SECTION I

Introduction to the Book
An Overview of Issues in Criminological Theory

Welcome to the world of criminological theory! It is an exciting and complex endeavor that explains why certain individuals and groups commit crimes and why other people do not. This book will explore the conceptual history of this endeavor as well as current theories. Most of us can relate directly to many of these theories; we may know friends or family members who fit dominant models of criminal behavior.

This introduction begins by describing what criminology is; what distinguishes it from other perspectives of crime, such as religion, journalism, and philosophy; and how definitions of crime vary across time and place. Then it examines some of the major issues used to classify different theories of criminology. After exploring the various paradigms and categories of criminological theory, we discuss what characteristics help to make a theory a good one—in criminology or in any scientific field. In addition, we review the specific criteria for proving causality—for showing which predictors or variables actually cause criminal behavior. We also explain why—for logistic and ethical reasons—few theories in criminology will ever meet the strict criteria required to prove that key factors actually cause criminal behavior. Finally, we look at the strengths and weaknesses of the various measures of crime, which are used to test the validity of all criminological theories, and what those measures reveal about how crime is distributed across various individuals and groups. Although the discussion of crime distribution, as shown by various measures of criminality, may seem removed from our primary discussion regarding theories of why certain individuals and groups commit more crime than others, nothing could be further from the truth. Ultimately, all theories of criminal behavior will be judged based on how much each theory can explain the observed rates of crime shown by the measures of criminality among individuals and groups.

What Is Criminology, and How Does It Differ from Other Examinations of Crime?

Criminology is the scientific study of crime—and especially of why people commit crime. Although many textbooks have more complex definitions of crime, the word *scientific* separates our definition from other perspectives and examinations of crime.[1] Philosophical and legal examinations of crime are based on logic and deductive reasoning, for example, by developing propositions for what makes logical sense. Journalists play a vital role in

[1]Stephen Brown, Finn Esbensen, and Gilbert Geis, *Criminology*, 8th ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Anderson, 2013).

examinations of crime by exploring what is happening in criminal justice and revealing injustices and new forms of crime; however, they tend to examine anecdotes or examples of crime as opposed to objective measures of criminality.

Taken together, philosophical, legal, and journalistic perspectives of crime are not scientific because they do not involve the use of the **scientific method**. Specifically, they do not develop specific predictions, known scientifically as **hypotheses**, which are based on prior knowledge and studies, and then go out and test these predictions through observation. Criminology is based on this scientific method, whereas other examinations of crime are not.

Instead, philosophers and journalists tend to examine a specific case, make conclusions based on that one example of a crime incident, and then leave it at that. Experts in these nonscientific disciplines do not typically examine a multitude of stories similar to the one they are considering, nor do they apply the elements of their story to an existing theoretical framework that offers specific predictions or hypotheses. Further, they do not test those predictions by observation. The method of testing predictions through observation and then applying the findings to a larger body of knowledge, as established by theoretical models, is solely the domain of criminologists, and it separates criminology from other fields. The use of the scientific method is a distinguishing criterion for many studies of human behavior, such as psychology, economics, sociology, and anthropology, which is why these disciplines are generally classified as **social sciences**; criminology is one of them.

To look at another perspective on crime, religious accounts are almost entirely based on dogmatic, authoritarian, or reasoning principles, meaning that they are typically based on what some authority (e.g., the Pope or the Bible, the Torah, or the Koran) has to say about the primary causes of crime and the best ways to deal with such violations. These ideas are not based on observations. A science like criminology is based not on authority or anecdotes but on empirical research—even if that research is conducted by a 15-year-old who performs a methodologically sound study. In other words, the authority of the scientist performing the study does not matter; rather, the observed evidence and the soundness of the methodology—how the study was performed—are of utmost importance. Criminology is based on science, and its work is accomplished through direct observation and testing of hypotheses, even if those findings do not fit neatly into logical principles or the general feelings of the public.

What Is Theory?

Theory can be defined as a set of concepts linked together by a series of statements to explain why an event or phenomenon occurs. A simple way of thinking about theories is that they provide explanations of why the world works the way it does. In other words, a theory is a model of the phenomenon that is being discussed, which in this case is criminal behavior. Sometimes, perhaps quite often, theories are simply wrong, even if the predictions they give are highly accurate.

For example, in the early Middle Ages, most people, including expert scientists, believed Earth was the center of the universe because everything seemed to rotate and revolve around our home planet. If we wake up day after day and see the sun (or moon) rise and set in close to the same place, it appears that these celestial bodies are revolving around Earth, especially considering the fact that we don't feel the world around us moving. Furthermore, calendars predicting the change of seasons, as well as the location and phases of these celestial bodies (such as the moon), were quite accurate. However, although the experts were able to predict the movements of celestial objects quite well and develop extremely accurate calendars, they had absolutely no understanding of what was actually happening. Later, when some individuals tried to convince the majority that they were wrong, specifically that Earth was not the center of the universe, they were condemned as heretics and persecuted, even though their theoretical models were correct.

The same type of argument could be made about Earth being flat; at one time, observations and all existing models seemed to claim it as proven and true. Some disagreed and decided to test their own predictions, which is how America was discovered by European explorers. Still, many who believed Earth was round were persecuted or cast out of mainstream society in Europe at the time.

Two things should be clear: Theories can be erroneous, and accurate predictions can be made (e.g., early calendars and moon and star charts) using them, even though there is no true understanding of what is actually happening. One way to address both of these issues is to base knowledge and theories on scientific observation and testing. All respected theories of crime in the modern era are based on science; thus, we try to avoid buying into and applying theories that are inaccurate, and we continuously refine and improve our theories (based on findings from scientific testing) to gain a better understanding of what causes people to commit crime. Criminology, as a science, always allows and even welcomes criticism of its existing theoretical models. There is no emphasis on authority but rather on the scientific method and the quality of the observations that take place in testing the predictions. All scientific theories can be improved, and they are improved only through observation and empirical testing.

▲ **Image 1.1** Earth seen from the surface of the moon. Theories of Earth as the center of the universe were dominant for many centuries, and scientists who proposed that Earth was not the center of the universe were often persecuted. Over time, the theory was proved false.

SOURCE: © istockphoto.com / RomoloTavani

Case Study: Burke and Hare

During the 1820s, Edinburgh, Scotland, was a major center for those pursuing an education in medicine. Almost 60 years prior to Jack the Ripper, the first serial murderers, William Burke and William Hare, captured media attention. During a 12-month period, Burke and Hare killed 16 people in Edinburgh before being arrested in November 1828. What made these killings so sordid was that Burke and Hare committed them for the sole purpose of selling the cadavers to medical schools for dissection and medical research. They were assisted by Burke's companion, Helen M'Dougal, and Hare's wife, Margaret. Burke and Hare would lure their victims with alcohol. Then, they would suffocate their inebriated victims by lying on their chests and holding their mouths and nostrils closed. Subsequently, Burke and Hare would sell these cadavers, "no questions asked," to Dr. Robert Knox, a promising anatomist.

> *What made these killings so sordid was that Burke and Hare committed them for the sole purpose of selling the cadavers to medical schools for dissection and medical research.*

(Continued)

During the trial, Hare was granted immunity in return for testifying against Burke. Burke was found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. He was hanged on January 28, 1829. Ironically, the next day, Burke's cadaver was donated to the University of Edinburgh, where Professor Alexander Monro conducted the dissection in the anatomical theater.[2] In fact, the University of Edinburgh Anatomical Museum has an exhibit of William Burke's skeletal remains. A description of the exhibit ends with a 19th-century children's rhyme:

Up the close and down the stair

In the house with Burke and Hare

Burke's the butcher

Hare's the thief

Knox the boy who buys the beef.[3]

In January 2016, Arthur and Elizabeth Rathburn from Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan (6 miles outside of Detroit), were indicted for running a black-market body part business. The Rathburns obtained most of the cadavers from two Chicago-area body donation labs. Many of the families who donated the bodies of their loved ones did so with the belief that they would go to science. A number of these cadavers were infected with HIV, hepatitis B, and other diseases. The Rathburns would use chainsaws, band saws, and reciprocating saws to butcher these cadavers for body parts. The Rathburns stored body parts from more than 1,000 people inside a warehouse. Subsequently, they would sell these butchered body parts to medical and dental trainees. However, they sometimes did not disclose to their customers that these body parts were infected with disease.[4]

More than 180 years separate these two cases; the technological expertise needed to carry out these crimes significantly changed during this time. However, one consistent theme that links these two cases is motive—monetary gain. This is one of the most fascinating aspects to studying crime—although technology may have changed how crimes are committed (e.g., Internet fraud), have the explanations changed? Studying motives and factors (e.g., poverty, peer influences, low self-control) that cause such motives is the primary topic of this book.

What Is Crime?

Definitions of crime vary drastically. For example, some take a **legalistic approach** to defining crime, including only acts that are specifically prohibited in the legal codes of a given jurisdiction. The problem with such a definition is that what is a crime in one jurisdiction is not necessarily a crime in other jurisdictions. To clarify, some

---

[2]Lisa Rosner, *Anatomy Murders: Being the True and Spectacular History of Edinburgh's Notorious Burke and Hare and of the Man of Science Who Abetted Them in the Commission of Their Most Heinous Crimes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 240–244.

[3]The University of Edinburgh, Biomedical-Sciences/Anatomy, "William Burke," March 22, 2016, http://www.ed.ac.uk/biomedical-sciences/anatomy/anatomymuseum/exhibits/burke.

[4]Meg Wagner, "Detroit Couple Accused of Hacking Donated Corpses with Chainsaw, Selling Diseased Body Parts to Unwitting Medical Students," *New York Daily News*, January 30, 2016, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/body-part-dealer-rented-infected-cadavers-students-article-1.2514657.

acts, such as murder and armed robbery, are against the law in virtually all countries and all regions of the United States, across time and culture. These are known as acts of *mala in se*, literally meaning *evil in itself*.[5] Typically, these crimes involve serious violence and shock the society in which they occur.

Other crimes are known as acts of *mala prohibita*, which has the literal meaning of *evil because prohibited.* This term acknowledges that these crimes are not inherently evil acts; they are bad only because the law says so.[6] A good example is prostitution, which is illegal in most of the United States but is quite legal and even licensed in most counties of Nevada. The same can be said about gambling and drug possession or use. These are just examples

▲ **Image 1.2** Prostitution is considered a *mala prohibita* offense because it is not inherently evil and is even legal in many jurisdictions around the world.

SOURCE: © istockphoto.com / stevanovicigor

of acts that are criminal only in certain places or at certain times and thus are not agreed upon by most members of a given community.

This book examines both *mala in se* and *mala prohibita* types of offenses, as well as other acts of **deviance**, which are not against the law in many places but are statistically atypical and may be considered more immoral than illegal. For example, in Nevada in the 1990s, a young man watched his friend (who was later criminally prosecuted) kill a young girl in the bathroom at a casino, but he told no one. Although most people would claim that this was highly immoral, at that time, the Nevada state laws did not require people who witnessed a killing to report it to authorities. (Note: As a result of this event, Nevada made withholding such information a criminal act.) Therefore, this act was deviant because most people would find it immoral, but it was not criminal because it was not technically against the laws in the jurisdiction at that time.

Other acts of deviance are not necessarily immoral but are certainly statistically unusual and violate social norms, such as purposely "passing gas" at a formal dinner. Such activities are relevant for our discussion, even if they are not defined as criminal by the law, because they show a disposition toward antisocial behavior, which is often found in individuals who are likely to become criminal offenders. Furthermore, some acts are moving from deviant to illegal all the time, such as using cell phones while driving or smoking cigarettes in public; many jurisdictions are moving to have these behaviors made illegal and have been quite successful to date, especially in New York and California.

Most *mala in se* activities (e.g., murder) are highly deviant, too, meaning they are not typically found in society, but many, if not most, *mala prohibita* acts are not deviant because they are committed by most people at some point. Speeding on a highway is a good example of a *mala prohibita* act that is illegal but not deviant. This book will examine theories for all of these types of activities, even those that do not violate the law in a given jurisdiction at the present time.

---

[5]Brown, Esbensen, and *Geis, Criminology*.

[6]Ibid.

How Are Criminological Theories Classified? The Major Theoretical Paradigms

Scientific theories of crime can be categorized based on several important concepts, assumptions, and characteristics. To begin, most criminological theories are classified by the paradigm they emphasize. **Paradigms** are distinctive theoretical models or perspectives; in the case of crime, they vary based largely on opposing assumptions of human behavior. There are four major paradigms.[7]

The first of these, deterrence or rational choice theories, commonly referred to as the **Classical School** perspective, will be discussed at length later in this book. It assumes that individuals have free will and choose to commit crimes based on rational, hedonistic decisions; they weigh out the potential costs and benefits of offending and then choose what will maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. The distinguishing characteristic of these theories is that they emphasize the free choice individuals have in committing crime. The other paradigms are based on the influence of factors other than free will or rational decision making—for example, biology, culture, parenting, and economics.

Another category of theories is positivism, which is somewhat the opposite of rational choice theories. These theories argue that individuals do not have free will or rationality in making decisions to commit crime. Rather, the **Positive School** perspective assumes that individuals are passive subjects of determinism, which means that people do not freely choose their behavior. Instead, their behavior is determined by factors outside of their free will, such as genetics, IQ, education, employment, peer influences, parenting, and economics.[8] Most of the highly respected and scientifically validated criminological theories of the modern era fall into this category.[9]

Another group of criminological theories belongs to the conflict or critical perspective, which emphasizes the use of law as a reaction or tool to enforce restraint on others by those in power or authority; it also involves how society reacts when a person (often a juvenile) is caught doing something wrong. These theories emphasize group behavior over individual behavior: Groups that are in power use the criminal codes as a tool in keeping people who have limited power restrained or confined.

Finally, over the past few decades, a new category has emerged, namely the integrated theoretical models, which attempt to combine the best aspects of explanatory models into a single, better theoretical framework for understanding crime. These models tend to suffer from the logical inconsistencies inherent in integrating theoretical models that have opposing assumptions or propositions. All of these categories will become clearer as we progress through this book.

Additional Ways to Classify Criminological Theories

Although the major paradigms are the primary way criminological theories are classified, there are several other ways that they can be categorized. Specifically, theoretical models can be classified based on whether they focus on individuals or groups as their primary units of examination. For instance, some theories emphasize why certain individuals do or do not commit crime. This level of investigation, in which the focus is on the individual, is often referred to as the **micro level of analysis**, much as microeconomics is the study of economics on the individual (person) level. When your instructors score each student on an exam, this is a micro-level analysis.

On the other hand, many theories emphasize primarily the group or **macro level of analysis**, much as macroeconomics is the study of economic principles at the aggregate or group level. In this book, some sections are

---

[7]Thomas J. Bernard, Jeffrey B. Snipes, and Alexander L. Gerould, *Vold's Theoretical Criminology*, 6th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[8]Ibid.

[9]Lee Ellis and Anthony Walsh, "Criminologists' Opinions about Causes and Theories of Crime and Delinquency," *The Criminologist* 24 (1999): 1–4.

separated by whether the individual or the group level of analysis is emphasized. For example, social process theories tend to be more micro-level oriented, whereas social structure theories are more macro-level oriented. Here's a good example: If instructors compare the mean score (or average) of one class to the mean score of another, this is a comparison of group rates, regardless of the performance of any individual in either class. Ultimately, a great theory would explain both the micro and macro levels of analysis, but we will see that very few attempt to explain or account for both levels.

Criminological theories can also be classified by their general perspective on how laws are made. Some theories assume that laws are made to define acts as criminal to the extent that they violate rights of individuals, and thus, virtually everyone agrees that such acts are immoral. This type of perspective is considered a **consensual perspective** (or nonconflict model). On the other hand, many modern forms of criminological theories fall into an opposite category, commonly known as the **conflict theories**, which assume that different groups disagree about the fairness of laws and that laws are used as a tool by those in power to keep down other, lower-power groups. There are many forms of both consensual and conflict theoretical models, and both will be specifically noted as we progress through the book.

A final, but perhaps most important, way to classify theories is in terms of their assumptions regarding human nature. Some theories assume that people are born good (giving, benevolent, etc.) and are corrupted by social or other developmental influences that lead them to crime. A good example is strain theory, which claims that people are born innocent and with good intentions but that society causes them to commit crime. On the other hand, many of the most popular current theories claim that virtually all individuals are born with a disposition toward being bad (selfish, greedy, etc.) and must be socialized or restrained from following their inherent propensities for engaging in crime.[10] A good example of this is control theory, which assumes that all individuals have a predisposition to be greedy, selfish, violent, and so on (i.e., they are criminally disposed) and therefore that people need to be controlled or prevented from acting on their natural, inherent disposition toward selfish and aggressive behaviors.

A variation of these theories is often referred to as *tabula rasa*, literally translated as blank slate. This assumes that people are born with no leaning toward good or bad but are simply influenced by the balance of positive or negative influences that are introduced socially during their development. A good example of this perspective is differential association or reinforcement theory, which assumes that all individuals are born with a blank slate and that they learn whether to be good or bad based on what they experience.

Although the dominant assumption tends to vary across these three models from time to time, the most popular theories today (which are self- and social-control theories) seem to imply the second option, specifically that people are born selfish and greedy and must be socialized and trained to be good and conforming.[11] There are other ways that criminological theories can be classified, but the various characteristics we have discussed in this section summarize the most important factors.

Characteristics of Good Theories

Respected scientific theories in any field, whether it be chemistry, physics, or criminology, tend to have the same characteristics. After all, the same scientific review process (i.e., blind peer review by experts) is used in all sciences to determine which studies and theoretical works are of high quality. The criteria that characterize a good theory in chemistry are the same as those used to judge a criminological theory. Such characteristics include parsimony,

---

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid.

scope, logical consistency, testability, empirical validity, and policy implications.[12] Each of these characteristics is examined here. (It should be noted that our discussion and many of the examples provided for the characteristics are taken from Akers and Sellers, 2012.[13])

Parsimony is achieved by explaining a given phenomenon—in our case criminal activity—in the simplest way possible. Other characteristics being equal, the simpler a theory, the better. The problem with criminal behavior is that it is highly complex. However, that has not stopped some criminologists from attempting to explain this convoluted phenomenon in highly simple ways. For example, one of the most recent and most popular theories (as indicated by the amount of related research and by which theories the experts believe are most important) is the theory of low self-control (which we discuss later in this book). This very simple model holds that one personality factor—low self-control—is responsible for all criminal activity. The originators of this theory, Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, asserted that every single act of crime and deviance is caused by this same factor: low self-control.[14] Everything from speeding, smoking tobacco, not wearing a seat belt while driving, and having numerous sex partners to committing serious crimes such as murder and armed robbery are caused by low self-control.

Although this theory has been disputed by much of the subsequent research on this model, it remains one of the most popular and accepted models of the modern era.[15] Furthermore, despite the criticisms of this theory, many notable criminologists still believe that this is the best single model of offending that has been presented to date. In addition, there is little doubt that this model has become the most researched theoretical model over the last two decades.[16]

Perhaps the most important reason why so much attention has been given to this theory is its simplicity, putting all of the focus on a single factor. Virtually all other theoretical models have proposed multiple factors that may play major parts in determining why individuals commit crime. After all, how can low self-control explain white-collar crime? Some self-control is required to obtain a white-collar position of employment. It is true that a simple theory is better than a more complex one, as long as other characteristics are equivalent. However, given a complex behavior like criminal behavior, it is unlikely that a simple explanation, such as naming one factor to account for everything, will prove adequate.

Scope, the next characteristic of a theory, indicates how much of a given phenomenon the theory seeks to explain. This is somewhat related to parsimony in the sense that some theories, like the theory of low self-control, seek to explain all crimes and all deviant acts as well. Thus, the theory of low self-control has a very wide scope. Other theories of crime, such as some versions of strain theory, may seek to explain only property crime or drug use. However, the wider the scope of what a theory can explain, the better the theory, assuming other characteristics are equal.

Logical consistency is the extent to which a theory makes sense in terms of its concepts and propositions. It is easier to show what we mean by logical consistency if we give examples of what does not fit this criterion. Some theories simply don't make sense because of the face value of their propositions. For example, Cesare Lombroso, called the father of criminology, claimed that the most serious offenders are "born criminals," biological throwbacks to an earlier stage of evolutionary development who can be identified by their physical features.[17] Lombroso, who is discussed at more length later in this book, claimed that tattoos were one of the physical features that identified these born criminals. This doesn't make sense, however, because tattoos are not biological physical features—no

---

[12]Ronald Akers and Christine Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, 6th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[13]Ibid., 4–19.

[14]Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, *A General Theory of Crime* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

[15]Ellis and Walsh, "Criminologists' Opinions," 3–4.

[16]Anthony Walsh and Lee Ellis, "Political Ideology and American Criminologists' Explanations for Criminal Behavior," *The Criminologist* 24 (1999): 1, 14.

[17]Cesare Lombroso, *The Criminal Man* (Milan: Hoepli, 1876).

baby has ever been born with a tattoo. This criticism will make even more sense when we discuss the criteria for determining causality later in this section.

Another prominent example of theories that lack logical consistency is the work of early feminist theorists, such as Freda Adler, who argued that, as females gain educational and employment opportunities, their rates of crime will be more likely to converge with those of males.[18] Such hypotheses were logically inconsistent with the data available at the time they were presented and are even more inconsistent with the data available today; the facts show that females who are given the most opportunities commit the fewest crimes, while females who have not been given these benefits commit the most crimes.

These are just two examples of how past theories were logically inconsistent with the data available at the time they were created, not to mention inconsistent with future research findings, which have completely dismissed their hypotheses.

Testability is the extent to which a theory can be put to empirical, scientific testing. Some theories simply cannot be tested. A good example is Sigmund Freud's theory of the psyche. Freud described three domains of the psyche—the conscious ego, the subconscious id, and the superego—but none of these domains can be observed or tested.[19] Although some theories can be quite influential without being testable (as was Freud's theory), other things being equal, it is a considerable disadvantage for a theoretical model to be untestable and unobservable. Fortunately, most established criminological theories can be examined through empirical testing.

Empirical validity is the extent to which a theoretical model is supported by scientific research. Obviously, this is highly related to the previous characteristic of testability. However, while virtually all accepted modern criminological theories are testable, that does not mean they are equal in terms of empirical validity. Although some integrated models (meaning two or more traditional theories that have been merged together; these will be examined later in this book) have gained a large amount of empirical validity, these models "cheat" because they merge the best of two or more models, even when the assumptions of these models are not compatible. The independent theoretical model that has garnered the most empirical validity is differential reinforcement theory, which has been strongly supported for various crime types (from tobacco usage to violence) among a wide variety of populations (from young children to elderly subjects).[20]

Ultimately, empirical validity is perhaps one of the most important characteristics used in determining how good a theory is at explaining a given phenomenon or behavior. If a theory has good empirical validity, it is an accurate explanation of behavior; if it does not have good empirical validity, it should be revised or dismissed because it is simply not true.

Policy implications refer to the extent to which a theory can create realistic and useful guidance for changing the way society deals with a given phenomenon. In our case, this means providing a useful model for informing authorities of how to deal with crime. An example is the broken windows theory, which says that to reduce serious crimes, authorities should focus on the minor incivilities that occur in a given area. This theory has been used successfully by many police agencies (most notably by New York City police, who reduced their homicide rate by more than 75% in the past decade). Other theories may not be as useful in terms of reducing crime because they are

---

[18]Freda Adler, *Sisters in Crime* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

[19]See Stephen G. Tibbetts, *Criminological Theory: The Essentials* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2015), 8.

[20]See Ronald Akers and Gang Lee, "A Longitudinal Test of Social Learning Theory: Adolescent Smoking," *Journal of Drug Issues* 26 (1996): 317–43; Ronald Akers and Gang Lee, "Age, Social Learning, and Social Bonding in Adolescent Substance Abuse," *Deviant Behavior* 19 (1999): 1–25; Ronald Akers and Anthony J. La Greca, "Alcohol Use among the Elderly: Social Learning, Community Context, and Life Events," in *Society, Culture, and Drinking Patterns Re-examined*, ed. David J. Pittman and Helene Raskin White (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies, 1991), 242–62; Sunghyun Hwang, *Substance Use in a Sample of South Korean Adolescents: A Test of Alternative Theories* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 2000); and Sunghyun Hwang and Ronald Akers, "Adolescent Substance Use in South Korea: A Cross-Cultural Test of Three Theories," in *Social Learning Theory and the Explanation of Crime: A Guide for the New Century*, ed. Ronald Akers and Gary F. Jensen (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003).

too abstract or propose changes that are far too costly or impossible to implement, such as theories that emphasize changing family structure or the chromosomal makeup of individuals. So, other things being equal, a theory that has readily available policy implications would be more advantageous than theories that do not.

Criteria for Determining Causality

There are several criteria for determining whether a certain variable causes another variable to change—in other words, causality. For this discussion, we will be using standard scientific notation to designate an independent or predictor variable (X) that results in a dependent or explanatory variable (Y). Such criteria are used for all scientific disciplines, whether chemistry, physics, biology, or criminology. In this book, we are discussing crime, so we will concentrate on examples that relate to this goal, but some examples will be given that are not crime related. Unfortunately, we will also see that, given the nature of our field, there are important problems with determining causality, largely because we are dealing with human beings as opposed to a chemical element or biological molecule.

The three criteria that are needed to show causality are (1) temporal ordering; (2) correlation, or covariation; and (3) accounting for spuriousness.

Temporal ordering requires that the predictor variable (X) precede the explanatory variable (Y) if we are to determine that X causes Y. Although this seems like a no-brainer, it is sometimes violated in criminological theories. For example, you'll remember that Lombroso claimed born criminals could be identified by tattoos, which obviously goes against this principle.

A more recent scientific debate has focused on whether delinquency is an outcome variable (Y) due to associations with delinquent peers and associates (X) or whether delinquency (X) causes associations with delinquent peers and associates (Y), which then leads to even more delinquency. This can be seen as the argument of which came first, the chicken or the egg. Studies show that both processes are often taking place, meaning that delinquency and associations with delinquent peers are likely to be both predictor and explanatory variables in most cases, and this forms a reciprocal or feedback loop that encourages both causal paths.[21] Thus, temporal ordering is an important question, and often it is quite complex and must be examined fully before causal order can be understood.

Correlation, or **covariation**, is the extent to which a change in the predictor (X) is associated with a change (either higher or lower) in the explanatory variable (Y). In other words, a change in X leads to a change in Y. For example, a rise in unemployment (X) in a given location is likely to lead to a rise in crime rates (Y) in the same area; this would be a positive association because both

▲ **Image 1.3**   Early theories identified criminals by whether they had tattoos; at that time, this might have been true. In contemporary times, many individuals have tattoos, so this would not apply.

[21] Terence Thornberry, "Toward an Interactional Theory of Delinquency," *Criminology* 25 (1987): 863–87.

increased. Similarly, an increase in employment (X) is likely to lead to a decrease in crime rates (Y) in that area; this would be a negative, or inverse, association, because one decreased and the other increased. The criterion of covariance is not met when a change in X does not produce any change in Y. That is, if a statistically significant change in X does not lead to a statistically significant change in Y, then this criterion is not met.

However, correlation alone does not mean that X causes Y. For example, if ice cream sales (X) tend to be highly associated with crime rates (Y), this does not mean that ice cream sales cause higher crime rates. Rather, other factors—in this case, warm weather—lead to increases in both sales of ice cream and the number of people who are outdoors in public areas and interacting, which naturally leads to greater opportunities and tendencies to engage in criminal activity. This brings us to the final criterion for determining causality.

Accounting for **spuriousness** is a complicated way of saying that, to determine that X causes Y, other factors (typically called Z factors) that could be causing the observed association must be accounted for before we can be sure that it is actually X that is causing Y. In other words, it is often a third factor (Z) that causes two events to occur together in time and place. A good example of a spurious association would be the observation that a greater number of firefighters at the scene of a fire is correlated with more damage. If only the first two criteria of causality were followed, this would lead to the conclusion that an increased number of fire officers (X) causes the heavier fire damage (Y). This conclusion meets the temporal ordering and covariance criteria. However, a third Z variable or factor is causing both X and Y to appear together. This Z variable is the size of the fire, which is causing more officers to show up and also causing more damage. Once this Z factor is accounted for, the effect of X on Y becomes nonexistent.

Using the Lombroso example, tattoos may have predicted criminality at the time he wrote (although criminals weren't born with them). However, Lombroso did not account for an important Z factor—namely, associates or friends who also had tattoos. This Z factor caused the simultaneous occurrence of both other factors. To clarify, individuals who had friends or associates with tattoos tended to get tattoos, and (especially at that time in the 1800s) friends or associates who had tattoos also tended to commit more crime. In that era, pirates and incarcerated individuals were most likely to get tattoos. Therefore, had Lombroso controlled for the number of tattooed associates of the criminals he studied, he likely would have found no causal effect on crime from body art.

Ultimately, researchers in criminology are fairly good at determining the first two criteria of causality: temporal ordering and covariance or correlation. Most scientists can perform classical experiments that randomly assign subjects either to receive or not to receive the experimental manipulation to examine the effect on outcomes. However, the dilemma for criminologists is that the factors that appear to be important (according to police officers, parole agents, and corrections officers) are family variables, personality traits, employment variables, intelligence, and other similar characteristics that cannot be experimentally manipulated to control for possible Z factors. After all, how can we randomly assign certain people or groups to bad parents or bad educations, no jobs, low IQs, bad genetics, or delinquent peers? Even if we could manage such manipulations, ethical constraints would prohibit them.

Thus, as criminologists, we may never be able to meet all the criteria of causality, so we are essentially stuck with building a case for the factors we think are causing crime by amassing as much support as we can in terms of temporal ordering and covariance or correlation, and perhaps accounting for other factors in advanced statistical models. Ultimately, social science, especially criminology, is a difficult field in terms of establishing causality, and we shall see that the empirical validity of various criminological theories is hindered by such issues.

Measures of Crime

Crime can be measured in an infinite number of ways. To some extent, readers have measured crime by observing what has been happening in their own neighborhoods or reading or watching the news every day. However, some

measures of crime go beyond these anecdotal or personal experiences, and these more exacting measures are what criminologists commonly use to gauge rates of crime across time and place.

Specifically, three major categories of crime measures are used by social scientists to examine crime. The first and most used measure is the **Uniform Crime Report (UCR)**. Police send reports about certain crimes and arrests to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which combines the many thousands of reports they receive from across the nation and publishes the UCR annually.

The second measure is the **National Crime Victimization Survey** (**NCVS**; prior to the early 1990s, it was known as the National Crime Survey [NCS]). Like the UCR, this report is issued by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), but the data are collected in an entirely different way. Specifically, interviews are conducted with a large, random sample of U.S. households, asking how much crime they have experienced in half-year intervals. The NCVS is collected by the research branch of the DOJ, called the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in conjunction with the U.S. Census Bureau, which was one of the earliest agencies to collect information about citizens and thus is the most experienced at such endeavors.

The third measure, which is perhaps the most important for purposes of this book, is **self-report data (SRD)**, which are primarily collected by independent academic scientists or think tank agencies, such as the RAND Corporation. Participating in surveys or interviews, individuals report crimes against themselves or crimes they have committed. This measure is the most important for the purposes of this book because the UCR and NCVS do not provide in-depth information on the offenders or the victims, such as personality, biology or physiology, family life, and economic information. These factors are of the utmost importance for our purposes because there is a broad consensus that they cause people to commit crime, yet they are missing from the most commonly used measures of crime. SRD are the best, and in most cases the only, measure for figuring out why some people offend and others do not. However, like the other measures, self-reports have numerous weaknesses as well as strengths.

Each of these three measures is briefly examined here. Although the measures are not the primary emphasis of this book, it is important to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

The Uniform Crime Report

The UCR is the oldest and most used measure of crime rates in the United States for purposes of examining trends and distribution of crime. It was first published in the early 1930s, and although changes have been made along the way, it is relatively stable in terms of comparing various years and decades. As mentioned before, the data are collected by many thousands of independent police agencies at federal, state, and local levels. These thousands of agencies send their reports of crimes and arrests to their respective state capitals, which then forward their synthesized reports to FBI headquarters, where all reports are combined to provide an overview of crime in the nation.

▲ **Image 1.4**   The annual UCRs are produced by the FBI. Local, county, and state criminal justice agencies send their annual crime data to the J. Edgar Hoover Building in Washington, DC. UCR data are, by their nature, incomplete, as many crimes are never reported to the police at all. This dark figure of crime might be as high as 90% of all crime incidents.

SOURCE: © istockphoto.com / mixmotive

FBI definitions of crimes often differ from state categorizations, and how crimes are differentiated will be important in future discussions in this section. The FBI concentrates on eight (four violent and four property) **index offenses**, or Part I offenses. The four violent crimes are murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible (not statutory) rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (which involves intentions of serious injury to the victim). The four property offenses are burglary (which includes a breaking and entering or trespass), motor vehicle theft, larceny (which does not involve a trespass; e.g., shoplifting), and arson (which was added to the crime index count in the late 1970s). All reports to police for these eight offenses are included in the crime index, whether or not they resulted in an arrest. This information is often referred to as crimes known to police (CKP).

The UCR also includes about two dozen other offenses known as **nonindex offenses**, or Part II offenses, which are reported only if an arrest is made. These offenses range from violent crimes (such as simple assault), to embezzlement and fraud, to offenses that are considered violations of the law only if an individual is under 18 years of age (such as running away from home). The major problem with the estimates of these nonindex offenses is that the likelihood of arresting someone for such crimes is less than 10% of the actual occurrence, so the data regarding nonindex offenses are highly inaccurate. The official count from the FBI is missing at least 90% of the actual offenses that take place in the United States. Therefore, we will primarily concentrate on index offenses for the purposes of our discussion.

Even the count of index offenses has numerous problems. The most important and chronic problem with using the UCR as a measure of crime is that, most of the time, victims fail to report crimes—yes, even aggravated assault, forcible rape, robbery, burglary, and larceny. Recent studies estimate that about 70% to 80% of these serious crimes are not reported to police. Criminologists call this missing amount of crime the **dark figure** because it never shows up in the police reports that get sent to the FBI.

There are many reasons why victims do not report these serious crimes to the police. One of the most important is that they consider it a personal matter. Many times, the offense is committed by a family member, a close friend, or an acquaintance. For instance, police are rarely informed about aggravated assaults among siblings. Rape victims are often assaulted on a date or by someone they know; they may feel that they contributed to their attack by choosing to go out with the offender, or they may believe that police won't take such a claim seriously. Regardless of the reason, many crime victims prefer to handle it informally and not involve the police.

Another major reason why police are not called is that victims don't feel the crime is important enough to report. For example, a thief may steal a small item that the victim won't miss, so she or he may not see the need to report what the police or FBI would consider a serious crime. This is likely related to another major reason why people do not report crime to the police: They have no confidence that reporting the case to law enforcement will do any good. Many people, often residents of neighborhoods that are the most crime-ridden, are likely to feel that the police are not competent or will not seriously investigate their charges.

There are many other reasons why people do not report their victimizations to police. Some may fear retaliation, for example, in cases involving gang activity; many cities, especially those with many gangs, have seen this occur even more in recent years. The victims may also fail to report a crime for fear that their own illegal activities will be exposed; an example is a prostitute who has been brutally beaten by her pimp. In U.S. society, much crime is committed against businesses, but those businesses may be very reluctant to report crimes because they don't want a reputation for being a hot spot for criminal activity. Sometimes when victims do call the police or 911, they leave the scene if the police fail to show up in a reasonable amount of time. This has become a chronic problem despite efforts by police departments to prioritize calls.

Perhaps the most chronic, most important reason for failure to report crimes—but one that is often ignored—can be traced to U.S. school systems. Most studies of crime and victimization in schools show that many and maybe even most juvenile crimes occur in schools, but these offenses almost never get reported to police, even when school resource officers (SROs) are assigned to the school. Schools—and especially private schools—have a vested interest in not reporting crimes that occur on their premises to the police. After all, no school (or school system) wants to become known as crime-ridden.

Schools are predisposed to being crime-ridden because the most likely offenders and the most likely victims—young people—interact there in close quarters for most of the day. The school is much happier, however, if teachers and administrators deal informally with the parties involved in an on-campus fight; the school doesn't want these activities reported to and by the media. In addition, the student parties involved in the fight don't want to be formally arrested and charged with the offense, so they are also happy with the case being handled informally. Finally, the parents of the students are also generally pleased with the informal process because they don't want their children involved in a formal legal case.

Even universities and colleges follow this model of not reporting crimes when they occur on campus. A good example can be seen on the websites of most major colleges, which are required by federal law to report crimes on campus. Official reports of crimes, ranging from rapes to liquor law violations, are often in the single digits each year for campuses housing many thousands of students. Of course, some crimes may not be reported to the school, and others may be dealt with administratively rather than by calling police. The absence of school data is a big weakness of the UCR.

Besides the dark figure, there are many other criticisms of the UCR as a measure of crime. For example, the way that crimes are counted can be misleading. Specifically, the UCR counts only the most serious crime that is committed in a given incident. For example, if a person or persons rob, rape, and murder a victim, only the murder will show up in the UCR; the robbery and rape will not be recorded. Furthermore, there are inconsistencies in how the UCR counts the incidents; for example, if a person walks into a bar and assaults eight people there, it is counted as eight assaults, but if the same person walks into the bar and robs every person of wallets and purses, it is counted as one robbery. This makes little sense, but it is the official count policy used by the UCR.

Other, more important criticisms of the UCR involve political considerations, such as the fact that many police departments (such as in Philadelphia and New York City) have systematically altered the way that crimes are defined, for example, by manipulating the way that classifications and counts of crimes are recorded (e.g., aggravated assault [an index crime] vs. simple assault [a nonindex crime]). Thus, official estimates can make it seem as if major crimes have decreased in the city when in fact they may have actually increased.

It is also important to note the strengths of the UCR. First, it was introduced in 1930, making it the longest-lasting systematic measure of crime in the United States. This is a very important advantage when we want to examine trends in crime over most of the 20th century. We will see later that there have been extremely high crime rates at certain times (such as during the 1930s and the 1970s to 1980) and very low crime rates at other times (such as the early 1940s and recent years [late 1990s to the present]). Other measures, such as the NCVS and national SRD, did not come into use until much later, so the UCR is important for the fact that it started so early.

Another important strength of this measure is that two of the offenses that the UCR concentrates on are almost always reported and therefore overcome the weakness of the dark figure, or lack of reporting to police. These two offenses are murder or nonnegligent manslaughter and motor vehicle theft. Murder is almost always reported because a dead body is found; very few murders go unreported to authorities. Although a few may elude official recording—for example, if the body is transported elsewhere or carefully hidden—almost all murders are recorded. Similarly, motor vehicle thefts, a property crime, are almost always reported because any insurance claims must provide a police report. Most cars are worth thousands (or at least many hundreds) of dollars, so victims tend to report when their vehicle(s) have been stolen; this provides a rather valid estimate of property crime in specific areas. The rest of the offenses (yes, even the other index crimes) counted by the UCR are far less reliable. If someone is doing a study on homicide or motor vehicle theft, the UCR is likely the best source of data, but for any other crime, researchers should probably look elsewhere.

This is even further advised for studies examining nonindex offenses, which the UCR counts only when someone is arrested for a given offense. The vast majority of nonindex offenses do not result in an arrest. To shed some light on how much actual nonindex crime is not reported to police, it is useful to examine the **clearance rate** of the index offenses in the UCR, our best indicator of solving crimes. Even for the crimes that the FBI considers most

serious, the clearance rate is about 21% of crimes reported to police ("reported to police" meaning that police made a report of the crime). Of course, the more violent offenses have higher clearance rates because (outside of murder) they inherently have a witness, namely the victim, and because police place a higher priority on solving violent crimes. However, for some of the index crimes, especially serious property offenses, the clearance rates are very low. Furthermore, it should be noted that the clearance rate of serious index crimes has not improved at all over the past few decades despite much more advanced resources and technology, such as DNA testing, fingerprints, and faster cars. These data on the clearance rates are only for the most serious, or index, crimes; thus, the reporting of the UCR regarding nonindex crimes is even more inaccurate because there is even less reporting (i.e., the dark figure) and less clearance of these less serious offenses. In other words, the data provided by the UCR regarding nonindex offenses are totally invalid and thus for the most part completely worthless.

Ultimately, the UCR is good for (a) measuring the overall crime rate in the United States over time, (b) examining what crime was like prior to the 1970s, and (c) investigating murder and motor vehicle theft. Outside of these offenses, the UCR has serious problems, and fortunately, we have better measures for examining crime rates in the United States.

The National Crime Victimization Survey

Another commonly used measure of crime is the NCVS (the NCS until the early 1990s), which is distinguished from other key measures of crime because it concentrates on the victims of crime, whereas other measures tend to emphasize the offenders. In fact, that is the key reason why this measure was started in 1973 after several years of preparation and pretesting. To clarify, one of the key recommendations of Lyndon Johnson's President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in the late 1960s was to learn more about the characteristics of victims of crime; at that time, virtually no studies had been done on the subject, whereas much research had been done on criminal offenders. The efforts of this commission set into motion the creation of the NCVS.

Since it began, the NCVS has been designed and collected by two agencies: the U.S. Census Bureau and the BJS, which is one of the key research branches of the DOJ. The NCVS is collected in a completely different way from the other commonly used measures of crimes; the researchers select tens of thousands of U.S. households, and each member of the household who is over 12 years of age is interviewed every 6 months about crime that occurred in the previous 6-month period (each selected household remains in the survey for 3 years, resulting in seven collection periods, including the initial interview). Although the selection of households is to some extent random, the way the sampling is designed guarantees that a certain proportion of the selected households have certain characteristics. For example, before the households are selected, they are first categorized according to factors such as region of the country, type of area (urban, suburban, rural), income level, and racial or ethnic composition. This type of sampling, called a multistage, stratified cluster sampling design, ensures that enough households are included in the survey to permit conclusions regarding these important characteristics. As you will see later in this section, some of the most victimized groups (by rate) in the United States do not make up a large portion of the population or households. So, if the sampling design were not set up to select a certain number of people from certain groups, it is quite likely the researchers would not obtain enough cases to draw conclusions about them.

The data gathered from this sample are then adjusted, and statistical estimates are made about crime across the United States, with the NCVS estimates showing about 3 times more crime than the UCR rates. Some may doubt the ability of this selected sample to represent crime in the nation, but most studies find that its estimates are far more accurate than those provided by the UCR (with the exception of homicide and maybe motor vehicle theft). This is largely due to the expertise and professionalism of the agencies that collect and analyze the data, as well as the carefully thought out and well-administered survey design, as indicated by interview completion rates (which are typically more than 90% higher than those of virtually all other crime and victimization surveys).

One of the biggest strengths of the NCVS is that it directly addresses the worst problem with the previously discussed measure, the UCR. Specifically, the greatest weakness of the UCR is the dark figure, or the crimes that victims fail to report, which happens most of the time (except in cases of homicide or motor vehicle theft). The NCVS interviews victims about crimes that happened to them, even those that were not reported to police. Thus, the NCVS captures far more crime events than the UCR, especially crimes that are highly personal (such as rape). The extent to which the NCVS captures much of this dark figure of crime is its greatest strength.

Despite this important strength, the NCVS, like the other measures of crime, has numerous weaknesses. Probably the biggest problem is that two of the most victimized groups in U.S. society are systematically not included in the NCVS. Specifically, homeless people are completely left out because they do not have a home and the participants are contacted through households, yet they remain one of the most victimized groups per capita in our society. Another highly victimized group in our society that is systematically not included in the NCVS is young children. Studies consistently show that the younger a person is, the more likely she or he is to be victimized. Infants in particular, especially in their first hours or days of life, face great risk of death and other sorts of victimization, typically from parents or caregivers. This is not very surprising, especially in light of the fact that very young children cannot defend themselves or run away. They can't even tell anyone until they are old enough to speak, and then most are too afraid to do so or are not given an opportunity. Although, to some extent, it is understandable to exempt young children from such sensitive questions, the loss of this group is huge in terms of estimating victimization in the United States.

The NCVS also misses the crimes suffered by American businesses, which cumulatively constitute an enormous amount of crime. In the early years of the NCVS, businesses were also sampled, but that practice was discontinued in the late 1970s. Had it continued, it would have provided invaluable information for social scientists and policy makers, not to mention the businesses that are losing billions of dollars each year as a result of crimes committed against them.

Many find it surprising that the NCVS does not collect data on homicide, which most people and agencies consider the most serious and important crime. Researchers studying murder cannot get information from the NCVS but must rely on the UCR, which is most accurate in its reporting for this crime type.

The NCVS also has issues with people accurately reporting the victimization that has occurred to them in the previous 6 months. However, studies show that their reports are surprisingly accurate most of the time. Often when participants report incidents inaccurately, they make unknowing mistakes rather than intentionally lying. Obviously, victims sometimes forget incidents that have occurred, probably because, most of the time, they know or are related to the person committing the offense against them, so they never think of it as a crime per se but rather as a personal disagreement. When asked if they were victims of theft, they may not think to report the time that a brother or uncle borrowed a tool without asking and never returned it.

Although NCVS researchers go to great lengths to prevent it, a common phenomenon known as **telescoping** tends to occur, which leads to overreporting of incidents. Telescoping is the human tendency to perceive events as having occurred more recently than they actually did. This is one of the key reasons why NCVS researchers interview household subjects every 6 months, but telescoping still happens. For instance, a larceny may have occurred 8 months ago, but it seems as if it happened just a few months ago to the participant, so it is reported to the researchers as occurring in the past 6 months when it really didn't. Telescoping thus inflates national crime rate estimates for a given interval.

As mentioned before, an additional weakness is that the NCVS did not start until 1973, so it cannot provide any estimates of victimization prior to that time. A study of national crime rates prior to the 1970s has little choice but to use the UCR. Still, for most crimes, the NCVS has provided a more accurate estimate over the past three decades. Since the NCVS was created, the crime trends it has revealed have tended to be highly consistent with those shown by the UCR. For example, both measures show violent crime rates peaking at the same time (about 1980), and both agree on when the rates increased (the 1970s) and decreased (the late 1990s to the present) most. This is very good,

because if they did not agree, that would mean at least one of them was wrong. Before we discuss the national trends in crime rates, however, we will examine the strengths and weaknesses of a third measure of crime.

Self-Report Studies of Crime

The final measure of crime consists of various self-report studies of crime, in which individuals report (in either a written survey or an interview) the extent of their own past criminal offending or victimization and other information. There is no one systematic study providing a yearly estimate of crime in the United States; rather, self-report studies tend to be conducted by independent researchers or institutes. Even when they do involve a national sample (such as the National Youth Survey [NYS]), they almost never use such data to make estimates of the extent of crime or victimization across the nation.

This lack of a long-term, systematic study that can be used to estimate national crime rates may be the greatest weakness of self-report studies; however, this very weakness—not having a universal consistency in collection—is also its greatest strength. To clarify, researchers can develop their questionnaires to best fit the exact purposes of their study. For example, if researchers are doing a study on the relationship between a given personality trait (e.g., narcissism) and criminal offending, they can simply give participants a questionnaire that contains a narcissism scale and items that ask about past criminal behavior. Of course, these scales and items must be checked for their reliability and validity, but this is a relatively easy way to directly measure and test the hypotheses the researcher is most concerned about.

Some question the accuracy of SRD because they believe participants typically lie, but most studies have concluded that participants generally tell the truth. Specifically, researchers have compared self-reported offenses to lie detector machine results, readministered the same survey to the same individuals to see if they answer the same way each time (called test–retest reliability), and cross-checked self-reported arrests with police arrest data. All of these methods have shown that most people tend to be quite truthful when answering surveys.[22]

The most important aspect of self-report surveys is that they are the only available source of data for determining the social and psychological reasons people commit crime. The UCR and NCVS have virtually no data on the personality, family life, biological development, or other characteristics of criminal offenders, which are generally considered key factors in the development of criminality. Therefore, although we examine the findings of all three measures in the next section, the vast majority of the content we cover in this book will be based on findings from self-report studies.

What Do the Measures of Crime Show regarding the Distribution of Crime?

It is important to examine the most aggregated trends of crime, namely the ups and downs of overall crime rates in the United States across different decades. We will start with crime in the early 1900s—largely because the best data started being collected during this era and also because the 20th century (especially the most recent decades) is most relevant to our understanding of the reasons for our current crime rates. However, most experts believe that the U.S. crime rate, whether in terms of violence or property offending, used to be far higher prior to the 20th century; historians have arrived at this conclusion based on sporadic, poorly recorded documentation from the 18th and 19th centuries. By virtually all accounts, crime per capita (especially homicide) was far higher in the 1700s and 1800s than at any point after 1900, which is likely due to many factors but perhaps most importantly because formal agencies of justice, such as police and corrections (i.e., prisons, parole), did not exist in most of the United States until the middle or end of the 1800s. Up to that time, it was up to individual communities or vigilantes to deal with offenders.

---

[22]Michael Hindelang, Travis Hirschi, and J. Weis, *Measuring Delinquency* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981).

▲ **Image 1.5** Group portrait of a police department liquor squad posing with cases of confiscated alcohol and distilling equipment during Prohibition.

SOURCE: © Getty Images / Archive Photos / Archive Photos

Therefore, there was little ability to investigate or apprehend criminals and no means to imprison them. But, as industrialization increased, the need to establish formal police agencies and correctional facilities evolved as a way to deal with people who offended in modern cities. By 1900, most existing states had formed police and prison systems, which is where our discussion will begin. See Figure 1.1.

The level of crime in the United States, particularly homicide, was relatively low at the beginning of the 20th century, perhaps because of the formal justice agencies that had been created during the 19th century. For example, the first metropolitan U.S. police departments were formed in Boston and then New York during the 1830s; in the same decade but a bit earlier, the first state police department, the Texas Rangers, had been established, and the U.S. Marshals Service had

---

Figure 1.1 • Homicide rates in the United States

The U.S. Murder Rate (per 100,000 people)
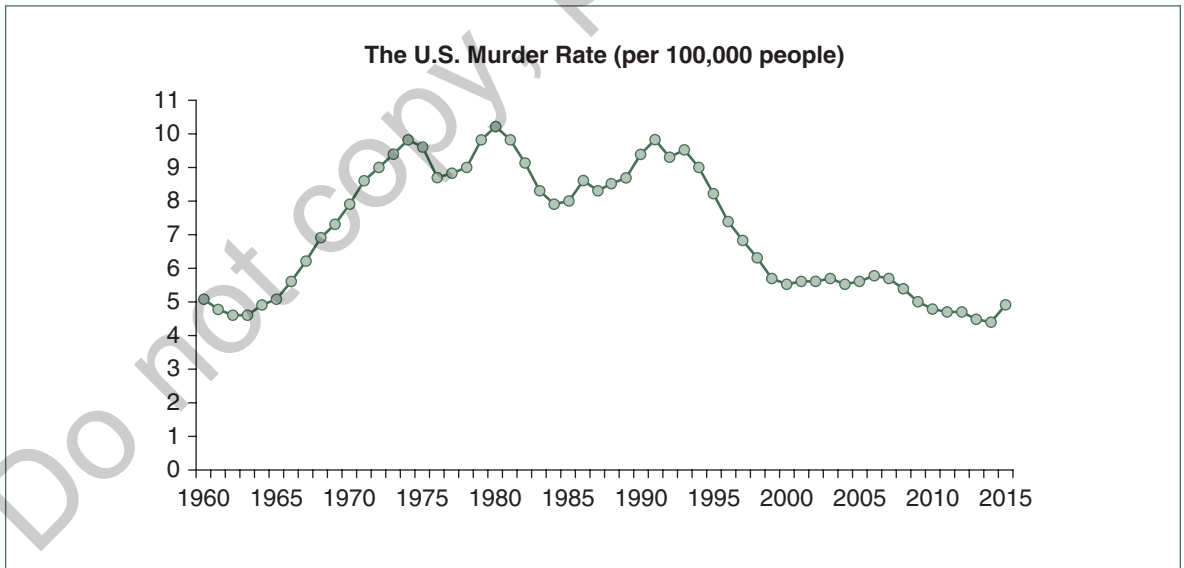
NOTE: The 2001 rate includes deaths attributed to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

SOURCE: FBI.

been founded still earlier. Although prisons started in the late 1790s, they did not begin to resemble their modern form or proliferate rapidly until the mid-1800s. The first juvenile court was formed in the Chicago area in 1899. The development of these formal law enforcement and justice agencies may have contributed to the low levels of crime and homicide in the very early 1900s. (Note: Our discussion of the crime rate in the early 1900s will primarily deal with homicide, because murder records constitute the only valid records of crime from that time; the UCR did not start until the 1930s. Most people consider homicide the most serious crime, and its frequency typically reflects the overall crime rate.)

The effects of the creation of these formal agencies did not persist long into the 20th century. Looking at the level of homicides that occurred in the United States, it is obvious that large increases took place between 1910 and 1920, likely because of extremely high increases in industrialization as the U.S. economy moved from an agricultural to an industrial emphasis. More important, population growth was rapid as a result of urbanization. Whenever high numbers of people move into an area (in this case, cities) and form a far more dense population (think of New York City at that time or Las Vegas in current times), it creates a crime problem. This is likely due to there being more opportunities to commit crimes against others; after all, when people are crammed together, it creates a situation in which there are far more potential offenders in close proximity to far more potential victims. A good modern example of this is high schools, which studies show have higher crime rates than city subways or other crime-ridden areas, largely because they densely pack people together, and in such conditions, opportunities for crime are readily available. Thus, the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the early 1900s is probably the most important reason for the increase in homicide and crime in general in the United States at that time.

The largest increases in U.S. homicide in the early 1900s occurred during the 1920s and early 1930s, with the peak level of homicide coming in the early 1930s. Criminologists and historians have concluded that this huge increase in the homicide rate was primarily due to two factors beyond the industrialization and urbanization that explained the increase prior to the 1920s. First, the U.S. Congress passed a constitutional amendment that banned the distribution and consumption of alcohol beginning in 1920. The period that followed is known as Prohibition. This legal action proved to be a disaster, at least in terms of crime, and Congress later agreed—but not until the 1930s—by passing another amendment to do away with the previous amendment that banned alcohol. For about 14 years, which notably recorded the highest U.S. rates of homicide and crime before 1950, the government attempted to stop people from drinking.

Prior to Prohibition, gangsters had been relatively passive and had not held much power. However, the ban on alcohol gave the black market a lot of potential in terms of monetary profit and reasons for killing off competition. Some of the greatest massacres of rival gangs of organized crime syndicates (e.g., the Italian Mafia) occurred during the Prohibition era. The impact on crime was likely only one of the many problems with Prohibition, but it was a very important and deadly one for our purposes. Once Prohibition ended in the early 1930s, homicide and crime rates decreased significantly, which may have implications for modern drug policies. According to studies, many banned substances today are less violence producing than alcohol, which studies show is the most violence-causing substance. For example, most criminologists believe that the current war on drugs may actually be causing far more crime than it seeks to prevent (even if it may be lowering the number of drug addicts) due to the black market it creates for drugs that are in demand, much like the case with alcohol during Prohibition.

Another major reason why the homicide rate and overall crime levels increased so much during the early 1930s was the Great Depression, which sent the United States into an unprecedented state of economic upheaval. Most historians and criminologists agree that the stock market crash of the late 1920s was a primary contributor to the large numbers of homicides in the early 1930s. We will return to this subject later when we examine the strain theory of crime, which emphasizes economic structure and poverty as the primary causes of crime.

Although the homicide and crime rate experienced a significant drop after Prohibition was eliminated, another reason for this decrease was likely the social policies of the New Deal, which was implemented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Such policies included those that created new jobs for people hit hardest by the Depression through

programs such as Job Corps and the Tennessee Valley Authority, both of which still exist today. Although such programs likely aided economic (and thus crime) recovery in the United States, world events of the early 1940s provided the greatest reasons for the huge decreases that were seen at that time.

The entry of the United States into World War II was probably the biggest contributor to decreasing U.S. crime in the early 20th century. As you will notice, homicides decreased dramatically during the 4 years (1941–1945) that hundreds of thousands of young men (the most likely offenders and victims) were sent overseas to fight on two fronts, Europe and the South Pacific. Anytime a society loses a huge portion of the most common offenders, namely young (teenage to 20s) males, it can expect a drop in crime like the one the United States experienced in the 1940s. However, at the end of 1945, most of these men returned and began making babies, which triggered the greatest increase in babies that U.S. society had ever seen. This generation of babies started what historians call the baby boom, which would have the greatest impact on crime levels that has ever been recorded in U.S. history.

Although crime rates increased after soldiers returned home from overseas in the late 1940s, they did not rise to anywhere near the levels present during Prohibition and the Great Depression. Alcohol was legal, and the economy was doing relatively well after World War II. During the 1950s, the crime level remained relatively low and stable until the early 1960s, when the impact of the baby boom emerged in terms of the crime rate. If a very large share of the population is made up of young people, particularly teenage or early-20s males, the crime rate will almost inevitably go up. This is exactly what occurred in the United States, starting in the early 1960s, and it led to the largest 10-year increase in crime that the country has ever seen.

The Baby Boom Effect

The UCR shows that the greatest single-decade increase in the crime rate occurred between 1965 and 1975. In that time, the overall crime rate more than doubled, an unprecedented increase. Notably, this increase occurred during the War on Poverty, which was set into motion by President Lyndon B. Johnson in a program he termed the Great Society; the crime increase thus turned many people and policy makers against having the government address economic issues to better society. However, the demographic factor that these individuals did not take into account was that this was the era in which most people in society belonged to young age groups, which predisposed the nation to the high crime rates experienced at this time. In contrast, the following generation, called Generation X, which includes those individuals born between 1965 and 1978, had a very low birth rate, which may have contributed to the low crime rates observed in recent years.

The high numbers of young people in society were not the only societal trend going on during the late 1960s and early 1970s that would lead to higher crime rates. For example, a large number of people were being arrested as a result of their participation in the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement, and anti–Vietnam War activities. Perhaps most important, the 1970s showed the highest levels of drug usage and favorable attitudes toward drugs since accurate national studies had first been conducted. Virtually all measures of drug usage peaked during the 1970s or early 1980s.

So, ultimately, many things came together between the mid-1960s and the late 1970s to usher in the greatest increase in the crime rate that the United States has ever seen, culminating in the peak of crime and homicide in 1980. All of our measures agree that crime, especially homicide, reached its highest level about that year. Although other periods, such as the early 1990s, showed similar increases in crime, largely due to juvenile offending, no other period showed higher rates than the 1980 period, most likely due to the coming of age of many baby boomers and their high drug usage.

Crime levels declined somewhat in the early 1980s and then rose again in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the crime and homicide rate never exceeded the 1980 peak. Furthermore, after 1994, the crime rate decreased drastically every year for about a decade, to the point that it dropped as low as it had been in the early 1960s. The U.S. crime rate is currently around where it was about 50 years ago.

There are many reasons for this huge decrease over the past two decades. One of the biggest reasons is that the population has a relatively smaller proportion of young people than it did during the 1960s and 1970s, but obviously there is more to the picture. Drug usage, as well as favorable attitudes toward drugs, has dropped a lot in recent years. Furthermore, the incarceration rate of prisoners is about 400% to 500% of what it was in the early 1970s. Although many experts have claimed that locking up criminals does not reduce crime levels in a society, it is hard to deny that imprisoning 5 times more people will not result in catching many, if not most, of the habitual offenders. It makes sense: By rate, the United States currently locks up more citizens in prison than virtually any other developed country.

Almost all crime tends to be nonrandom. Consistent with this, the crime measures show a number of trends in which crime occurs among certain types of people, in certain places, at certain times, and so on. We turn to an examination of such concentrations of crime, starting with large, macro differences in crime rates across regions of the United States.

Rates of Crime

Regional and City Differences

Crime tends to be higher in certain regions of the country. According to the UCR, the United States is separated into four regions: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. For the past few decades, crime rates (based on crime per capita) have been significantly higher in two of these regions: the South and the West. These two regions consistently have higher rates than the other regions, with one or the other having the highest rates for violence or property offenses or both each year. Some studies have found that, when poverty levels are accounted for, much of the regional difference is explained away. Although this is a very simple conclusion, the studies seem to be consistent in tying regional differences to variations in social factors, notably socioeconomic levels.

Regardless of the region, there seems to be extreme variation from high to low crime rates across states and cities within each of these large regions. For example, crime measures consistently show that certain U.S. states and jurisdictions have consistently high crime rates. The two standouts are Louisiana and the District of Columbia, with the latter having an extremely high rate—typically more than 8 times the national average for homicide. It is quite ironic that arguably the most powerful city in the world has an extremely serious crime problem, certainly one of the worst in our nation.

Another question is why crime rates in states or jurisdictions, or in cities and counties, vary drastically from one region to the next. For instance, Camden, New Jersey, one of the cities in the lower-rate Northeast region according to the UCR, had the highest rate of crime among all U.S. cities in the years 2004 and 2005. Detroit, Michigan, was second worst for both of these years; it used to be number one before Camden outdid it. At the same time, however, New Jersey had some of the safest cities in the nation for these years—2 of the 10 safest cities are in New Jersey, which shows how much crime can vary from place to place, even those in relatively close proximity. Notably, in the most recent estimates from the FBI, the cities of St. Louis and New Orleans exhibited the highest rates of serious violent crimes in 2006 and 2007, respectively. An important factor for New Orleans was the devastation of the city's infrastructure after Hurricane Katrina, which essentially wiped out the city's criminal justice system and resources.

Crime has also been found to cluster within a given city, whether the overall city is relatively low crime or high crime. Virtually every area (whether urban, suburban, or rural) has what are known as **hot spots**, or places that have high levels of crime activity. Such places are often bars or liquor stores or other types of businesses, such as bus stops and depots, convenience stores, shopping malls, motels and hotels, fast-food restaurants, check-cashing businesses, tattoo parlors, or discount stores (such as dollar stores). However, hot spots can also be residential places, such as homes that police are constantly called to for domestic violence or apartment complexes that are crime-ridden—something often seen in subsidized housing areas.

Even the nicest of cities and areas have hot spots, and even the worst cities and areas also tend to have most of their police calls coming from specific addresses or businesses. This is one of the best examples of how crime does not tend to be random. Many police agencies have begun using spatial software on computer systems to analyze where the hot spots in a given city are and to predict where certain crimes are likely to occur in the future. This allows more preventive patrols and proactive strategies in such zones. One criminological theory, routine activities theory, is largely based on explaining why hot spots exist.

Rates of Crime according to Time of Day and Time of Year

Another way that crime is known to cluster is by time of day. This varies greatly depending on the type of group being examined. For example, juvenile delinquency and victimization, especially for violence, tends to peak sharply at 3:00 p.m. on school days (about half of the days of the year for children), which is the time that youths are most likely to lack supervision (i.e., children are let out of school and are often not supervised by adults until they get home). On the other hand, adult crime and victimization, especially for violence, tends to peak much later on, at about 11:00 p.m. on almost all days, which is a sharp contrast to the juvenile peak in midafternoon. These estimates are primarily based on FBI and UCR data.

To some extent, the peak hour for juveniles is misleading; other non-police-based estimates show that just as much crime is going on during school, but schools tend not to report it. As stated previously, this widespread lack of reporting by schools occurs because none of the parties involved wants a formal police report taken. Typically, the youth doesn't want to be arrested; the child's parents don't want their daughter or son to be formally processed by police; and most important, no school wants to become known as a dangerous place. Thus, the police are typically called only in extreme cases—for example, if a student pulls a gun on another student or actually uses a weapon.

This underreporting also occurs in colleges and universities, because such institutions depend largely on tuition for funding, and this goes down if enrollment levels decline. After all, no parents want to send their teenagers to a college that is high in crime. Federal law now requires virtually all colleges to report their crime levels to the public, so there is a lot at stake if police take formal reports on crime events. Thus, most colleges, like K–12 school systems, have an informal process in place so that even violent crimes can often be handled informally.

Crimes tend to peak significantly during the summer. Studies show that criminals tend to be highly opportunistic, meaning that they happen to be going about their normal activities when they see an opportunity to commit a crime, as compared to a more hydraulic model, in which an offender actually goes out looking to commit a crime. Because criminals are like everyone else in most ways, they tend to be out and about more in the summer, so they are more likely to see opportunities at that time. Furthermore, youths are typically out of school during the summer, so they are often bored and not supervised by adults as much as during the traditional school year. Burglary tends to rise 300% during the summer, an increase that may be linked to the fact that people go on vacation and leave their homes vacant for weeks or months at a time. All of these factors come together to produce much higher rates in the summer than in any other season.

A couple of crimes, such as murder and robbery, tend to have a second peak in the winter, which most experts believe is due to high emotions during the holidays, additional social interaction (and often the drinking of alcohol) during the holidays, and an increase in wanting money or goods for gift giving, which would explain robbery increases at that time. These offenses are the exception, however, not the rule. Most offenses, including murder and robbery, tend to have their highest peaks during warmer summer months.

Rates of Crime according to Age and Gender

Age is perhaps the most important way that crime and victimization tend to cluster in certain groups. Almost no individual gets arrested before the age of 10; if one does, it is a huge predictor that the child is likely to become a

habitual, chronic offender. However, between the ages of 10 and 17, the offending rate for all serious street crimes (i.e., FBI index crimes) goes up drastically, peaking at an average age of 17. Then the offending rates begin decreasing significantly, such that by the time people reach the age of 20, the likelihood of being arrested has fallen in half as compared to the midteenage years. This offending level continues to decline throughout life for all of the serious index crimes, although other crimes, such as white-collar crimes, tax evasion, and gambling, are likely to be committed more often at later ages.

The extraordinarily high levels of offending in the teenage years have implications for how we prevent and deal with juvenile delinquency and help explain why we are so bad at preventing habitual offenders from committing so many crimes. We are often good at predicting who the most chronic, serious offenders are by the time they are in their 20s, but that does little good because most offenders have committed most of their crimes before they hit 20 years old.

Another characteristic important in the way crime clusters is gender. In every society, at every time in recorded history, males have committed far more serious street crimes (both violent and property) than females. It appears there is almost no closing of this gap in offending—at least for FBI index crimes. Even in the most recent years, males have been the offenders in 80% to 98% of all serious violent crimes (murder, robbery, aggravated assault, forcible rape) and have made up the vast majority of offenders in property index crimes (burglary, motor vehicle theft, arson, and larceny). The fact that the last offense is committed more frequently by males often surprises people because the most common type of larceny is shoplifting, which people often perceive as being done mostly by women. All studies show that men commit most of the larcenies in the United States. It is important to realize that males in all societies throughout the world commit the vast majority of offenses, and the more violent and serious the crimes are, the more men are represented.

However, there are a few nonindex crimes that females commit as much as, or more than, males. Specifically, in terms of property crimes, embezzlement and fraud are two offenses that females commit at rates comparable to those for men, which likely has to do with enhanced opportunities to commit such crimes. Most of the workforce is now female, which wasn't true in past decades, and many women work in banking and other businesses that tempt employees by having large amounts of money available for embezzling. In terms of public disorder, prostitution arrests tend to be mostly female, which is not too surprising.

The only other offense in which females are well represented is running away from home, which is a status offense (illegal for juveniles only). However, virtually all sources and studies of offending rates (e.g., self-report studies) show that male juveniles run away far more than females, but because of societal norms and values, females get arrested far more than males. Feminist theories of the patriarchal model (in short, men are in charge and dominate or control females) and the chivalry model (females are treated differently because they are seen as more innocent) argue that females are protected as a type of property. This may be important in light of the opposing findings regarding female and male rates of running away versus female and male rates of being arrested for running away. The bottom line is that families are more likely to report missing girls than missing boys and more likely to press law enforcement agencies to pursue girls who have run away than boys who have done so. We will explore explanations for such differences in later sections, particularly in the section in which we cover conflict and feminist theories of crime.

Rates of Crime according to Population Density

Victimization and offending rates are also clustered according to the density of a given area. All sources of crime data show that rates of offending and victimization are far higher per capita in urban areas than in suburban and rural regions. Furthermore, this trend is linear: The more rural an area, the lower the rates for crime and victimization. To clarify, urban areas have, by far, the highest rates for offending, followed by suburban areas; the least amount of crime and victimization is found in rural (e.g., farming) areas. This trend has been shown for many decades and is undisputed. Keep in mind that such rates are based on population in such areas, so this trend holds true even

per capita for citizens in a given region. This is likely due to enhanced opportunities to commit crime in urban and even suburban areas, as well as the fact that rural communities tend to have stronger **informal controls**, such as family, church, and community ties. Studies consistently show that informal controls are far more effective in preventing and solving crimes than are the **formal controls** of justice, which include all official aspects of law enforcement and justice, such as police, courts, and corrections (i.e., prisons, probation, parole).

A good example of the effectiveness of informal sanctions can be seen in the early formation of the U.S. colonies, such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In the early 1600s, crime per capita was at an all-time low in what would become the United States. It may surprise many that police and prisons did not exist then; rather, the low crime rate was due to high levels of informal controls: When people committed crimes, they were banished from the society or were shunned.

As in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, even for what would now be considered a relatively minor offense (adultery), people were forced to wear a large letter (such as an *A* for adultery or a *T* for theft), and they were shunned by all others in their social world. Such punishments were (and still are) highly effective deterrents for offenders, but they work only in communities with high levels of informal controls. Studies have shown that, in such societies, crime tends to be extremely low—in fact, so low that such communities may "invent" serious crimes so that they can have an identifiable group on which to blame societal problems. We saw this occur in the Massachusetts Bay Colony with the creation of a new offense, witchcraft, for which hundreds of people were put on trial and many were executed.

Such issues will be raised again later when we discuss the sociological theories of Émile Durkheim. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that some judges and communities have gone back to public-shaming punishments, such as making people carry signs of their offenses or putting the names of offenders in local newspapers. But the conclusion at this point is that rural communities tend to have far higher informal controls, which keep their crime rates low. On the other hand, urban (especially inner-city) areas tend to have very low levels of informal controls, which lead to few attempts by the community to police itself.

Crime also tends to cluster according to social class, with the lower classes experiencing far more violent offending and victimization. This is now undisputed and consistently shown across all sources of data regarding criminal offending. Interestingly, the characteristics associated with offending tend to be a mirror image of those associated with victimization. To clarify, young, poor urban males tend to have the highest rates of criminal offending—and this group also has the highest rates of victimization as a result of violent offending. This mirror image phenomenon is often referred to as the **equivalency hypothesis**. However, the equivalency hypothesis does not characterize the relationship between social class and property crimes. Specifically, members of middle- to upper-class households tend to experience just as much and often more victimization for property crimes than do lower-class households, but the most likely offenders in most property crimes are from the lower class. This makes sense; offenders will tend to steal from the people and places that have the most property or money to steal. This tendency has been found since criminological data were first collected, even back to the early 1800s, and it is often found in present times, although it is not consistently shown each year (e.g., in NCVS data). Nevertheless, the equivalency hypothesis holds true for violent crimes: Lower-class individuals, especially those who are young, inner-city males, commit more violent crimes, and they are victimized more as a result of such violent crimes.

Rates of Crime according to Race or Ethnicity

Another important way crimes are clustered in U.S. society is by race or ethnicity. In terms of violent crimes, the most victimized group by far in the United States is Native Americans or American Indians. According to NCVS data, Native Americans are victimized at almost twice the rate of any other racial or ethnic group. This is likely due to the extreme levels of poverty, unemployment, and so on that exist on virtually all American Indian reservations.

Although some Indian tribes have recently gained profits from operating gaming casinos on their lands, the vast majority of tribes in most states are not involved in such endeavors, so deprivation and poverty are still the norm.

Although there is little offending data for this group (the UCR does not adequately measure this group in its arrest data), it is generally assumed that Native Americans have the highest rates of offending as well. This is a fairly safe assumption, because research has clearly shown that the vast majority of criminal offending and victimization are **intraracial**. This means that crime tends to occur within a race or ethnicity (e.g., Whites offending against Whites) as opposed to being **interracial** or across races or ethnicities (e.g., Whites offending against Blacks).

Another major group that experiences an extremely high rate of victimization, particularly for homicide, is Blacks. (The term *Black* is used here, as opposed to *African American*, because this is what most measures [e.g., the UCR and NCVS] use and because many African Americans are not Black [e.g., many citizens from Egypt or South Africa]). According to UCR data for homicide, which the NCVS does not report, Blacks have by far the highest rates of victimization and offending. Again, this is likely due to the extreme levels of poverty experienced by this group as well as the high levels of single-headed households among this population (which likely explains much of the poverty).

▲ **Image 1.6**   Offenders being forced to hold signs as part of their punishment is becoming a more popular informal sanction that shames individuals in their communities.

SOURCE: © Joe Amon / Denver Post / Getty Images

A good example of the high levels of homicide rates among Blacks, in terms of both offending and victimization, can be seen in certain U.S. cities. Washington, DC, New Orleans, St. Louis, and Detroit have some of the highest murder rates among U.S. cities. They also have some of the highest proportions of Black residents as compared to other U.S. cities. Notably, studies have shown that when researchers control for poverty rates and single-headed households, the racial and ethnicity effects seem to disappear.

For example, data show that Washington, DC, and the state of Louisiana are the top two jurisdictions for high rates of poverty, with most of the poor being children or teenagers, the latter of whom are most prone to committing crimes, especially violent offenses (such as murder). Thus, the two racial and ethnic groups rated highest for violent crime, both as victims and offenders—Native Americans and Blacks—also tend to have the highest rates in the nation for poverty and broken families. It should be noted that Hispanics, a common ethnic group in the United States, also have relatively high offending and victimization rates as compared to Whites and other minorities, such as Asians, who tend to experience low rates.

Policy Implications

One of the key elements of a good theory is that it can help inform policy makers in making decisions about how to reduce crime. This theme will be reviewed at the end of each section in this book. After all, a criminological theory is only truly useful in the real world if it helps to reduce criminal offending. Many theories have been used as the basis of such changes in policy, and we will present examples of how the theories of crime discussed in each section have guided policy making. We will also examine empirical evidence for such policies, specifically to determine whether or not such policies have been successful (and many have not).

Conclusion

Although there are numerous other ways that crime tends to be clustered in our society, we have covered most of the major variables in this section. The rest of this book will examine the various theories of why crime tends to occur in such groups and individuals, and the way that we determine the accuracy of these theories will directly relate to how well they explain the high rates of crime in the groups that we have discussed.

//// SECTION SUMMARY

- Criminology is the scientific study of crime. It involves the use of the scientific method and testing hypotheses, which distinguishes it from other perspectives of crime (e.g., journalistic, religious, legal) because these fields are not based on science.

- Criminological theory seeks to do more than simply predict criminal behavior; rather, the goal is to more fully understand the reasons why certain individuals offend and others do not.

- Definitions of crime vary drastically across time and place; most criminologists tend to focus on deviant behaviors whether or not they violate criminal codes.

- There are various paradigms, or unique perspectives, pertaining to crime, which have contrasting assumptions and propositions. The Classical School of criminological theory assumes free will and choice among individuals, whereas the Positive School focuses on biological, social, and psychological factors that negate the notion of choice among criminal offenders. Other theoretical paradigms, such as conflict, critical, and integrated models of offending, also exist.

- Criminological theories can be classified by their fundamental assumptions as well as other factors, such as the unit of measure on which they focus—the individual or the group (micro or macro, respectively)—or the assumptions they make regarding basic human nature: good, bad, or blank slate.

- There are more than a handful of characteristics that good criminological theories should have and that bad criminological theories do not have.

- Three criteria are required for determining causality and thus are essential in determining whether or not an independent (predictive) variable (X) actually affects a dependent (consequent) variable (Y).

- This introduction also discussed the primary measures that are used for estimating the crime committed in the United States; these primary measures are police reports (e.g., the UCR), victimization surveys (e.g., the NCVS), and offenders' self-reports of the crimes they have committed.

- We also discussed in this section what the measures of crime have shown regarding the distribution of criminal offending according to region, race and ethnicity, time of day, time of year, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and period of history. It is important to note that various theories presented in this book will be tested on the extent to which they can explain the clustering of crime among certain individuals and groups.

/// KEY TERMS

Classical School   6

clearance rate   14

conflict theories   7

consensual perspective   7

correlation, or covariation   10

criminology   1

dark figure   13

deviance   5

empirical validity   9

equivalency hypothesis   24

formal controls   24

hot spots   21

hypotheses   2

index offenses   13

informal controls   24

interracial   25

intraracial   25

legalistic approach   4

logical consistency   8

macro level of analysis   6

mala in se   5

mala prohibita   5

micro level of analysis   6

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)   12

nonindex offenses   13

paradigms   6

parsimony   8

policy implications   9

Positive School   6

scientific method   2

scope   8

self-report data (SRD)   12

social sciences   2

spuriousness   11

telescoping   16

temporal ordering   10

testability   9

theory   2

Uniform Crime Report (UCR)   12

/// DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does criminology differ from other perspectives of crime?

2. How does a good theoretical explanation of crime go beyond simply predicting crime?

3. Should criminologists emphasize only crimes made illegal by law, or should they also study acts that are deviant but not illegal? Explain why you feel this way.

4. Even though you haven't been exposed to all the theories in this book, do you favor classical or positive assumptions regarding criminal behavior? Explain why.

5. Which types of theories do you think are most important: those that explain individual behavior (micro) or those that explain criminality among groups (macro)? Explain your decision.

6. Do you tend to favor the idea that human beings are born bad, good, or a blank slate? Discuss your decision, and provide an example.

7. Which characteristics of a good theory do you find most important? Which are least important? Make sure to explain why you feel that way.

8. Of the three criteria for determining causality between a predictor variable and a consequent variable, which do you think is easiest to show, and which is hardest to show? Why?

9. Which of the measures of crime do you think is the best estimate of crime in the United States? Why? Also, which measure is the best for determining associations between crime and personality traits? Why?

10. Looking at what the measures of crime show, which finding surprises you the most? Explain why.

11. What types of policies do you feel reduce crime the most? Which do you think have little or no effect in reducing crime?

//// WEB RESOURCES

Measures of Crime

http://criminal-justice.iresearchnet.com/criminology/theories
https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015
http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245

How to Read a Research Article

As you travel through your criminal justice and criminology studies, you will soon learn that some of the best-known and emerging explanations of crime and criminal behavior come from research articles in academic journals. This book is full of research articles, and you may be asking yourself, "How do I read a research article?" It is my hope to answer this question with a quick summary of the key elements of any research article, followed by the questions you should be answering as you read through the assigned sections.

Every research article published in a social science journal will have the following elements: (a) introduction, (b) literature review, (c) methodology, (d) results, and (e) discussion or conclusion.

In the introduction, you will find an overview of the purpose of the research. Within the introduction, you will also find the hypothesis or hypotheses. A hypothesis is most easily defined as an educated statement or guess. In most hypotheses, you will find that the format usually followed is "If X happens, then Y will occur." For example, a simple hypothesis might be "If the price of gas increases, more people will ride bikes." This is a testable statement that the researcher wants to address in her or his study. Usually authors will state the hypothesis directly, but not always. Therefore, you must be aware of what the author is actually testing in the research project. If you are unable to find the hypothesis, ask yourself what is being tested or manipulated and then the expected results.

The next section of the research article is the literature review. At times, the literature review will be separated from the text in its own section, and at other times it will be found within the introduction. In any case, the literature review is an examination of what other researchers have already produced in terms of the research question or hypothesis. For example, returning to my hypothesis on the relationship between gas prices and bike riding, we may find that five researchers have previously conducted studies on the increase in gas prices. In the literature review, the author will discuss her or his findings and then discuss what the study will add to the existing research. The literature review may also be used as a platform of support for the hypothesis. For example, one researcher may have already determined that an increase in gas prices causes more people to roller-skate to work. The author can use this study as evidence to support her or his hypothesis that increased gas prices will lead to more bike riding.

The methods used in the research design are found in the next section of the research article. In the methodology section, you will find the following: who or what was studied, how many subjects were studied, the research tool (e.g., interview, survey, observation), how long the subjects were studied, and how the data that were collected were processed. The methods section is usually very concise, with every step of the research project recorded. This is important because a major goal of the researcher is reliability; describing exactly how the research was done allows it to be repeated. Reliability is determined by whether the results are the same.

The results section is an analysis of the researcher's findings. If the researcher conducted a quantitative study, using numbers or statistics to explain the research, you will find statistical tables and analyses that explain whether or not the researcher's hypothesis is supported. If the researcher conducted a qualitative study, nonnumerical research for the purpose of theory construction, the results will usually be displayed as a theoretical analysis or interpretation of the research question.

The research article will conclude with a discussion and summary of the study. In the discussion, you will find that the hypothesis is usually restated, and there may be a small discussion of why this was the

hypothesis. You will also find a brief overview of the methodology and results. Finally, the discussion section looks at the implications of the research and what future research is still needed.

Now that you know the key elements of a research article, let us examine a sample article from your text: "The Use and Usefulness of Criminology, 1751–2005: Enlightened Justice and Its Failures" by Lawrence W. Sherman.

1. What is the thesis or main idea from this article?

   • The thesis or main idea is found in the introductory paragraph of this article. Although Sherman does not point out the main idea directly, you may read the introduction and summarize the main idea in your own words. For example, the thesis or main idea is that criminology should move away from strict analysis and toward scientific experimentation to improve the criminal justice system and crime control practices.

2. What is the hypothesis?

   • The hypothesis is found in the introduction of this article. It is first stated in the beginning paragraph: "As experimental criminology provides more comprehensive evidence about responses to crime, the prospects for better basic science—and better policy—will improve accordingly." The hypothesis is also restated in the middle of the second section of the article. Here, Sherman actually distinguishes the hypothesis by stating, "The history of criminology . . . provides an experimental test of this hypothesis about analytic versus experimental social science: *that social science has been most useful, if not most used, when it has been most experimental, with visibly demonstrable benefits (or harm avoidance) from new inventions.*"

3. Is there any prior literature related to the hypothesis?

   • As you may have noticed, this article does not have a separate section for a literature review. However, you will see that Sherman devotes attention to prior literature under the heading "Enlightenment, Criminology, and Justice." Here, he offers literature regarding the analytical and experimental history of criminology. This brief overview helps the reader understand the prior research, which explains why social science became primarily analytic.

4. What methods are used to support the hypothesis?

   • Sherman's methodology is known as a historical analysis. In other words, rather than conducting his own experiment, Sherman is using evidence from history to support his hypothesis regarding analytic and experimental criminology. When conducting a historical analysis, most researchers use archival material from books, newspapers, journals, and so on. Although Sherman does not directly state his source of information, we can see that he is basing his argument on historical essays and books, beginning with Henry Fielding's *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (1751) and continuing through the social experiments of the 1980s by the National Institute of Justice. Throughout his methodology, Sherman continues to emphasize his hypothesis about the usefulness of experimental criminology, along with how experiments have also been hidden in the shadows of analytic criminology throughout history.

5. Is this a qualitative study or a quantitative study?

   • To determine whether a study is qualitative or quantitative, you must look at the results. Is Sherman using numbers to support his hypothesis (quantitative), or is he developing a nonnumerical theoretical argument (qualitative)? Because Sherman does not use statistics in this study, we can safely conclude that this is a qualitative study.

HOW TO READ A RESEARCH ARTICLE

6. What are the results, and how does the author present the results?

    - Because this is a qualitative study, as we earlier determined, Sherman offers the results as a discussion of his findings from the historical analysis. The results may be found in the section titled "Criminology: Analytic, Useful, and Used." Here, Sherman explains that "*the vast majority of published criminology remains analytic and nonexperimental*." He goes on to say that although experimental criminology has been shown to be useful, it has not always been used or used correctly. Because of the misuse of experimental criminology, criminologists have steered toward the safety of analysis rather than experimentation. Therefore, Sherman concludes that "analytic social science still dominates field experiments by 100 to 1 or better in criminology. . . . Future success of the field may depend upon a growing public image based on experimental results."

7. Do you believe that the author(s) provided a persuasive argument? Why or why not?

    - This answer is ultimately up to the reader, but looking at this article, I believe that it is safe to assume that readers will agree that Sherman offered a persuasive argument. Let us return to his major premise: The advancement of theory may depend on better experimental evidence, but as history has illustrated, the vast majority of criminology remains analytical. Sherman supports this proposition with a historical analysis of the great thinkers of criminology and the absence of experimental research throughout a major portion of history.

8. Who is the intended audience of this article?

    - A final question that will be useful for the reader deals with the intended audience. As you read the article, ask yourself to whom the author is wanting to speak. After you read this article, you will see that Sherman is writing for students, professors, criminologists, historians, and criminal justice personnel. The target audience may most easily be identified if you ask yourself, "Who will benefit from reading this article?"

9. What does the article add to your knowledge of the subject?

    - This answer is best left up to the reader because the question is asking how the article improved your knowledge. However, one answer to this question is as follows: This article helps the reader to understand that criminology is not just about theoretical construction. Criminology is both an analytical and an experimental social science, and to improve the criminal justice system as well as criminal justice policies, more attention needs to be given to the usefulness of experimental criminology.

10. What are the implications for criminal justice policy that can be derived from this article?

    - Implications for criminal justice policy are most likely to be found in the conclusion or the discussion sections of the article. This article, however, emphasizes the implications throughout. From this article, we are able to conclude that crime prevention programs will improve greatly if they are embedded in well-funded, experiment-driven data rather than strictly analytical data. Therefore, it is in the hands of policy makers to fund criminological research and apply the findings in a productive manner to criminal justice policy.

Now that we have gone through the elements of a research article, it is your turn to continue through your text, reading the various articles and answering the same questions. You may find that some articles are easier to follow than others, but do not be dissuaded. Remember that each article will follow the same format: introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion. If you have any problems, refer to this introduction for guidance.

READING /// 1

In this selection, Lawrence Sherman provides an excellent review of the policies that have resulted from the very early stages of classical theories, through the early positivist era, and into modern times. Sherman's primary point is that experimental research is highly important in determining the policies that should be used with offenders and potential offenders. Although many important factors can never be experimentally manipulated—bad parents, poor schooling, negative peer influences—there are, as Sherman asserts, numerous types of variables that can be experimentally manipulated by criminological researchers. The resulting findings can help guide policy makers in pushing forward more efficient and effective policies regarding the prevention of and reaction to various forms of criminal offending. There is no better scholar to present such an argument and support for it; Sherman is perhaps the best-known scholar who has applied the experimental method to criminological research, given his experience with studies regarding domestic violence and other criminal offenses.

While reading this entry, readers are encouraged to consider the following:

- The "pioneers" and studies that led the way in showing a way to experimentally examine the effectiveness of various approaches to reducing crime

- Other variables or aspects of crime that can be examined via experimental forms of research

- The vast number of variables that are important causes of crime or delinquency but could never be experimentally manipulated for logistic or ethical reasons

- The conclusion and policy implications stated by Joan McCord in the final words of her address to the American Society of Criminology in 2003

The Use and Usefulness of Criminology, 1751–2005
Enlightened Justice and Its Failures

Lawrence W. Sherman

Criminology was born in a crime wave, raised on a crusade against torture and execution, and then hibernated for two centuries of speculation. Awakened by the rising crime rates of the latter twentieth century, most of its scholars chose to pursue analysis over experiment. The twenty-first century now offers more policy-relevant science than ever, even if basic science still occupies center stage. Its prospects for integrating basic and "clinical" science are growing, with more scholars using multiple tools rather than pursuing single-method work. Criminology contributes only a few drops of science in an ocean of decision making, but the number of drops is growing steadily. As experimental criminology provides more comprehensive evidence about responses

to crime, the prospects for better basic science—and better policy—will improve accordingly.

Enlightenment, Criminology, and Justice

The entire history of social science has been shaped by key choices scholars made in that transformative era, choices that are still made today. For criminology more than most disciplines, those Enlightenment choices have had enormous consequences for the use and usefulness of its social science. The most important of these consequences is that justice still remains largely un-Enlightened by empirical evidence about the effects of its actions on public safety and public trust.

Historians may despair at defining a coherent intellectual or philosophical content in the Age of Enlightenment, but one idea seems paramount: "that we understand nature and man best through the use of our natural faculties" (May 1976, xiv) by systematic empirical methods, rather than through ideology, abstract reasoning, common sense, or claims of divine principles made by competing religious authorities. Kant, in contrast, stressed the receiving end of empirical science in his definition of Enlightenment: the time when human beings regained the courage to "use one's own mind without another's guidance" (Gay 1969, 384).

Rather than becoming *experimental* in method, social science became primarily *analytic*. This distinction between experimental manipulation of some aspect of social behavior versus detached (if systematic) observation of behavioral patterns is crucial to all social science (even though not all questions for social science offer a realistic potential for experiment). The decision to cast social science primarily in the role of critic, rather than of inventor, has had lasting consequences for the enterprise, especially for the credibility of its conclusions. There may be nothing so practical as a good theory, but it is hard to visibly—or convincingly—demonstrate the benefits of social analysis for the reduction of human misery. The absence of "show-and-tell" benefits of analytic social science blurred its boundaries with ideology, philosophy, and even emotion. This problem has plagued analytic social science ever since, with the possible exception of times (like the Progressive Era and the 1960s) when the social order itself was in crisis. As sociologist E. Digby Baltzell (1979) suggested

about cities and other social institutions, "as the twig is bent, so grows the tree." Social science may have been forged in the same kind of salon discussions as natural science, but without some kind of empirical reports from factories, clinics, or farm fields. Social science has thus famously "smelled too much of the lamp" of the library (Gay 1969). Even when analytic social science has been most often used, it is rarely praised as useful.

That is not to say that theories (with or without evidence) have lacked influence in criminology, or in any social science. The theory of deterrent effects of sanctions was widely used to reduce the severity of punishment long before the theory could be tested with any evidence. The theories of "anomie" and "differential association" were used to plan the 1960s "War on Poverty" without any clear evidence that opportunity structures could be changed. Psychological theories of personality transformation were used to develop rehabilitation programs in prisons long before any of them were subject to empirical evaluation. Similarly, evidence (without theory) of a high concentration of crime among a small proportion of criminal offenders was used to justify more severe punishment for repeat offenders, also without empirical testing of those policies.

The criminologists' general preference for analysis over experiment has not been universal in social science. Enlightenment political science was, in an important—if revolutionary—sense, experimental, developing and testing new forms of government soon after they were suggested in print. The Federalist Papers, for example, led directly to the "experiment" of the Bill of Rights.

Perhaps the clearest exception to the dominance of analytic social science was within criminology itself in its very first work during the Enlightenment. The fact that criminologists do not remember it this way says more about its subsequent dominance by analytic methods than about the true history of the field. Criminology was born twice in the eighteenth century, first (and forgotten) as an experimental science and then (remembered) as an analytic one. And though experimental criminology in the Enlightenment had an enormous impact on institutions of justice, it was analytic criminology that was preserved by law professors and twentieth-century scholars as the foundation of the field.

The history of criminology thus provides an experimental test of this hypothesis about analytic versus experimental social science: *that social science has been most useful, if not most used, when it has been most*

experimental, with visibly demonstrable benefits (or harm avoidance) from new inventions. The evidence for this claim in eighteenth-century criminology is echoed by the facts of criminology in the twentieth century. In both centuries, the fraternal twins of analysis and experiment pursued different pathways through life, while communicating closely with each other. One twin was critical, the other imaginative; one systematically observational, the other actively experimental; one detached with its integrity intact, the other engaged with its integrity under threat. Both twins needed each other to advance their mutual field of inquiry. But it has been experiments in every age that made criminology most useful, as measured by unbiased estimates of the effects of various responses to crime.

The greatest disappointment across these centuries has been the limited usefulness of experimental criminology in achieving "geometric precision" (Beccaria 1764/1964) in the pursuit of "Enlightened Justice," defined as "the administration of sanctions under criminal law guided by (1) inviolate principles protecting human rights of suspects and convicts while seeking (2) consequences reducing human misery, through means known from (3) unbiased empirical evidence of what works best" (Sherman 2005). While some progress has been made, most justice remains unencumbered by empirical evidence on its effects. To understand why this disappointment persists amid great success, we must begin with the Enlightenment itself.

Inventing Criminology: Fielding, Beccaria, and Bentham

The standard account of the origin of criminology locates it as a branch of moral philosophy: part of an aristocratic crusade against torture, the death penalty, and arbitrary punishment, fought with reason, rhetoric, and analysis. This account is true but incomplete. Criminology's forgotten beginnings preceded Cesare Beccaria's famous 1764 essay in the form of Henry Fielding's 1753 experiments with justice in London. Inventing the modern institutions of a salaried police force and prosecutors, of crime reporting, crime records, employee background investigations, liquor licensing, and social welfare policies as crime prevention

strategies, Fielding provided the viable preventive alternatives to the cruel excesses of retribution that Beccaria denounced—before Beccaria ever published a word.

The standard account hails a treatise on "the science of justice" (Gay 1969, 440) that was based on Beccaria's occasional visits to courts and prisons, followed by many discussions in a salon. The present alternative account cites a far less famous treatise based on more than a thousand days of Fielding conducting trials and sentencing convicts in the world's (then) largest city, supplemented by his on-site inspections of tenements, gin joints, brothels, and public hangings. The standard account thus chooses a criminology of analytic detachment over a criminology of clinical engagement.

The standard account in twentieth-century criminology textbooks traced the origin of the field to this "classical school" of criminal law and criminology, with Cesare Beccaria's (1738–1794) treatise *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764) as the first treatise in scientific criminology. (Beccaria is also given credit [incorrectly], even by Enlightenment scholars, for first proposing that utility be measured by "the greatest happiness divided among the greatest number"—which Frances Hutcheson, a mentor to Adam Smith, had published in Glasgow in 1725 before Beccaria was born [Buchan 2003, 68–71]). Beccaria, and later Bentham, contributed the central claims of the deterrence hypothesis on which almost all systems of criminal law now rely: that punishment is more likely to prevent future crime to the extent that it is certain, swift, and proportionate to the offense (Beccaria) or more costly than the benefit derived from the offense (Bentham).

Fielding

This standard account of Beccaria as the *first* criminologist is, on the evidence, simply wrong. Criminology did not begin in a Milanese salon among the group of aristocrats who helped Beccaria formulate and publish his epigrams but more than a decade earlier in a London magistrate's courtroom full of gin-soaked robbery defendants. The first social scientist of crime to publish in the English—and perhaps any—language was Henry Fielding, Esq. (1707–1754). Fielding was appointed by the government as magistrate at the Bow Street Court in London. His years on that bench, supplemented by his visits to the homes of London labor and London poor,

provided him with ample qualitative data for his 1751 treatise titled *An Enquiry Into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers.*

Fielding's treatise is a remarkable analysis of what would today be called the "environmental criminology" of robbery. Focused on the reasons for a crime wave and the policy alternatives to hanging as the only means of combating crime, Fielding singles out the wave of "that poison called gin" that hit mid-century London like crack hit New York in the 1980s. He theorizes that a drastic price increase (or tax) would make gin too expensive for most people to consume, thereby reducing violent crime. He also proposes more regulation of gambling, based on his interviews with arrested robbers who said they had to rob to pay their gambling debts. Observing the large numbers of poor and homeless people committing crime, he suggests a wider "safety net" of free housing and food. His emphasis is clearly on prevention without punishment as the best policy approach to crime reduction.

Fielding then goes on to document the failures of punishment in three ways. First, the system of compulsory "voluntary policing" by each citizen imposed after the Norman Conquest had become useless: "what is the business of every man is the business of no man." Second, the contemporary system of requiring crime victims to prosecute their own cases (or hire a lawyer at their own expense) was failing to bring many identified offenders to justice. Third, witnesses were intimidated and often unwilling to provide evidence needed for conviction. All this leads him to hint at, but not spell out, a modern system of "socialized" justice in which the state, rather than crime victims, pays for police to investigate and catch criminals, prosecutors to bring evidence to court, and even support for witnesses and crime victims.

His chance to present his new "invention" to the government came two years after he published his treatise on robbery. In August 1753, five different robbery-murders were committed in London in one week. An impatient cabinet secretary summoned Fielding twice from his sickbed and asked him to propose a plan for stopping the murders. In four days, Fielding submitted a "grant proposal" for an experiment in policing that would cost £600 (about £70,000 or $140,000 in current value). The purpose of the money was to retain, on salary, the band of detectives Fielding worked with, and to pay a reward to informants who would provide evidence against the murderers.

Within two weeks, the robberies stopped, and for two months not one murder or robbery was reported in Westminster (Fielding 1755/1964, 191–193). Fielding managed to obtain a "no-cost extension" to the grant, which kept the detectives on salary for several years. After Henry's death, his brother John obtained new funding, so that the small team of "Bow Street Runners" stayed in operation until the foundation of the much larger—and uniformed—Metropolitan Police in 1829.

The birth of the Bow Street Runners was a turning point in the English paradigm of justice. The crime wave accompanying the penny-a-quart gin epidemic of the mid-eighteenth century had demonstrated the failure of relying solely on the *severity* of punishment, so excessive that many juries refused to convict people who were clearly guilty of offenses punishable by death—such as shoplifting. As Bentham would later write, there was good reason to think that the *certainty* of punishment was too low for crime to be deterrable. As Fielding said in his treatise on robbery, "The utmost severity to offenders [will not] be justifiable unless we take every possible method of preventing the offence." Fielding was not the only inventor to propose the idea of a salaried police force to patrol and arrest criminals, but he was the first to conduct an *experiment* testing that invention. While Fielding's police experiment would take decades to be judged successful (seventy-six years for the "Bobbies" to be founded at Scotland Yard in 1829), the role of experimental evidence proved central to changing the paradigm of practice.

Beccaria

In sharp contrast, Beccaria had no clinical practice with offenders, nor was he ever asked to stop a crime wave. Instead, he took aim at a wave of torture and execution that characterized European justice. Arguing the same ideology of prevention as Fielding (whose treatise he did not cite), Beccaria urged abolition of torture, the death penalty, and secret trials. Within two centuries, almost all Europe had adopted his proposals. While many other causes of that result can be cited, there is clear evidence of Beccaria's 1764 treatise creating a "tipping point" of public opinion on justice.

What Beccaria did not do, however, was to supply a shred of scientific evidence in support of his theories of the deterrent effects of non-capital penalties proportionate to the severity of the offense. Nor did he state his theories in a clearly falsifiable way, as Fielding had done. In his method, Beccaria varies little from law professors or judges (then and now) who argue a blend of opinion and factual assumptions they find reasonable, deeming it enlightened truth *ipse dixit* ("because I say so myself"). What he lacked by the light of systematic analysis of data, he made up for by eloquence and "stickiness" of his aphorisms. Criminology by slogan may be more readily communicated than criminology by experiment in terms of fame. But it is worth noting that the founding of the British police appears much more directly linked to Fielding's experiments than the steady abolition of the death penalty was linked to Beccaria's book.

Bentham

Beccaria the moral-empirical theorist stands in sharp contrast to his fellow Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham, who devoted twelve years of his life (and some £10,000) to an invention in prison administration. Working from a book he wrote on a "Panopticon" design for punishment by incarceration (rather than hanging), Bentham successfully lobbied for a 1794 law authorizing such a prison to be built. He was later promised a contract to build and manage such a prison, but landed interests opposed his use of the site he had selected. We can classify Bentham as an experimentalist on the grounds that he invested much of his life in "trying" as well as thinking. Even though he did not build the prison he designed, similar prisons (for better or worse) were built in the United States and elsewhere. Prison design may justifiably be classified as a form of invention and experimental criminology, as distinct from the analytic social science approach Bentham used in his writings—thereby making him as "integrated" as Fielding in terms of theory and practice. The demise of Bentham's plans during the Napoleonic Wars marked the end of an era in criminology, just as the Enlightenment itself went into retreat after the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon. By 1815, experimentalism in criminology was in hibernation, along with most of criminology itself, not to stir until the 1920s or spring fully to life until the 1960s.

Two Torpid Centuries— With Exceptions

Analytic criminology continued to develop slowly even while experimental criminology slumbered deeply, but neither had any demonstrable utility to the societies that fostered them. One major development was the idea of involuntary causes of crime "determined" by either social (Quetelet 1835/2004) or biological (Lombroso 1876/1918) factors that called into question the legal doctrines of criminal responsibility. The empirical evidence for these claims, however, was weak (and in Lombroso's case, wrong), leaving the theoretical approach to criminology largely unused until President Johnson's War on Poverty in the 1960s.

Cambridge-Somerville

The first fully randomized controlled trial in American criminology appears to have been the Cambridge-Somerville experiment, launched in Massachusetts in the 1930s by Dr. Richard Clark Cabot. This project offered high-risk young males "friendly guidance and social support, healthful activities after school, tutoring when necessary, and medical assistance as needed" (McCord 2001). It also included a long-term "big brother" mentoring relationship that was abruptly terminated in most cases during World War II. While the long-term effects of the program would not be known until the 1970s, the critical importance of the experimental design was recognized at the outset. It was for that reason that the outcomes test could reach its startling conclusion: "The results showed that as compared with members of the control group, those who had been in the treatment program were more likely to have been convicted for crimes indexed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as serious street crimes; they had died an average of five years younger; and they were more likely to have received a medical diagnosis as alcoholic, schizophrenic, or manic-depressive" (McCord 2001, 188). In short, the boys offered the program would have been far better off if they had been "deprived" of the program services in the randomly assigned control group.

No study in the history of criminology has ever demonstrated such clear, unintended, criminogenic effects of a program intended to prevent crime. To this day, it is "exhibit A" in discussions with legislators,

students, and others skeptical of the value of evaluating government programs of any sort, let alone crime prevention programs. Its early reports in the 1950s also set the stage for a renaissance in experimental criminology, independently of the growth of analytic criminology.

Renaissance: 1950–1982

Amidst growing concern about juvenile delinquency, the Eisenhower administration provided the first federal funding for research on delinquency prevention. Many of the studies funded in that era, with both federal and non-federal support, adopted experimental designs. What follows is merely a highlighting of the renaissance of experimental criminology in the long twilight of the FDR coalition prior to the advent of the Reagan revolution.

Martinson and Wilson

While experimental evidence was on the rise in policing, it was on the decline in corrections. The comprehensive review of rehabilitation strategies undertaken by Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks (1975) initially focused on the internal validity of the research designs in rehabilitation experiments within prisons. Concluding that these designs were too weak to offer unbiased estimates of treatment effects, the authors essentially said "we don't know" what works to rehabilitate criminals. In a series of less scientific and more popular publications, the summary of the study was transformed into saying that there is no evidence that criminals can be rehabilitated. Even the title "What Works" was widely repeated in 1975 by word of mouth as "nothing works."

The Martinson review soon became the basis for a major change in correctional policies. While the per capita rates of incarceration had been dropping throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the trend was rapidly reversed after 1975 (Ruth and Reitz 2003). Coinciding with the publication of Wilson's (1975) first edition of *Thinking About Crime*, the Martinson review arguably helped fuel a sea change from treating criminals as victims of society to treating society as the victim of criminals. That, in turn, may have helped to feed a three-decade increase in prisoners (Laub 2004) to more than 2.2 million, the highest incarceration rate in the world.

Warp Speed: 1982–2005

Stewart

In September 1982, a former Oakland Police captain named James K. Stewart was appointed director of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Formerly a White House Fellow who had attended a National Academy of Sciences discussion of the work of NIJ, Stewart had been convinced by James Q. Wilson and others that NIJ needed to invest more of its budget in experimental criminology. He acted immediately by canceling existing plans to award many research grants for analytic criminology, transferring the funds to support experimental work. This work included experiments in policing, probation, drug market disruption, drunk-driving sentences, investigative practices, and shoplifting arrests.

Schools

The 1980s also witnessed the expansion of experimental criminology into the many school-based prevention programs. Extensive experimental and quasi-experimental evidence on their effects—good and bad—has now been published. In one test, for example, a popular peer guidance group that was found effective as an alternative to incarceration was found to increase crime in a high school setting. Gottfredson (1987) found that high-risk students who were not grouped with other high-risk students in high school group discussions did better than those who were.

Drug Courts

The advent of (diversion from prosecution to medically supervised treatments administered by) "drug courts" during the rapid increase in experimental criminology has led to a large and growing volume of tests of drug court effects on recidivism. Perhaps no other innovation in criminal justice has had so many controlled field tests conducted by so many different independent researchers. The compilations of these findings into meta-analyses will shed increasing light on the questions of when, and how, to divert drug-abusing offenders from prison.

Boot Camps

Much the same can be said about boot camps. The major difference is that boot camp evaluations started off as

primarily quasi-experimental in their designs (with matched comparisons or worse), but increasing numbers of fully randomized tests have been conducted in recent years (Mitchell, MacKenzie, and Perez 2005). Many states persist in using boot camps for thousands of offenders, despite fairly consistent evidence that they are no more effective than regular correctional programs.

Child Raising

Criminology has also claimed a major experiment in child raising as one of its own. Beginning at the start of the "warp speed" era, the program of nurse home visits to at-risk first mothers designed by Dr. David Olds and his colleagues (1986) has now been found to have long-term crime prevention effects. Both mothers and children show these effects, which may be linked to lower levels of child abuse or better anger management practices in child raising.

Criminology: Analytic, Useful, and Used

This recitation of a selected list of experiments in criminology must be labeled with a consumer warning: *the vast majority of published criminology remains analytic and nonexperimental*. While criminology was attracting funding and students during the period of rising crime of the 1960s to 1990s, criminologists put most of their efforts into the basic science of crime patterns and theories of criminality. Studies of the natural life course of crime among cohorts of males became the central focus of the field, as measured by citation patterns (Wolfgang, Figlio, and Thornberry 1978). Despite standing concerns that criminology would be "captured" by governments to become a tool for developing repressive policies, the evidence suggests that the greatest (or largest) generation of criminologists in history captured the field away from policymakers.

The renaissance in experimental criminology therefore addressed very intense debates over many key issues in crime and justice, providing the first unbiased empirical guidance available to inform those debates. That much made criminology increasingly useful, at least potentially. Usefulness alone, of course, does not guarantee that the information will be *used*. Police agencies today do make extensive use of the research on concentrating patrols in crime hot spots, yet they have few repeat offender units, despite two successful tests of the "invention." Correctional agencies make increasing use of the "what works" literature in the United States and United Kingdom, yet prison populations are still fed by people returned to prison on the unevaluated policy of incarcerating "technical" violators of the conditions of their release (who have not committed new crimes). Good evidence alone is not enough to change policy in any context. Yet absent good evidence, there is a far greater danger that bad policies will win out. Analytic criminology—well or badly done—poses fewer risks for society than badly done experimental criminology. It is not clear that another descriptive test of differential association theory will have any effect on policy making, unless it is embedded in a program evaluation. But misleading or biased evidence from poor-quality research designs—or even unreplicated experiments—may well cause the adoption of policies that ultimately prove harmful.

This danger is, in turn, reduced by the lack of influence criminology usually has on policy making or operational decisions. That, in turn, is linked to the absence of clear conclusions about the vast majority of criminal justice policies and decisions. Until experimental criminology can develop a more comprehensive basis of evidence for guiding operations, practitioners are unlikely to develop the habit of checking the literature before making a decision. The possibility of improving the quality of both primary evidence and systematic reviews offers hope for a future in which criminology itself may entail less risk of causing harm.

This is by no means a suggestion that analytic criminology be abandoned; the strength of experimental criminology may depend heavily on the continued advancement of basic (analytic) criminology. Yet the full partnership between the two has yet to be realized. Analytic social science still dominates field experiments by 100 to 1 or better in criminology, just as in any other field of research on human behavior. Future success of the field may depend upon a growing public image based on experimental results, just as advances in treatment attract funding for basic science in medicine.

Conclusion

Theoretical criminology will hold center stage for many years to come. But as Farrington (2000) has argued, the advancement of theory may depend on better

experimental evidence. And that, in turn, may depend on a revival in the federal funding that has recently dropped to its lowest level in four decades. Such a revival may well depend on exciting public interest in the practical value of research, as perhaps only experiments can do.

"Show and tell" is hard to do while it is happening. Yet it is not impossible. Whether anyone ever sees a crime prevention program delivered, it is at least possible to embed an experimental design into every long-term analytic study of crime in the life course. As Joan McCord (2003) said in her final words to the American Society of Criminology, the era of purely observational criminology should come to an end. Given what we now know about the basic life-course patterns, McCord suggested, "all longitudinal studies should now have experiments embedded within them."

Doing what McCord proposed would become an experiment *in* social science as well as *of* social science. That experiment is already under way, in a larger sense. Criminology is rapidly becoming more multi-method, as well as multi-level and multi-theoretical. Criminology may soon resemble medicine more than economics, with analysts closely integrated with clinical researchers to develop basic science as well as treatment. The integration of diverse forms and levels of knowledge in "consilience" with each other, rather than a hegemony of any one approach, is within our grasp. It awaits only a generation of broadly educated criminologists prepared to do many things, or at least prepared to work in collaboration with other people who bring diverse talents to science.

References

Baltzell, D. (1979). *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant ethics and the spirit of class authority and leadership.* New York: Free Press.

Beccaria, C. (1964). *On crimes and punishments* (J. Grigson, Trans.). Milan, Italy: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1764)

Buchan, J. (2003). *Crowded with genius: The Scottish Enlightenment: Edinburgh's moment of the mind.* New York: HarperCollins.

Farrington, D. (2000). Explaining and preventing crime: The globalization of knowledge. The American Society of Criminology 1999 Presidential Address. *Criminology, 38,* 1–24.

Fielding, H. (1964). *The journal of a voyage to Lisbon.* London: Dent. (Original work published 1755)

Gay, P. (1969). *The Enlightenment: An interpretation. Vol. 2, The science of freedom.* New York: Knopf.

Gottfredson, G. (1987). Peer group interventions to reduce the risk of delinquent behavior: A selective review and a new evaluation. *Criminology, 25,* 671–714.

Laub, J. (2004). The life course of criminology in the United States: The American Society of Criminology 2003 Presidential Address. *Criminology, 42,* 1–26.

Lipton, D., Martinson, R., & Wilks, J. (1975). *The effectiveness of correctional treatment: A survey of treatment evaluation studies.* New York: Praeger.

Lombroso, C. (1918). *Crime, its causes and remedies.* Boston: Little, Brown. (Original work published 1876)

May, H. (1976). *The Enlightenment in America.* New York: Oxford University Press.

McCord, J. (2001). *Crime prevention: A cautionary tale.* Proceedings of the Third International, Interdisciplinary Evidence-Based Policies and Indicator Systems Conference, University of Durham. Retrieved April 22, 2005, from http://cem.dur.ac.uk

McCord, J. (2003). *Discussing age, crime, and human development. The future of life-course criminology.* Denver, CO: American Society of Criminology.

Mitchell, O., MacKenzie, D., & Perez, D. (2005). A randomized evaluation of the Maryland correctional boot camp for adults: Effects on offender anti-social attitudes and cognitions. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 40*(4).

Olds, D., Henderson, C., Chamberlin, R., & Tatelbaum, R. (1986). Preventing child abuse and neglect: A randomized trial of nurse home visitation. *Pediatrics, 78,* 65–78.

Quetelet, A. (2004). A treatise on man. As cited in F. Adler, G. O. W. Mueller, and W. S. Laufer, *Criminology and the criminal justice system* (5th ed., p. N-6). New York: McGraw-Hill. (Original work published 1835)

Ruth, H., & Reitz, K. (2003). *The challenge of crime: Rethinking our response.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sherman, L. (2005). *Enlightened justice: Consequentialism and empiricism from Beccaria to Braithwaite.* Address to the 14th World Congress of Criminology, International Society of Criminology, Philadelphia, August 8.

Wilson, J. (1975). *Thinking about crime.* New York: Basic Books.

Wolfgang, M., Figlio, R., & Thornberry, T. (1978). *Evaluating criminology.* New York: Elsevier.

///   **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. According to Sherman, what part did Henry Fielding's research play in the early stages of research on crime and the influence it had on stopping robberies in London? Explain in detail. What implications can be drawn about using resources (i.e., money) to stop a given crime in a certain location?

2. What does Sherman have to say about what Beccaria and Bentham contributed to policies regarding crime? Do you agree with Sherman's assessment?

3. What does Sherman have to say about Martinson's review of rehabilitation programs and its impact on policy?

4. What does Sherman have to say about criminological research regarding schools, drug courts, boot camps, and child raising? Which recent programs does he claim had success? Which recent programs or designs does he suggest do not work?

5. How do Joan McCord's final words in her address to the American Society of Criminology have both theoretical and policy implications for the study of causes of crime?