	
Central America (8/8 countries)	
Caribbean (9/24 countries)	
Eastern Europe (10/10 countries)	
Southeastern Asia (8/11 countries)	
Central Asia (5/5 countries)	
North America (2/3 countries)	
Southern Asia (8/9 countries)	
Northern Africa (5/7 countries)	
Western Asia (16/18 countries)	
Northern Europe (9/10 countries)	
Eastern Asia (4/5 countries)	
Oceania (3/25 countries)	
Southern Europe (12/13 countries)	
Western Europe (8/9 countries)	

Source: From *International Statistics on Crime and Justice,* by Harrendorf, S., Heiskanen, M., & Malby, S, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, © 2010 United Nations. Reprinted with the permission of the United Nations.

NIBRS: THE "NEW AND IMPROVED" UCR

Efforts to improve the reliability and validity of official statistics happen all the time, with the most ambitious being the **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**. NIBRS began in 1982 and is designed to collect more detailed and comprehensive crime statistics than did the UCR, which it has replaced. As opposed to the UCR, which monitored only a few crimes and gathered few details associated with them, NIBRS collects data on 46 "Group A" offenses and 11 "Group B" offenses. There is no hierarchy rule under the NIBRS system; it reports multiple victims, multiple offenders, and multiple crimes that may be part of the same incident. It also provides information about the circumstances of the offense and about victim and offender characteristics, such as the offender–victim relationship and age, sex, and race of victims and perpetrators (if known). NIBRS data is available for anyone to explore using the FBI's Crime Data Explorer (CDE). This is an interactive webpage that allows users to examine the data in intricate detail. In this sense, it is a real improvement over the UCR.

However, in terms of providing an overall picture of crime in the United States, it leaves much to be desired. As we saw

Is a mother leaving her spouse and taking their child considered kidnapping? It depends on what country you live in. This illustrates the difficulties in collecting and comparing crime statistics internationally.

iStockPhoto/doble-d

previously, only 53% of the police agencies reported crimes to NIBRS in 2021, with the largest departments such as NYPD and LAPD not participating. For 2022, only 70% of agencies submitted NIBRS data. Unfortunately, many departments lack the staff and technical expertise to collect and process the wide and detailed range of information that is part of each crime incident their officers deal with, and administrators see little benefit to their department to justify the effort (Dunworth, 2001). However, the Justice Department is working to increase NIBRS participation by using incentives such as grants and offering free training, but at present, for all the advantages that NIBRS has over the UCR, we have a severely limited view of the overall extent of crime in the United States due to the lack of law enforcement participation. For 2022, the FBI accepted SRS data from agencies that did not submit NIBRS data, which alleviated much of the headache associated with moving away from the UCR to NIBRS.

NIBRS, the UCR, and Police Bias in Arrests

NIBRS may miss an awful lot of crime and makes trend analyses difficult, but it makes up for it in other areas. Because NIBRS data provide information about the offender and the victim (victims can identify physical characteristics of perpetrators), it can be used to resolve some important criminological issues. One issue is the disproportionately high rate of arrest for African Americans in the United States. For instance, while Blacks constitute about 13% of the U.S. population, the percentages of Blacks arrested for each Part I crime in 2020 were as follows: murder (51.0%), rape (25.4%), Robbery (49.3%), aggravated assault (33.1%), burglary (27.6%), larceny/theft (28.7%), motor vehicle theft (26.4%), and arson (22.9%) (FBI, 2021). The question for criminologists is this: Is the disproportion in arrests the result of disproportionately high Black involvement in crime or the result of discriminatory arrest patterns of police? If we only had raw arrest data from the UCR, we could argue without end about whether the data reflect police bias or disproportionate Black involvement in crime.

This issue was explored by D'Alessio and Stolzenberg (2003) using NIBRS data from 335,619 arrests for rape, robbery, and aggravated and simple assault. Their results indicate the odds of arrest for robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault were significantly greater for White offenders than for Black offenders, but there was no significant difference in the probability of arrest for rape. For instance, African Americans committed 5,278 robberies but only 21.4% were arrested; Whites committed 2,620 robberies for which 30.8% were arrested. The same results were found for aggravated assault (42.5% Blacks versus 55.1% Whites). The researchers concluded that the disproportionately high Black arrest rate is attributable to disproportionately higher Black involvement in crime. More recently, Fogliato, Xiang, Lipton, Nagin, and Chouldechova (2021) examined 3,470,165 violent crimes recorded by NIBRS from 2007 to 2016. Blacks were overrepresented for all crimes, but Whites (56%) were arrested more than Blacks (42%). The gap is largest in robbery (36% versus 19%) and aggravated assault (62% versus 44%), followed by simple assault (57% versus 43%), and smallest for rape (27% versus 25%). Similar results based on NIBRS data were found in Pope and Snyder's (2003) analysis of 102,905 violent incidents committed by juveniles; that is, White juveniles were significantly more likely to be arrested (40.5%) than Black juveniles (34.5%) even though African American juveniles were more involved in violent incidents than White juveniles.

Pictured here is a mobile command center. The use of technology by police has been credited in part for crime reduction during the 1990s.

iStockPhoto/Angel Di Bilio

Multiple data sources show that some people, or groups of people, are differentially involved in crime, and this differential involvement explains the bulk of racial disparities we see in arrest numbers and other crime statistics, such as stop-and-frisk frequencies or use-of-force instances.

Although NIBRS data show that African American offenders are proportionally less likely to be arrested than Whites, several examples of differential enforcement against Blacks have been identified. For example, according to the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (2018), African Americans and Whites use marijuana at equal rates, yet Blacks are several times more likely to be arrested for a marijuana offense, although "a marijuana offense" does not distinguish between marijuana found in a car and the sale and distribution of marijuana. Additionally, the city of Milwaukee agreed to pay $3.4 million to settle a racial profiling lawsuit where the police were using stop-and-frisk and pretext traffic stop tactics disproportionately against minority citizens. More concerning is when police differentially use force. Nix and colleagues (2017) examined 990 fatal police shootings in the United States in 2015 and found that unarmed African Americans were more than twice as likely to be shot and killed by police than unarmed Whites even while controlling for the threat posed to police and citizens (see "Outside the Box: Police Shootings" below). In sum, official crime statistics can elucidate what is factually observed, even though the numbers reported face meaningful limitation related to reporting frequency and accuracy. That said, these numbers do not tell us the "why" behind these numbers. This is where theory comes in. The subsequent chapters on the various theories of crime will help readers understand the most and least plausible explanations of why the crime statistics we read are what they are.

CRIME VICTIMIZATION SURVEY DATA AND ITS PROBLEMS

Crime victimization surveys involve asking large numbers of people if they have been criminally victimized within some specified time frame regardless of whether they reported the incident to police. Census Bureau personnel interview a nationally representative sample of people ages 12 and over on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) twice each year. This survey is known as the **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**, and in 2022, 226,962 people from 143,749 households were interviewed (Thompson & Tapp, 2023). The NCVS requests information on crimes committed against individuals and households, the circumstances of the offense, and personal information about victims (age, sex, race, income, and education level) and offenders (approximate age, sex, race, and victim/offender relationship). Table 2.3 presents highlights from the 2022 NCVS report.

TABLE 2.3 ■ Highlights from the 2022 Crime Victimization Survey
The violent victimization rate increased from 16.5 victimizations per 1,000 persons in 2021 to 23.5 per 1,000 in 2022.
From 1993 to 2022, the overall rate of violent victimization declined from 79.8 to 23.5 victimizations per 1,000 persons ages 12 or older.
In 2022, about 2 in 5 (42%) violent victimizations were reported to police.
Motor vehicle theft victimization increased from a rate of 4.3 victimizations per 1,000 households in 2021 to 5.5 per 1,000 in 2022.
About 10% of violent victimizations involved a firearm in 2022, an increase from 2021 (7%).
Victims received assistance from a victim service provider in 9% of violent victimizations in 2022.
In 2022, about 1.24% (3.5 million) of persons ages 12 or older nationwide experienced at least one violent crime.
The burglary or trespassing rate was lower in 2022 (14.6 victimizations per 1,000 households) than in 2018 (21.1 per 1,000) but has been relatively flat since 2020.

Source: Criminal Victimization, 2022. Thompson & Tapp (2023)

Victimization surveys have their own problems, some of which include the following:

- Crimes such as drug dealing and all "victimless" crimes such as prostitution and gambling are not revealed in such surveys for obvious reasons. And because murder victims cannot be interviewed, this most serious of crimes is not included.

- Because NCVS only surveys households, crimes committed against commercial establishments such as stores, bars, and factories are not included. This exclusion results in a huge underestimate of crimes such as burglaries, robberies, theft, and vandalism.

- Victimization data do not have to meet any stringent legal or evidentiary standards to be reported as an offense; if the respondent says he or she was robbed (it may have actually been a theft or a burglary), a robbery will be recorded. UCR data, on the other hand, pass through the legal sieve to determine whether the reported incident was indeed a robbery.

- Other problems involve memory lapses, providing answers the respondent thinks the interviewer wants to hear, forgetting an incident, embellishing an incident, and any number of other misunderstandings, ambiguities, and even downright lies that occur when one person asks another about his or her life experiences.

- Consistent with this are suggestions that just as underreporting plagues UCR data, overreporting may plague NCVS data (O'Brien, 2001). Whatever the case may be, we find many anomalies when comparing the two sources of data. For instance, substantially more crimes appear in police records than NCVS victims claim to have reported to the police. The discrepancy is easily explained for burglary and motor vehicle theft because the NCVS does not include commercial establishments in their reports. It is more difficult to explain discrepancies in violent crime, however. One explanation for this is that the NCVS does not include victims less than 12 years of age whereas the UCR does, although it is difficult to believe that children under 12 account for 15% to 20% of the violent victimization known to the police.

NCVS researchers are aware of the problems that arise when asking people to recall victimization and have initiated interview improvements in their methodology, one of which is the *bounding interview.* This technique involves comparing reported incidents from the same household in the current interview with those reported 6 months prior. When a report appears to be a duplicate, the respondent is reminded of the earlier report and asked if the new report represents the incident previously mentioned or if it is different. Other techniques used to minimize some of the reported problems mentioned earlier are available on the NCVS website. Figure 2.5 provides an example of the kinds of questions asked by NCVS survey workers.

AREAS OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UCR AND NCVS

To the extent that two or more data sources tell us the same thing, our confidence in both is increased. The UCR and NCVS agree on the demographics of crime in that they both tell us that males, the young, the poor, and African Americans are more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of crime than are females, older persons, wealthier persons, and persons of other races. Both sources also agree as to the geographic areas and times of the year and month when crimes are more likely to occur. Over a 3-year period, O'Brien (2001) found that NCVS victims reported that 91.5% of those who robbed them and 87.7% of their aggravated assault assailants were male, as were 91.2% and 84.3%, respectively, of those arrested for those offenses. Likewise, NCVS victims reported that 64.1% of those who robbed them and 40% of their aggravated assault assailants were Black. These percentages fit the UCR arrest statistics for race almost exactly over the 3-year period; 62.2% arrested for robbery were Black, as were 40% of those arrested for aggravated assault. More recently, Beck (2021) found that for "serious non-fatal violent crimes" in 2018, NCVS victims reported to the police that 40.9% of the assailants were White and 42.8% were Black. For the same year, the UCR reported that 38.7% of those arrested for these crimes were White and 36.1% were Black. Thus, the two data sets agree very closely with respect to violent crimes, as well as showing that Whites are more likely to be arrested than Blacks.

Comparisons of UCR and NCVS data have often proven useful to resolve issues such as these. Another such issue is the so-called masculinization hypothesis put forward by some feminist criminologists. The essence of this hypothesis is that women are becoming more "masculinized" as a result of assuming "male" roles in the workforce and that this is reflected in the increased rates of female arrests for violent crimes. Darrell Steffensmeier and his colleagues (2006) used a comparison of data trends reported in the UCR and NCVS from 1980 to 2003 to explore the issue of whether the violent crime gap between males and females is closing. They found that both sources reported little or no changes in the gender ratio for violent crimes such as murder, rape, and robbery but that the UCR indicated

FIGURE 2.5 ■ Example NCVS Victimization Questions

29. How were you attacked? Any other way?
Mark (X) all that apply.
 	
FIELD REPRESENTATIVE – *If raped, ASK –*
Do you mean forced or coerced sexual intercourse?
If No, ASK – **What do you mean?**
 	
If tried to rape, ASK –
Do you mean attempted forced or coerced sexual intercourse?
If No, ASK – **What do you mean?**
	646 1 ☐ Raped
	* 2 ☐ Tried to rape
	      3 ☐ Sexual assault other than rape or attempted rape
	      4 ☐ Shot
	      5 ☐ Shot at (but missed)
	      6 ☐ Hit with gun held in hand
	647 7 ☐ Stabbed/cut with knife/sharp weapon
	* 8 ☐ Attempted attack with knife/sharp weapon
	      9 ☐ Hit by object (other than gun) held in hand
	      10 ☐ Hit by thrown object
	648 11 ☐ Attempted attack with weapon other than gun/knife/sharp weapon
	* 12 ☐ Hit, slapped, knocked down
	      13 ☐ Grabbed, held, tripped, jumped, pushed, etc.
	      14 ☐ Other – *Specify* ⌐_____

30. Did the offender THREATEN to hurt you before you were actually attacked?	649 1 ☐ Yes
	      2 ☐ No
	      3 ☐ Other – *Specify* ⌐_____

31. What were the injuries you suffered, if any? Anything else?
Mark (X) all that apply.
 	
FIELD REPRESENTATIVE – *If raped and box 1 in item 29 is NOT marked, ASK –*
Do you mean forced or coerced sexual intercourse?
If No, ASK – **What do you mean?**
 	
If attempted rape and box 2 in item 29 is NOT marked, ASK –
Do you mean attempted forced or coerced sexual intercourse?
If No, ASK – **What do you mean?**
	655 1 ☐ None – ***SKIP*** *to 40*
	* 2 ☐ Raped
	      3 ☐ Attempted rape
	      4 ☐ Sexual assault other than rape or attempted rape
	      5 ☐ Knife or stab wounds
	      6 ☐ Gun shot, bullet wounds
	656 7 ☐ Broken bones or teeth knocked out
	* 8 ☐ Internal injuries
	      9 ☐ Knocked unconscious
	      10 ☐ Bruises, black eye, cuts, scratches, swelling, chipped teeth
	      11 ☐ Other – *Specify* ⌐_____

32. *ASK OR VERIFY –* **Were any of the injuries caused by a weapon other than a gun or knife?**	657 1 ☐ Yes – *Ask 33* 2 ☐ No – ***SKIP*** *to 34*
33. Which injuries were caused by a weapon OTHER than a gun or knife? *Enter code(s) from 31.*	658 ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ * Code Code Code
34. Were you injured to the extent that you received any medical care, including self treatment?	659 1 ☐ Yes – *Ask 35* 2 ☐ No – ***SKIP*** *to 40*

35. Where did you receive this care? Anywhere else?
Mark (X) all that apply.
	660 1 ☐ At the scene
	* 2 ☐ At home/neighbor's/friend's
	      3 ☐ Health unit at work/school, first aid station at a stadium/park, etc.
	      4 ☐ Doctor's office/health clinic
	      5 ☐ Emergency room at hospital/emergency clinic
	      6 ☐ Hospital (other than emergency room)
	      7 ☐ Other – *Specify* ⌐_____

CHECK ITEM E Is (box 6) "Hospital" marked in 35?	☐ Yes – *Ask 36* ☐ No – ***SKIP*** *to 38*
36. Did you stay overnight in the hospital?	662 1 ☐ Yes – *Ask 37* 2 ☐ No – ***SKIP*** *to 38*
37. How many days did you stay (in the hospital)?	663 _____ Number of days

Source: Catalano et al. (2013).

a sharp rise in assaults by females. Does this mean that women became more violent over the period examined, or does the increase reflect the behavior of the police more than the behavior of women? The authors conclude that net-widening policy shifts have escalated the arrest proneness of females for "criminal assault" (e.g., policing physical attacks, threats of marginal seriousness) rather than women having become any more violent. In other words, UCR increases in female arrests for simple assault are explained by changes in police policy in the form of mandatory arrests for domestic violence. This could not have been determined without examining both data sources. The addition of the NCVS and NIBRS to the nation's crime databases thus has great utility for settling some major quarrels among criminologists of different persuasions, although not to the satisfaction of everyone.

RESEARCH SNIPPET

How Dangerous Is Police Work?

Although imperfect, the UCR program is a treasure trove of information that is easily accessible for anyone with internet access. The information about the UCR in this chapter is just a small taste of what is available. Many criminology and criminal justice students consider a career in police work and are interested in understanding the dangers involved. The UCR reports data on law enforcement officers killed or assaulted (LEOKA). In 2014, 51 police officers were feloniously killed while on duty. Most officers were killed by handguns, and most officers were killed by White men, although they are disproportionately more likely to be killed by Black men. Another 45 officers were accidently killed, primarily due to traffic accidents. Also in 2014, more than 48,000 officers were assaulted while on duty. Nearly 28% of those sustained at least minor injuries. The data suggest that police work has become less dangerous over recent decades, with 2013 being the safest year for police on record. Policing is a dangerous job, much more dangerous than higher education or accounting, for example. However, policing is not the most dangerous job in the country. Fishermen, truckers, loggers, and pilots sustain higher rates of death and injury than police while on the job. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, police work does not break the top 10 in fatal occupational injuries.

Sources: FBI (2014); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018).

SELF-REPORT CRIME SURVEYS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Self-report surveys of offending provide a way for criminologists to collect data without having to rely on government sources. Questionnaires used in these surveys typically provide a list of offenses and request subjects to check each offense they recall having committed and how often and sometimes if they have ever been arrested (and if so, how many times). Self-report surveys have relied heavily on college and high school students for subjects, although prison inmates and probationers/parolees have also been surveyed.

The greatest strength of self-report research is that it allows researchers to easily collect copious amounts of data that allows them to correlate a variety of characteristics of respondents with their admitted offenses that go beyond the demographics of age, race, and gender. For instance, they can attempt to measure various constructs thought to be associated with offending, such as impulsiveness, empathy, and sensation seeking, as well as their peer associations and attitudes. The evidence indicates that self-report crime measures provide largely accurate information about some illegal act sometime in their lives. However, there are a number of reasons why self-report crime surveys also provide a distorted picture of criminal involvement.

- The majority of self-report studies in the past surveyed "convenience" samples of high school and college students, populations in which we don't expect to find seriously criminally involved individuals. Most self-report studies thus fail to include the very people we are most interested in gathering information about. One strength of the self-report method, however, is that it appears to capture the extent of illegal drug use among high school and college students, something that neither the UCR nor the NCVS attempt to do.

- Self-report studies typically uncover only fairly trivial antisocial acts such as fighting, stealing items not worth very much, substance use, and truancy. Almost everyone has committed one or more of these acts. These are hardly acts that help us to understand the nature of serious crime. A connected problem is that some researchers lump respondents who report one delinquent act together with adjudicated delinquents who break the law in many different ways many different times.

- Even though most people are forthright in revealing minor antisocial behaviors, most people do not have a serious criminal history, and those who do have a distinct tendency to underreport their crimes (Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981). As the number of crimes people commit increases, so does the proportion of offenses they withhold reporting, with those arrested for the most serious offenses having the greatest probability of denial (Farrington 1982).

- Males tend to report their antisocial activities less honestly than females and African Americans less honestly than other racial groups (Cernkovich, Giordano, & Rudolph, 2000; Kim, Fendrich, & Wislar, 2000). This evidence renders any statements about gender or racial differences regarding antisocial behavior based on self-report data suspect. When it comes to relying on self-report data to assess the nature and extent of serious crime, it is well to remember the gambler's dictum: "Never trust an animal that talks."

We should not end on a pessimistic note about self-reports, however. Several studies have addressed the issue of the accuracy and honesty of self-reported offenses in various ways, and the results have generally been encouraging, at least for uncovering the extent of minor offenses. On average, known delinquents and criminals disclose almost 3 times as many offenses as nondelinquents or noncriminals. Many major multimillion dollar longitudinal studies taking place today have built-in safeguards against researchers naively taking subjects at their word. A number of studies verify self-report accounts with police records and other social agencies, a practice that further helps us to gain a grasp on the reliability of self-report studies. For instance, a large longitudinal (a study following the same people across the life span) cohort study (studying a set of individuals who share a common characteristic, such as being born in the same month in the same geographic area) showed that individuals from the lowest socioeconomic class reported 3.21 times more offenses than individuals from the high-

A woman completing a self-report survey. When using self-report data, we must ask ourselves, "How accurate are people's memories? Do people lie on surveys?"

iStockPhoto/VioletaStoimenova

est class (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2004). However, when researchers compared individuals from these two classes for official juvenile and adult arrests, the members of the lowest class had 25.82 times more officially recorded arrests than members of the highest class. Thus, the more actively involved delinquents/criminals do report more antisocial behavior than others, but they also greatly underreport it.

CRIME MAPPING

Crime statistics are also gathered by individual police departments for their own use in the battle against crime in their jurisdictions. These statistics enable police departments to view areas and trends across time periods (the where, when, and how of crime) so they can allocate their resources where and when they are most needed. The most sophisticated of these methods is known as crime mapping. **Crime mapping** is the use of modern technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) by police departments to "map" (visualize) and analyze patterns of crime.

The geography of a city can strongly influence crime because the features and characteristics of an area of a city or town can make it easier or more difficult for crime to occur (Kumar & Chan-drasekar, 2011). For instance, the location of alleys, buildings, and open spaces, as well as the houses and businesses that occupy the areas, such as bars, banks, marijuana dispensaries, payday loan centers, pawn shops, derelict buildings, schools, parks, and factories, all affect the likelihood that a crime will occur.

FIGURE 2.6 ■ **Mapping Homicide Locations and Methods in Washington, DC**
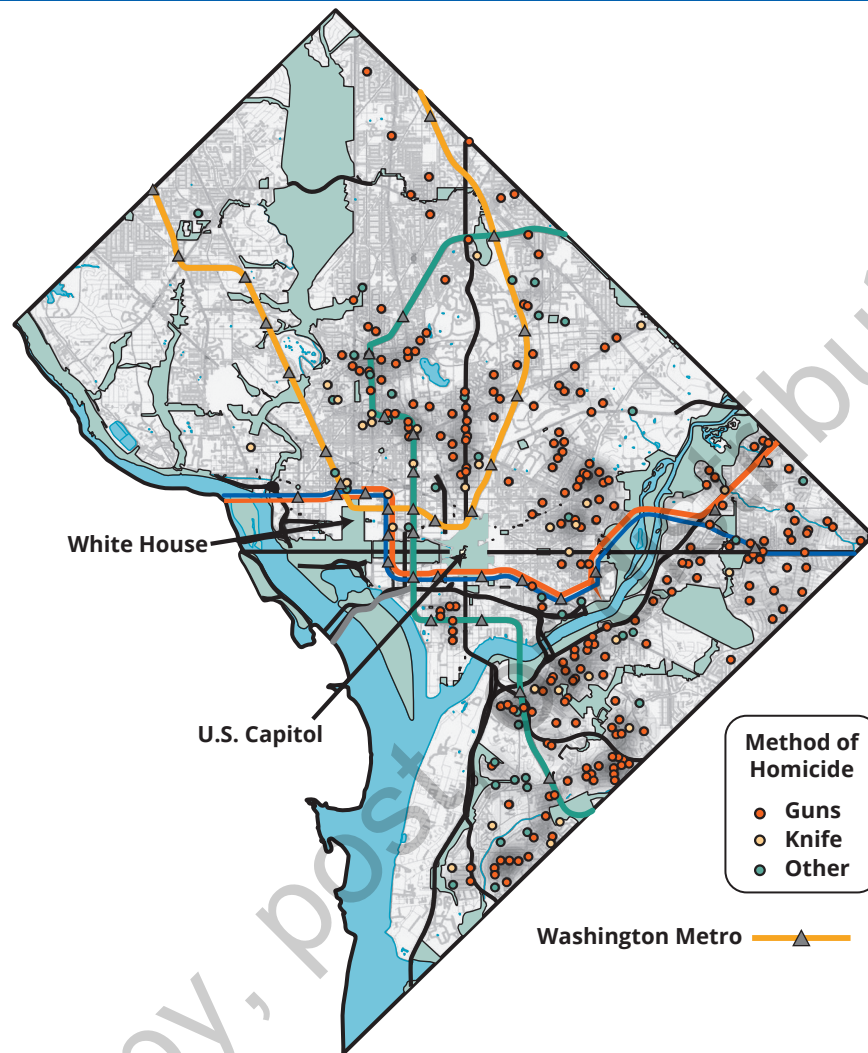
By combining such geographic information with police report data and then displaying the information on a computerized map, police analysts find it to be an effective way to analyze where, when, and how crime occurs. To accomplish such mapping, information about all serious criminal incidents is fed into a computer equipped with special software, allowing analysts to pinpoint crime hot spots and other trends and patterns over time. This is the basis for hot spot policing, intelligence-led policing, and other data-driven police practices, which have been enormously useful to police departments in their relentless battle with crime. Figure 2.6 is an example of the pattern of homicides by location and methods of killing in Washington, DC, from 2004 to 2006.
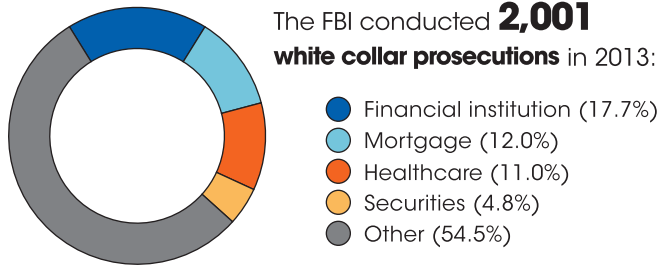
WHITE-COLLAR CRIME: THE FBI'S FINANCIAL CRIMES REPORT

The only white-collar crimes, that is, crimes committed by guile as opposed to force, that used to be listed in the UCR were embezzlement, forgery/counterfeiting, and fraud, which are mostly committed by individuals. There is, however, a separate accounting of major white-collar crimes committed by organized groups (e.g., banks, law firms, medical practices) and corporations called the **Financial Crimes Report** (FBI, 2012) which contains results of investigations carried out by the Financial Crimes Section (FCS) of the FBI. This report is not issued regularly; in fact, the 2012 report is the latest to be found. The role of the FCS is to oversee the investigation of financial fraud and to supervise the forfeiture of assets from individuals engaged in such crimes. The FCS is composed of the Asset Forfeiture/

Money Laundering Unit (AF/MLU), the Economic Crimes Unit (ECU), the Health Care Fraud Unit (HCFU), the Forensic Accountant Unit (FAU), and the National Mortgage Fraud Team (NMFT).

The crimes investigated by the FCS are more fully discussed in Chapter 16, but we highlight the FBI's major successes in 2011 as reported in the 2012 Financial Crimes Report. FBI investigations led to 242 indictments and 241 convictions for corporate fraud, mostly cases involving fraudulent accounting and insider trading. The FBI obtained $2.4 billion in restitution and $16.1 million in fines from convicted corporate criminals. The latest figures available show an ever-growing number of fraud cases being investigated since 2001. Figure 2.7 provides the number of cases, convictions, fines and recoveries, and convictions in 2011 as well as white-collar prosecutions in 2013.

FIGURE 2.7 ■ Summary of FBI White-Collar Prosecutions in 2011 and 2013

The FBI conducted **2,001 white collar prosecutions** in 2013:

- ● Financial institution (17.7%)
- ● Mortgage (12.0%)
- ● Healthcare (11.0%)
- ● Securities (4.8%)
- ● Other (54.5%)

In 2011, the **FBI investigated:**

2,691 mortgage fraud cases

resulting in **1,223** indictments/informations

1,082 convictions

$1.4 billion in restitution orders   **$116.3 million** in fines

2,690 healthcare fraud cases

resulting in **1,676** indictments/informations

736 convictions

$1.2 billion in restitution orders   **$1 billion** in fines   **$1 billion** in civil settlements

1,846 securities fraud cases

resulting in **520** indictments/informations

394 convictions

$8.8 billion in restitution orders   **$113 million** in fines   **$36 million** in recoveries   **$751 million** in forfeitures

Note: Most recent data available at time of publication.

Source: National Center for Victims of Crime (2016).

The FBI obtained 520 indictments and 394 convictions for securities/commodities fraud—market manipulation, Ponzi schemes, cyberscams, foreign currency exchange fraud, and so on. As a result of these investigations, the FBI recovered $36 million and obtained $8.8 billion in restitution, $752 million in forfeitures, and $113 million in fines.

In the health care field, the FBI investigated 2,690 cases resulting in 1,676 indictments and 736 convictions. This type of fraud involves billing for services not provided, duplicate claims, medically unnecessary services, and kickbacks for referring patients for services paid for by Medicare or Medicaid. The FBI obtained $1.2 billion in restitution, $1 billion in fines, $96 million in seizures, $320 million in restitution, and $1 billion in settlements in 2011.

Because of tighter underwriting standards, mortgage fraud was at its lowest level since 2001. Mortgage fraud includes foreclosure rescue schemes and a wide variety of other types of misrepresentations or omissions aimed at distressed homeowners who bought homes under greatly relaxed loaning standards prior to the 2007 housing crash. In 2011, the FBI had 2,691 pending mortgage fraud cases and obtained convictions on 1,082 criminals. It obtained $1.38 billion in restitution, $116.3 million in fines, and $23 million in seizures/forfeitures.

Finally, the FBI obtained 521 indictments and 429 convictions for financial institution fraud, a type of crime that includes embezzlement, check fraud, counterfeit negotiable instruments, check kiting, and fraud contributing to the failure of financial institutions. These convictions resulted in $1.38 billion in restitution, $116.3 million in fines (being exactly the same value as listed for mortgage fraud, this figure may have been erroneously listed twice), and $15.7 million in seizures. Wall Street in New York City may well be the most crime-ridden street in America given how often white-collar and corporate crimes are committed there and how damaging they are to everyday citizens. Certainly, students of criminology should give adequate attention to studying white-collar crime.

CRITICAL THINKING

Think like a criminologist. Come up with two crime-related questions that you would like to answer.

1. What are your research questions?
2. What kind of data would you need to answer your research questions?
3. Would you use UCR, NIBRS, NCVS, or self-report data?
4. Why are your chosen data sources better than other options available?
5. What are some limitations or shortcomings of the data sources you have chosen?
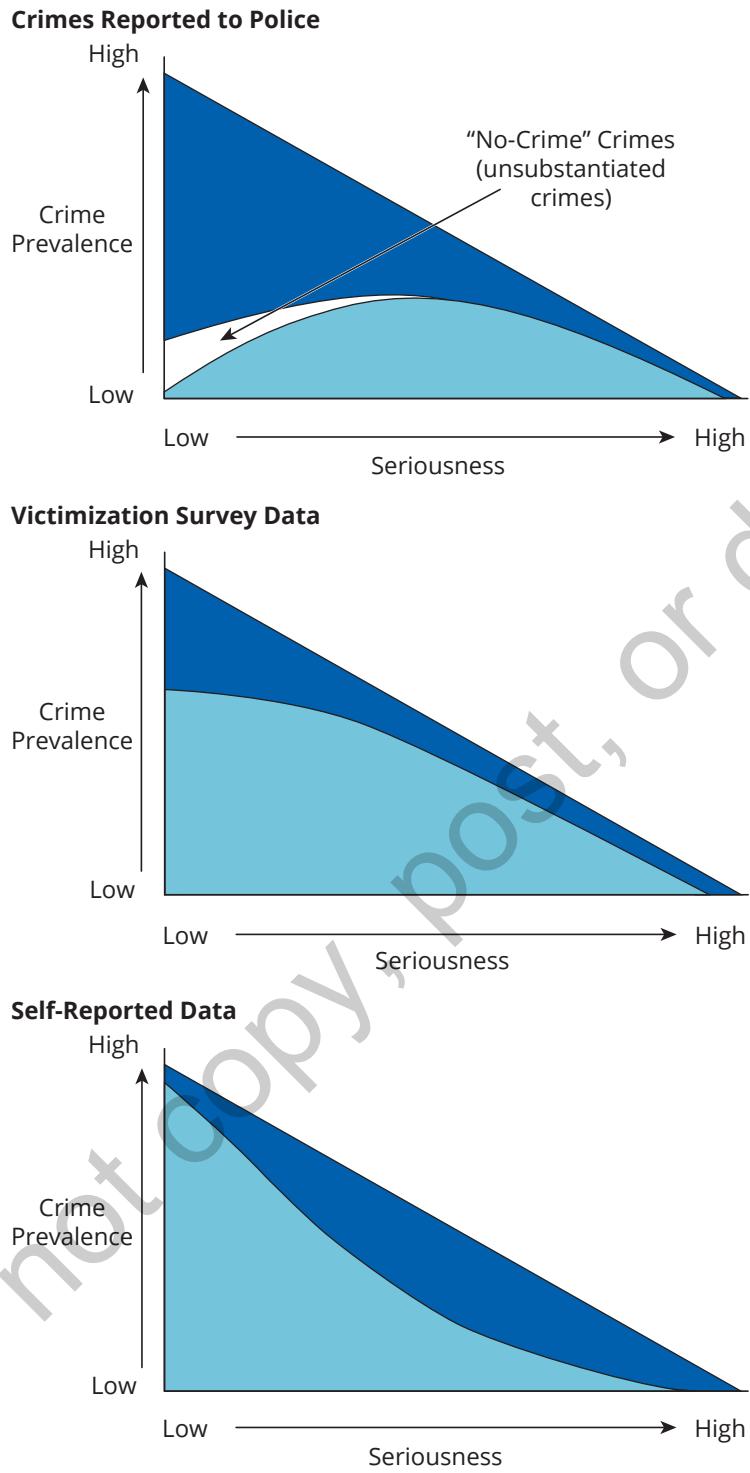6. Can you think of any ways to overcome those limitations?

THE DARK FIGURE OF CRIME

The **dark (or hidden) figure of crime** is that portion of the total crimes committed each year that never comes to light. Figure 2.8 presents three diagrams that show the different dark figures for the three major measures of criminal behavior. (The dark figures are represented by the dark shading in each diagram.)

Each diagram shows the degree to which crimes of varying degrees of seriousness are most likely to be detected by each measure ("victimless" crimes excluded). In the top diagram displaying UCR data, you can see that very few trivial offenses are reported in official statistics, and most of those that are will be dismissed as unfounded by the police. For official statistics, then, the dark figures are highly concentrated at the nonserious end of the crime spectrum.

The middle diagram reveals that the dark figures for victimization data are primarily concentrated in the nonserious end of the spectrum also, although to a lesser degree than in the case of official data. The failure of victimization data to pick up these minor offenses is largely due to survey subjects not remembering all incidences of victimization.

FIGURE 2.8   ■   Differing Proportions of Reported and Unreported Crimes for the Three Major Measures of Crime

Crimes Reported to Police

"No-Crime" Crimes (unsubstantiated crimes)

Crime Prevalence — High / Low

Seriousness — Low → High

Victimization Survey Data

Crime Prevalence — High / Low

Seriousness — Low → High

Self-Reported Data

Crime Prevalence — High / Low

Seriousness — Low → High

Note: Light shading = proportion of crimes reported. Dark shading = proportion not reported.

In the bottom diagram we see that most of the dark figures in the case of self-reports are concentrated in the upper end of the seriousness continuum rather than the lower end. This is partly due to (A) nearly all self-report surveys excluding most persistent serious offenders from their subject pools, and (B) many of the most serious offenders who remain in self-report subject pools do not reveal the full extent of their criminal histories.

WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE ABOUT THE THREE MAIN MEASURES OF CRIME IN AMERICA?

All three main measures of crime in America are imperfect, and which one of them is "best" depends on what we want to know. UCR data used to be the best single source of data for studying serious crimes and the only one for studying murder rates and circumstances. NIBRS is best for a more comprehensive picture of criminal events such as the demographics (sex, race, age) of offenders and victims, although it is not as nationally representative as either the UCR or the NCVS. For studying less serious but much more common crimes, either victimization or self-report survey data are best. If the interest is in drug offenses, self-reports are the preferable data source.

Sometimes sources of crime data disagree with each other, albeit only somewhat. Sometimes research findings using the same data can be different, but this is typically a matter of statistical parlance. Sometimes even data stemming from the same source can differ in its reporting. For example, Comer, Jorgensen, and Carter (2021) found that UCR data reported by law enforcement agencies at the state level differed from the same data reported at the federal level, however the differences were much smaller than the similarities. The point here is that although differences within our crime data do exist and are common, what matters the most is the grand scheme of things. The larger picture is what we should concern ourselves with, and this larger picture reveals general patterns in crime. Because all three data sources converge on some important points about crime, they enable us to proceed with at least some confidence in our endeavors to understand the *whys* of crime. This convergence of information is known as triangulation. Triangulation occurs when two or more methods or data sources are used in concert to cross-validate research findings; when the findings from independent sources are consistent with each other then we can be more confident in the accuracy of those findings. Research finds remarkable consistency across multiple methods and sources of data regarding the relationship between demographic characteristics and crime. The basic demographics of crime constitute the raw social facts that are the building blocks of our criminological theories. If street crime is concentrated among the lower socioeconomic classes and in the poorest neighborhoods, we can begin to ask such things as whether poverty "causes" crime, if the causal direction runs the other way, or does some other variable or set of variables cause both? Is social disorganization in a neighborhood independent of the people living in it or completely dependent on the people living in it? Why do females always and everywhere commit far less crime (particularly the most serious crimes) than males? These and many dozens of other *why* questions can be asked once we have a firm grip on the raw facts supplied by the methods described in this chapter.

CRIMINOLOGY IN POP CULTURE

The Reality of Crime Rates

Shortly after being confirmed as attorney general in 2017, Jeff Sessions claimed that America was experiencing a dangerous and permanent increase in crime. However, the data suggest otherwise. The violent crime rate did increase from 2014 to 2016, but only marginally so, and violence decreased again in 2017 according to the UCR. Violent crime rose greatly in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic but has since fallen again. Gallup polls also routinely find that the public perception of crime trends is inaccurate, and hearing inaccurate information from our political leaders and criminal justice officials is a likely culprit for these misperceptions. Many Americans wrongfully believe that the crime rate is currently high, getting higher, and much higher now than it was 10 to 20 years ago. The reality is that in modern times, crime peaked in the early 1990s, and the current crime rates are about half of what they were back then.

Outside the Box: Police Shootings

Recent police shootings recall Paul Takagi's claim that "police have one trigger finger for whites and another for blacks" (1974:30). African Americans are certainly shot and killed at a rate (26%) twice that which we expect based on their proportion of the population (about 13%). However,

using population proportion to assess Takagi's claim is not a valid methodology because it implies that fairness demands that people of each race to be shot according to their population proportion. Police shootings are a function of how often police officers encounter armed, or perceived to be armed, suspects. Roland Fryer, a leading contemporary scholar of police shootings, controlled for criminal interactions in 4,500 police shootings in five large cities and 10 large counties and concluded: "Given the stream of video 'evidence,' which many take to be indicative of structural racism in police departments across America, and the ensuing and understandable outrage in black communities across America…the results [show that] blacks are 23.5 percent *less likely* to be shot by police, relative to whites, in an interaction" (2019:1241). It should be noted that the Fryer study only included a handful of large cities and counties whereas the Nix et al. (2017) study was nationally representative. The differences in the samples can help us explain why the Fryer and Nix results differ.

By "interaction" Fryer means situations in which an officer is legally justified in using deadly force. Given that Blacks are less likely to be killed in a crime-related situation in which police guns are drawn, police are more apparently more hesitant to fire on Black suspects than on White suspects. Cesario, Johnson, and Terrill (2019) looked at 1,561 fatal police shootings in 2015 and 2016 controlling for racial differences in criminal activity and found the following: "Although Blacks have greater odds of being fatally shot given population proportions, Whites overall were more likely to be fatally shot given each group's involvement in those situations where the police may be more likely to use deadly force" (2019:588). James, James, and Vila (2016:457) reach a similar conclusion with respect to police hesitancy to use lethal force against Blacks: "We found that … officers were slower to shoot armed Black suspects than armed White suspects, and they were less likely to shoot unarmed Black suspects than unarmed White suspects."

Most police killings of suspects of any race are committed by White officers because White officers comprise about 75% of officers nationally (Menifield, Shin, & Strother, 2019). If police shootings of Blacks are driven by White officers, should the policing of Black neighborhoods should be left to Black officers. This would not eliminate the shooting deaths of Black suspects because "Black officers had more than three times greater odds of shooting than white officers. This finding runs counter to concerns that white officers are overrepresented among officers using lethal force and is consistent with several previous studies of officer race and police use-of-force" (Ridgeway, 2016:5). Menifield, Shin, and Strother (2019) also note that while African Americans are disproportionately killed by police, they are killed at higher rates by Black officers than by White officers: "Consistent with prior research, our study finds no support for the popular narrative of the 'racist white cop' being the key driver of the killing of black suspects. The present research provides real-world corroboration of recent laboratory experimental research finding no evidence of race-based targeting of suspects for killing. Indeed, we find that nonwhite officers kill both black and Latino suspects at significantly higher rates than white officers" (2019:65).

A U.S. Department of Justice's (Fachner & Carter, 2015) analysis of police shootings found that Black and Hispanic officers were more likely than White officers to shoot unarmed Black or White suspects. White suspects were unarmed in 8 of 32 officer-involved shootings (25%), and Black suspects were unarmed in 45 of 285 (15.8%) shootings. Black suspects were thus almost 9 times (285/32 = 8.9) more likely to be in potentially deadly confrontations than White suspects and more likely to be armed (84. 2% versus 75%). Police shootings of unarmed suspects were attributable to either wrong perceptions of threat (perceiving a suspect as armed by misidentification of an object such as a cell phone, or some movement that would lead an officer to believe that the suspect is going for a gun), or a physical altercation in which the officer was either being overwhelmed, or the suspect reached for the officer's firearm.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think that public perceptions of police shootings are inconsistent with the data presented here?

2. If it is true that White officers are more hesitant to shoot Black suspects than White suspects, why do you think this is?

3. What is your position on the recent "defund the police" movement, and do you believe that this would reduce police shootings?

4. Do you think that the differences in police shootings could be explained by urbanity? For example, could it be the case that police aren't shooting minorities more often in urban areas but are in more suburban and rural areas?

5. Do you think that police shootings are more of a racial issue or a threat perception issue in which any racial effects observed are artifacts of objective threats?

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SUMMARY

- Crime and criminal behavior are measured in several ways in the United States. The oldest measure is the FBI's UCR, a tabulation of all crimes reported to the police in most of the jurisdictions in the United States in the previous year. The UCR is divided into two parts: Part I records the eight index crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson), and part II records arrests made for all other crimes.

- UCR data seriously underestimate the extent of crime because it only records reported crimes, ignores drug offenses, and only reports the most serious crime in a multiple-crime event. The problems with the UCR led to the implementation of the NIBRS.

- The second major source of crime statistics is the NCVS. This survey consists of many thousands of interviews of households throughout the United States asking them about their crime victimization (if any) during the previous 6 months. The NCVS also has problems because it leaves out crimes against commercial establishments and relies exclusively on the memory and word of interviewees.

- The third source of crime data is self-report data collected by criminologists themselves. The advantage of self-report data is that it is derived "from the horse's mouth," and typically the questionnaires used ask about "victimless" offenses not covered in either the UCR or NCVS. The major problems with self-report data are that it does not capture serious criminal behavior and is

subject to dishonesty in the form of underreporting, especially by those most seriously involved in criminal activity.

- The UCR, NCVS, and self-report data come to different conclusions on a variety of points, but they agree about where, when, and among whom crime is most prevalent and the fact that crime has fallen dramatically in the United States over the past two decades. Taken together, then, we have a fairly reliable picture of the correlates of crime from which to develop our theories about explanatory mechanisms.

- The FBI's Financial Crimes Report is the white-collar version of the UCR. This report focuses on ongoing and completed investigations of many kinds of white-collar crime such as insider trading, fraudulent schemes, and medical fraud.

- The "dark figure" of crime refers to the amount of crime that goes unreported and unknown every year. All measures of criminal activity discussed in this chapter have weaknesses that obscure an unknown amount of crime, but taken together they provide a roughly accurate picture of annual crime rates in the United States.

EXERCISES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Go to the website https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/topten for the FBI's 10 most wanted and research the background and crimes of one of the men listed there. Then write a one- to two-page summary and report to the class.

2. Do you think it wise to make "authoritative" statements or formulate theories of criminal behavior, especially serious criminal behavior, based on self-report data?

3. Can you think of other problems possibly associated with asking people about their delinquent or criminal behavior or their victimization other than those discussed in the chapter?

4. If you were the American "crime czar," what would you do to get the various law enforcement agencies to fully implement NIBRS (no, you can't just order them to do so)?

KEY TERMS

Cleared offense
Crime mapping
Crime rate
Dark figure of crime
Financial Crimes Report
Hierarchy rule
National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)
Part I offenses (or index crimes)
Part II offenses
Self-report surveys
Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)