

What Is Criminology?

Understanding Crime and Criminals

“Society secretly wants crime, needs crime, and gains definite satisfactions from the present mishandling of it! We condemn crime; we punish offenders for it; but we need it. The crime and punishment ritual is part of our lives!”

—Karl Menninger¹

- 1** Differentiate between crime, deviance, and delinquency.
- 2** Explain how the consensus perspective differs from the pluralist perspective.
- 3** Describe criminology and the role of criminologists.
- 4** Summarize the theoretical perspectives of criminology.
- 5** Summarize the various ways crime is reported and measured.
- 6** Summarize statistics and trends in U.S. crime rates.
- 7** Explain how criminology works with other disciplines and how it impacts the making of laws and social policy.

1

According to social commentators, people are simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by crime—especially gruesome crimes involving extreme personal violence. The popularity of today’s TV crime shows, Hollywood-produced crime movies, true-crime books and magazines, and websites devoted exclusively to the coverage of crime supports that observation. The CBS TV megahit *CSI: Miami*, for example, which ran for ten seasons until going off the air in 2012, garnered 50 million regular viewers in more than 55 countries. By its eighth season, it had become the most popular television show in the world.² But *CSI* programming extends well beyond the Miami-based series, and the *CSI* franchise, which now includes shows featuring New York City, Las Vegas, and other locales, is available in both real time and on demand to a global audience of nearly 2 billion viewers in 200 countries around the globe.³ In 2012, the *CSI* series was named the most watched TV show in the world for the fifth time.⁴ Other popular TV crime series, both past and present, include *Awake* (NBC), *Criminal Minds* (CBS), *Blue Bloods* (CBS), *Without a Trace* (CBS), *Magic City* (HBO), *Numb3rs* (CBS), *The Unit* (CBS), *The Unusuals* (ABC), *The Sopranos* (in reruns on HBO), *The Killing* (AMC), *White Collar* (USA), *The District* (CBS), *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO), *The Shield* (FX), *The Wire* (HBO), *Cold Case* (CBS), *NCIS* (CBS), *Prison Break* (Fox), and *Law and Order* (NBC)—along with the *Law and Order* spin-offs *Law and Order: Criminal Intent* and *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*. American TV viewers are hungry for crime-related entertainment and have a fascination with criminal motivation and detective work.

Some crimes cry out for explanation. One thing that fascinates people about crime—especially violent crime—is that it is inexplicable. While it’s true that some crimes are especially difficult to understand, our natural tendency is to seek out some reason for the unreasonable.

DISCUSS Why are people fascinated by crime and criminal behavior? How does the popularity of TV crime shows reflect the American mindset?



The cast of the popular TV show, *CSI New York*.

© AF archive/Alamy

We search for explanations for the seemingly unexplainable. How, for example, can the behavior of child killers be understood, anticipated, and even prevented? Why don’t terrorists acknowledge the emotional and personal suffering they inflict? Why do some robbers kill, utterly disregarding human life?

Toward this end, people wonder about spectacular crimes, and “everyday” crimes such as burglary, drug use, assault, vandalism, and computer intrusion need explaining. Why do people fight? Does it matter to a

robber that he may face prison time? How can people sacrifice love, money, careers, and even their lives for access to illegal drugs? What motivates terrorists to give up their own lives to take the lives of others? Why do gifted techno-savvy teens

and preteens hack seemingly secure sites on the Internet? While this text may not answer every question, it examines the causative factors that are in effect when a crime is committed and encourages an appreciation of the challenges of crafting effective crime-control policy.

► What Is Crime?

As the word implies, *criminology* is clearly concerned with crime. As we begin our discussion of criminology, let’s consider just what the term *crime* means. Like anything else, crime can be defined several ways. For our purposes, **crime** is *human conduct that violates the criminal laws of a state, the federal government, or a local jurisdiction that has the power to make and enforce the laws*. We prefer this definition because without a law defining a particular form of behavior, there is no crime, no matter how deviant or socially repugnant the behavior in question may be.⁵

Edwin Sutherland, regarded by many as a founding figure in American criminology, said that crime’s “essential characteristic ... is that it is behavior which is prohibited by the State as an injury to the State and against which the State may react ... by punishment.”⁶ This is a legalistic perspective,

Crime is human conduct that violates the criminal law.

Think About It . . .

Some people say that sagging pants are a fashion statement, while others say that wearing such pants is a deviant act. Keeping that example in mind, what kinds of human behavior might be deviant but not criminal? What things might be criminal but not necessarily deviant?



Mark Stout Photography

and it recognizes that laws are social products. The legalistic approach to crime assumes that powerful individuals who are in a position to politically influence lawmaking strategies can impose their preferred definitions of criminal behavior on lawbreakers. By making their own laws, powerful but immoral individuals might therefore escape the label “criminal” and may escape punishment for wrongdoings they have committed. Although democratic societies such as that of the United States seem immune from legislative process abuse, history demonstrates otherwise. Consequently, crime is socially relative in the sense that it is created by legislative activity. Without a law defining it, there can be no crime. Hence, as social scientists are fond of saying, “Crime is whatever a society says it is.” Later in this book, we will focus on the process of *criminalization*, which is used to **criminalize** some forms of behavior—or make them illegal.

Crime, Deviance, and Delinquency

In line with sociological thought, many crimes are seen as deviant or abnormal forms of behavior. The definition of **deviant behavior** that we will use in this book is as follows: Deviant behavior is human activity that violates social norms. Some activities that are not condemned by **statute** are nonetheless regarded as “bad behavior.” Sufficiently “bad behavior” calls out for a societal response, echoing, “That ought to be a crime!” or “There should be a law against that!”

Abnormality, deviance, and crime are concepts that do not always easily mesh. Some forms of deviance are not violations of the criminal law, and the reverse is equally true. (See Figure 1–1.) Deviant styles of dress, for example, are not restricted by criminal law unless they violate decency statutes by virtue of lack of clothing. Laws are generally subject to interpretation, and they may be modified as social norms evolve. A few years ago, for

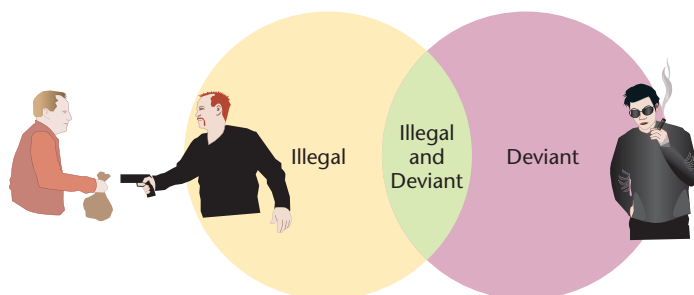


FIGURE 1–1 The Overlap between Deviance and Crime

example, a Palm Beach County (Florida) judge struck down a law banning baggy pants, calling the measure unconstitutional. The judge agreed with a public defender representing a teenager arrested for exposing his underwear by wearing pants that sagged. The attorney argued that the law was unacceptable because it restricted styles of dress and empowered “the fashion police.”⁷

However, some types of behavior, although neither deviant nor abnormal, are still against the law.

Although speeding on interstate highways in some circumstances is considered the *norm* and not deviant, it is still illegal. Complicating matters further, certain behaviors are illegal in some jurisdictions but not in others. Commercialized gambling (slot machines and games of chance) are against the law in many parts of the United States, although they are legitimized in Nevada, on some Native American reservations, on cruise ships operating outside U.S. territorial waters, on some Mississippi riverboats, and in some state-sponsored locales. Even state governments seeking to enhance revenues allow gambling through state lotteries—which now operate in 45 states⁸—although online gambling is forbidden in an effort to protect states’ lottery revenues. Similarly, prostitution, almost uniformly illegal in the United States, is legal in Nevada if it occurs within licensed brothels that meet state licensing and health requirements.

Finally, we should add that **delinquency**, a term often used in conjunction with crime and deviance, refers to violations of the criminal law and other misbehavior committed by young people. The laws of many states proclaim that “youth” ends at a person’s eighteenth birthday, although other states specify the sixteenth or seventeenth birthday as meeting that requirement. All states, however, specify certain offenses, such as running away from home, being ungovernable, and drinking alcohol, as illegal for children but not adults.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1

Differentiate between crime, deviance, and delinquency.

GLOSSARY

crime Human conduct that violates the criminal laws of a state, the federal government, or a local jurisdiction that has the power to make and enforce the laws.

criminalize To make an act illegal.

deviant behavior Human activity that violates social norms.

statute A formal written enactment of a legislative body.

delinquency Violations of the criminal law and other misbehavior committed by young people.

► What Should Be Criminal?

By now, you have probably realized that the question “What is crime?” differs from the question “What should be criminal?” Everyone would agree that murder, rape, burglary, and theft are illegal activities, but there is far less agreement about the legal status of controlled substance abuse, abortion, “abortion pills” (RU-486, or Mifeprex), gambling, and “deviant” forms of consensual adult sexual behavior. State legislatures, along with the general public, have recently

Think About It . . .

Not everyone agrees about what is moral or immoral; nor do they agree about what should be legal or illegal—and laws vary from one place to another. What are some forms of behavior that are illegal in some jurisdictions (or states) but not in others?



18percentgrey/Shutterstock

that it was old-fashioned and reflected badly on an acceptable consumer product that is a staple of some ethnic diets. Eventually, the ordinance was repealed, and the hubbub it had inspired ended. The debate, however, shows the inherent difficulties in achieving a consensus over minor matters in our complex society.

debated the pros and cons of same-sex marriages and certain forms of biomedical research (specifically human cloning and stem cell research).

Certainly, the question “What should be criminal?” can be answered in many different ways. The social and intellectual processes addressing this question can be found in two contrasting points of view: (1) the consensus perspective and (2) the pluralist perspective. The **consensus perspective** holds that laws should be enacted to criminalize given forms of behavior when members of society agree that such laws are necessary. The consensus perspective is most applicable to homogeneous societies with shared values, norms, and belief systems. Multicultural and diverse societies such as the United States find it difficult to achieve shared consensus. Here, even minor matters may spawn complex debates over the issues. For example, a Chicago municipal ordinance banned giving wine to a dog and provided that anyone who did so could be arrested and jailed.⁹ While the ordinance seemed reasonable when enacted (after all, dogs sometimes need to be shielded from their owners’ indiscretions), others viewed the law as silly and unnecessary. The ordinance pitted wine connoisseurs against collectors, growers, and sellers and animal rights activists against animal protectionists and city council members.¹⁰ Those favoring repeal of the ordinance argued

view of crime, the **pluralist perspective** recognizes the importance of diversity in our society. It states that behaviors are typically criminalized through a political process only after debate over the appropriate course of action. The political process creates legislation and may involve additional appellate court action to interpret the laws passed by the legislature. After the 2012 Aurora, Colorado, movie theater shooting and the 2007 Virginia Tech University shooting, for example, state and federal legislatures reexamined gun laws to determine whether new laws would keep guns out of the hands of potential mass killers. With our society’s diversity of perspectives, agreement was not easy to reach—and gun control proponents won out, at least temporarily.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

2

Explain how the consensus perspective differs from the pluralist perspective.

GLOSSARY

consensus perspective A viewpoint that holds that laws should be enacted to criminalize given forms of behavior when members of society agree that such laws are necessary.

pluralist perspective A viewpoint that recognizes the importance of diversity in our society and says that behaviors are typically criminalized through a political process.

Multicultural and diverse societies such as the United States find it difficult to achieve shared consensus. Here, even minor matters may spawn complex debates over the issues.

► What Do Criminologists Do?

A typical dictionary definition of a **criminologist** is “one who studies crime, criminals, and criminal behavior.”¹¹ Occasionally, the term *criminologist* describes almost anyone working in the criminal justice field, regardless of formal training. Today, the growing tendency is to reserve applying the term *criminologist* to academics, researchers, and policy analysts with advanced degrees who study crime, study trends, and analyze societal reactions to crime. In respect to this designation, we describe

Think About It . . .

Some people believe that “there ought to be a law” about some forms of behavior that are currently legal. Others think that people should have more freedom. What forms of behavior that are currently crimes would you like to see legalized? What forms of behavior that are currently legal would you like to criminalize?



Ronald Summers/Shutterstock

The term criminologist refers to credentialed individuals holding advanced degrees in the field and studying crime, criminal behavior, and crime trends. The word criminalist describes people who collect and examine the physical evidence associated with specific crimes. Others working in the criminal justice system are called criminal justice professionals. This table and Figures 1-2 and 1-3 illustrate these differences.

The activities of criminologists include but are not limited to the following:

Data gathering and analysis	Public service
Crime-pattern analysis and trend identification	Developing crime prevention programs
Theory construction	Scholarly presentations and publications
Hypothesis testing	Education and training
Social policy creation	Threat assessment and risk analysis
Public advocacy	Service as an expert witness at trial or in other court proceedings

highly skilled investigators, crime laboratory technicians, fingerprint experts, crime-scene photographers, ballistics experts, and others who work to solve particular crimes as criminalists. A **criminalist** is “a specialist in the collection and examination of the physical evidence of crime.”¹² By contrast, police officers, corrections professionals, probation and parole officers, judges, district attorneys, criminal defense attorneys, and others who do the day-to-day work of the criminal justice system are best referred to as criminal justice professionals.

Academic criminologists and research criminologists generally hold doctoral degrees (Ph.D.) in criminology or criminal justice from accredited universities. Some criminologists hold degrees in related fields such as sociology and political science, specializing in the study and control of crime and deviance. Most Ph.D. criminologists teach criminology or criminology-related subjects in institutions of higher learning, including universities and two- and four-year colleges. Nearly all criminology professors are involved in research or writing projects, thereby advancing criminological knowledge and expertise. Some Ph.D. criminologists are strictly researchers and work for federal agencies such as the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) or for private (albeit often government-funded) organizations such as RAND and SEARCH.

With a master’s or bachelor’s degree in the field of criminology, criminologists often find easy entrance into police investigative or support work, probation and parole agencies, court support activities, and correctional (prison) venues. Criminologists also work for government agencies developing effective social policies intended to deter or combat crime.

In addition, private security offers other career options to individuals interested in criminology and criminal justice. Twice as many law enforcement personnel are employed by private security agencies than public law enforcement agencies, and the gap is widening. Many upper- and mid-level private managers at private security firms hold criminology or criminal justice degrees.

Training in criminology offers many career alternatives. (See Table 1-1.) Some people trained in criminology or criminal justice decide to attend law school, while others become teachers or even private investigators. Many criminologists provide civic organizations (such as victims’ assistance and justice advocacy groups) with their expertise, work for politicians

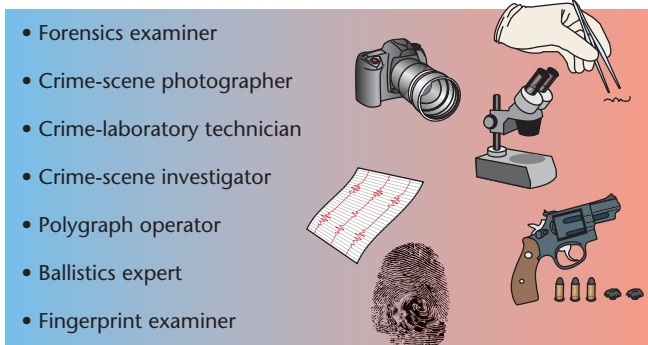


FIGURE 1-2 Jobs in the Field of Criminalistics



FIGURE 1-3 Jobs in the Field of Criminal Justice

Think About It . . .

This chapter identifies significant differences between a criminologist and those who work in the field of criminal justice. What are those differences? Given a choice, which type of work would you like to do?



©wellphoto/Fotolia

and legislative bodies, or appear on talk shows debating social policies designed to “fight” crime. Some criminologists even write books like this one.

What Is Criminology?

This text describes various criminological theories and explains the most popular ones in detail. Let’s start by defining the term *criminology*.

LEARNING OUTCOMES 3

Describe criminology and the role of criminologists.

GLOSSARY

criminologist A person trained in the field of criminology who studies crime, criminals, and criminal behavior.

criminalist “A specialist in the collection and examination of the physical evidence of crime.”

criminology The scientific study of crime and criminal behavior, including their manifestations, causes, legal aspects, and control.

criminal justice The scientific study of crime, criminal law, the criminal justice system, police, courts, and correctional systems.

Theorists believe that the word *criminology* was coined in 1889¹³ by a Frenchman, Paul Topinard, to describe the study of criminal body types within the field of anthropology.¹⁴

With varying interpretations, numerous definitions of *criminology* are found in literature today. One straightforward definition comes from a linguistic analysis of the word *criminology*, which literally means “the study of criminal accusations”—or simply, “the study of crime.”

Edwin H. Sutherland, referred to as the “dean of American criminology,” offered definitions of the field, emphasizing its importance as a discipline of study.¹⁵ Sutherland’s textbook, first published in 1924, set the stage for much of American criminology. By

1974, in the final printing of that text, Sutherland’s original definition of *criminology* was restated as follows: “Criminology . . . includes the processes of making laws, of breaking laws, and of reacting toward the breaking of laws.”¹⁶

For our purposes, we will use a definition that brings together the works of previous writers and recognizes the increasingly professional status of the criminological enterprise. Throughout this book, then, we view **criminology** as an *interdisciplinary profession built on the scientific study of crime and criminal behavior, including their manifestations, causes, legal aspects, and control*. As this definition indicates, criminology includes consideration of possible solutions to the problem of crime. This text (in later chapters) describes treatment

strategies and social policy initiatives that grew out of existing theoretical explanations for crime.

Our definition of *criminology* shows that it is more than a field of study or a collection of theories; it is also a profession.¹⁷ More than a decade ago, experts recognized the importance of controlling crime through the prevention, rehabilitation, and deterrence of repeat offences. In this

way, our society ensures that the criminal justice system reflects the high aspiration we have as a society of “justice for all,” which is characterized by the principal goals that motivate the work of the field of criminology.¹⁸

Notably, criminology also contributes to the discipline of **criminal justice**, which emphasizes application of criminal law and the study of the components of the justice system, especially the police, courts, and correctional systems. As one author stated, “Criminology gives prominence to questions about the *causes of criminality*, while the *control of lawbreaking* is at the heart of criminal justice.”¹⁹

► Theoretical Criminology

Theoretical criminology, considered a subfield of general criminology, is the type of criminology that is usually studied in colleges and universities. Theoretical criminology, instead of simply describing crime and its occurrence, offers explanations for criminal behavior. As Edwin Sutherland said, “The problem in criminology is to explain the criminality of behavior. . . . However, an explanation of criminal behavior should be a specific part of [a] general theory of behavior and its task should be to differentiate criminal from noncriminal behavior.”²⁰

Criminologists have developed many theories to explain and understand crime. A *theory*, ideally, is made of clearly stated propositions suggesting relationships, often causal, between events and occurrences being studied. An old Roman theory, for example, maintained that insanity was caused by lunar influences and followed its cycles—hence the term *lunacy*.

Theories provide us with explanatory power, aiding our understanding of the phenomenon under study. A **general theory** of crime attempts to explain most forms of criminal conduct through a single, overarching approach. Unfortunately, as prominent scholars observe, “Theories in criminology tend to be unclear and lacking in justifiable generality.”²¹ When we consider all criminal behaviors—from murder to drug use to white-collar and computer crime—who would imagine that one theory could explain them all? Still, many past theoretical approaches to crime causation were **unicausal**, posing a single identifiable source for all serious deviant and criminal behavior.

An **integrated theory** does not necessarily explain all criminality, but is distinguished because it merges concepts drawn from different sources. As noted criminologist Gregg Barak states, “An integrative criminology . . . seeks to bring together the diverse bodies of knowledge that represent the

full array of disciplines that study crime.”²² This is why integrated theories provide potentially wider explanatory power than narrower formulations.

Both theoretical integration and the ability to apply criminological theories to a wide variety of law-violating behavior are appealing concepts. Even far more limited attempts at criminological theorizing, however, often face daunting challenges. As criminologist Don C. Gibbons notes, “Criminologists have not managed to articulate a large collection of relatively formalized arguments in a general or integrated form.”²³ Many social scientists insist that to be considered theories, explanations must consist of sets of clearly stated, logically interrelated, and measurable propositions. The fact that only a few of the theories described in this book rise above the level of organized conjecture—and those offer only limited applicability to other settings and have rarely been integrated—is one of the greatest challenges facing criminology today. So although we will use the word *theory* to describe the many explanations for crime covered in this book, the word will only loosely apply to many of the perspectives on crime causation discussed.

The Social Context of Crime

Crime does not occur in a vacuum. For this reason, we say that criminal activity is diversely created and variously interpreted—meaning that different people will have various interpretations regarding the who, what, when, where, and why of crime. We recognize in this book that crime is not an isolated individual activity, but a social event.

Every crime has a unique set of causes, consequences, and participants. Crime affects some people more than others, even impacting those who are not direct participants in the act itself—offenders, victims, police officers, witnesses, and so forth. In general, crime provokes reactions from the individuals it victimizes. These reactions flow from concerned groups of citizens to the criminal justice system and sometimes to society as a whole. This can manifest itself in the creation of new social policy, or laws. Reactions to crime, from the everyday to the precedent-setting, may color the course of punishment for future criminal events.²⁴

Like other social events, crime is fundamentally a social construction.²⁵ However, agreeing that crime is a social

Think About It . . .

A unicausal theory posits a single identifiable source for all serious deviant and criminal behavior. Can you offer (or create) an example of a unicausal theory of crime? Can you think of one explanation that encompasses the behavior of diverse offenders such as those who deal in drugs or participate in prostitution? Why is this exercise especially challenging?



Monkey Business Images

LEARNING OUTCOMES 4

Summarize the theoretical perspectives of criminology.

GLOSSARY

theoretical criminology The type of criminology that is usually studied in colleges and universities, describes crime and its occurrence, and offers explanations for criminal behavior.

general theory A theory that attempts to explain most forms of criminal conduct through a single, overarching approach.

unicausal Of or having one cause. Theories posing one source for all that they attempt to explain.

integrated theory An explanatory perspective that merges concepts drawn from different sources.

social relativity The notion that social events are interpreted differently according to the cultural experiences and personal interests of the initiator, observer, or recipient of that behavior.

construction doesn't lessen the impact of victimization experienced by people affected by crime. Nor does this statement trivialize the significance of crime-prevention efforts or the activities of members of the criminal justice system. Crime has a measurable cost to individual victims and to society as a whole. Although a given instance of criminal behavior may have many causes, it may also carry with it many different meanings. There may be one meaning for offenders, another (generally quite different) for victims, and still another for agents of the criminal justice system. In view of this fact, all social interest groups (victims' advocates, prisoner “rights” advocates, and gun control organizations) interpret law-breaking behavior from their unique point of view. Then each arrives at different conclusions regarding resolving the so-called problems inherent in crime.

Think About It . . .

This textbook says that “criminal activity is diversely created and variously interpreted.” What does that mean? Similarly, what does it mean to say that “crime is fundamentally a social construction”? How does the concept of social relativity come into play in the field of criminology?



©Ilya Andriyanov/Shutterstock

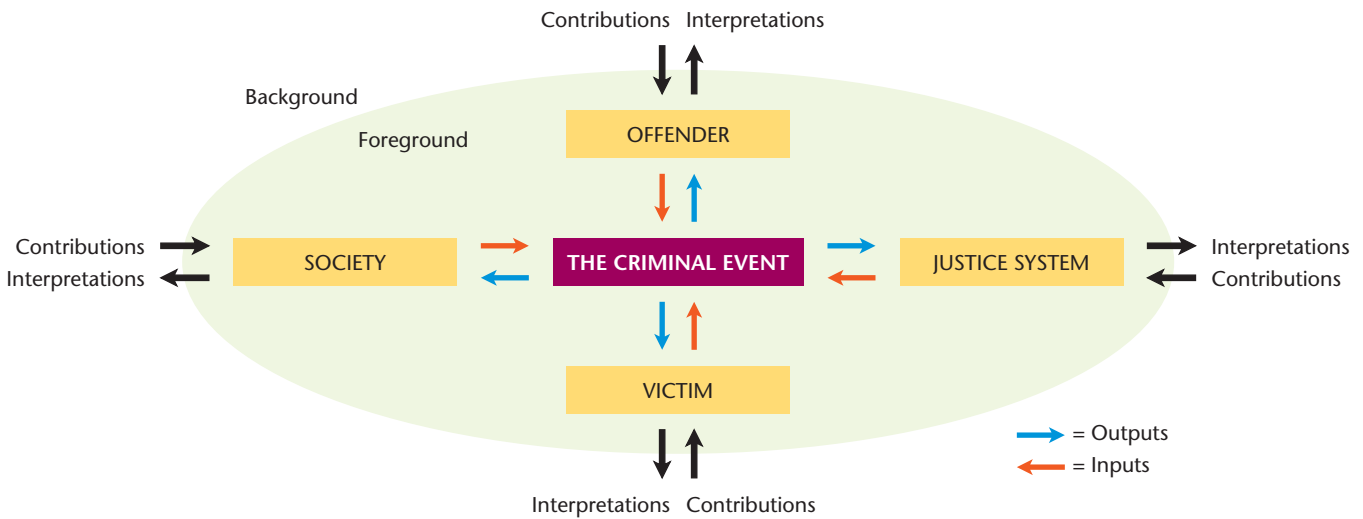


FIGURE 1-4 Interpreting the Criminal Event

For these reasons, criminologists apply the concept of **social relativity** to the study of criminality.²⁶ Social relativity means that social events are interpreted differently according to the cultural experiences and personal interests of the initiator, observer, or recipient of that behavior. This is why crime has a different meaning to the offender, the criminologist studying it, the police officer investigating it, and the victim experiencing it firsthand. (See Figure 1-4.)

Criminology's Interdisciplinary Nature

Academically, criminology is presently considered primarily a social scientific discipline. Nonetheless, contemporary criminologists recognize that their field is interdisciplinary—drawing on other disciplines to provide an integrated approach to crime in contemporary society and advancing solutions to the social problems that crime creates. Here, anthropology (cultural anthropology, or ethnology), biology, sociology, political science, psychology, psychiatry, economics, ethology (the study of character), medicine, law, philosophy, ethics, and numerous other fields all have something to offer the student of criminology. Other disciplines providing the tools to measure results are found in statistics, computer science, and other forms of scientific and data analysis. (See Figure 1-5.)

Many contemporary criminologists operate primarily from a sociological perspective. A large number of today's theoretical explanations of criminal behavior are routinely presented in the language of social science and emerge within the framework of sociological theory.

Some disagree with people who claim that the sociological perspective should be elevated in importance in today's criminological enterprise. Those who agree with the primacy of sociology emphasize the fact that the study of crime is a social phenomenon. Central to any study of crime, they say, is the social context of the criminal event because it brings victims and criminals together.²⁷ Moreover, much of contemporary criminology rests on a tradition of social scientific investigation into the nature of crime and criminal behavior, as rooted in European and American sociological thought and traditions that are well over 200 years old.²⁸

One of sociology's problems is its apparent reluctance to accept the significance of findings from research gathered in other fields. It traditionally has a frequent inability to integrate such findings into existing sociological understandings of crime. Another problem has been its seeming inability to demonstrate conclusively an effective means of controlling violent and other forms of crime. Diana Fishbein, professor of criminology at the University of Baltimore, says, "Sociological factors play a role. But they have not been able to explain why one person becomes violent and another doesn't."²⁹

While sociological theories continue to develop, new and emerging perspectives ask to be recognized. The role of biology in explaining criminal tendencies, for example, appears to be gaining strength as investigations into the mapping of human DNA continue. One expert puts it this way: "The future development of causal theory is dependent upon our movement toward integrated theories that involve biological, social, and cultural dimensions. Our failure to achieve much in the way of understanding the causal sequences of crime is in part a reflection of our slowness in moving toward multidisciplinary, integrated theoretical structures. . . . Fortunately in the last 20 years, this has begun to change. Today we see under way substantial

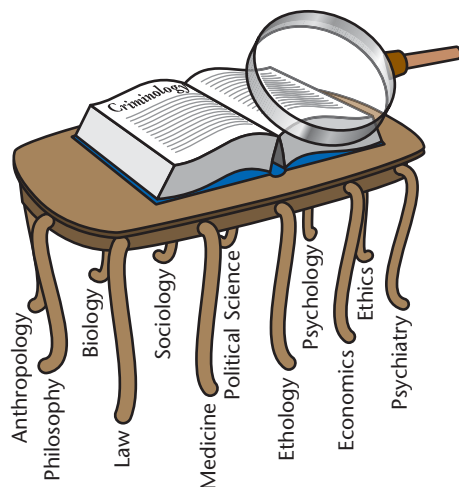


FIGURE 1-5 Criminology's Many Roots

Think About It . . .

This chapter says that sociological perspectives continue to dominate the field of criminology, but it also says that criminology is an interdisciplinary discipline. What does the word *interdisciplinary* mean in this context? How can both claims be true?



adisa/Fotolia

criminal justice is the *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*, which is compiled yearly by the BJS and made available in electronic format.

The UCR/NIBRS and the NCVS each uses its own specialized definitions in deciding which events should be scored as crimes. Sometimes the definitions vary considerably between programs, and none of the definitions used by the reporting agencies are strictly based on federal or state statutory crime classifications.

research efforts that are based upon models of explanation that far exceed the traditional sociological approaches.”³⁰

In line with current thought, it is highly likely that sociological perspectives will continue to dominate the field of criminology for some time to come. This dominance plays out because crime—regardless of the causative nuances identified in its development—occurs within the context of a social world. For this reason, the primary significance of crime and criminal behavior is fundamentally social in nature and only effective social policy will effectively curb criminal activity.

► Crime Facts

To fully understand the nature of crime, it is necessary to gain an appreciation for crime statistics—including how they are gathered, how they affect our understanding of crime, and how they are accessed. Such an appreciation helps criminologists keep types of crime in perspective and allows them to track increases and decreases in kinds of criminal activity.

The government-sponsored gathering of crime data for the nation as a whole began in the United States around 1930. Before then, the gathering of statistics was random at best and most accounts were anecdotal and spread by word of mouth or were printed in local newspapers (or both).

Today’s official U.S. crime statistics come from the BJS, which conducts the annual **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**, and from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which publishes yearly data under its summary-based **Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program** and its more detailed incident-driven **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**. NIBRS data provide a more complete picture of crimes reported and committed.

NCVS data appear in a number of annual reports, the most important of which is *Criminal Victimization in the United States*. FBI data take the form of the annual publication *Crime in the United States*. Numerous other surveys and reports are made available through the BJS. Such surveys not only cover the incidence of crime and criminal activity in the United States, but also extend to many other aspects of the criminal justice profession, including justice system expenditures, prisons and correctional data, probation and parole populations, jail inmate information, data on law enforcement agencies and personnel, and information on the activities of state and federal courts. These and other reports are generally made available free of charge to interested parties through the NCJRS.³¹ The largest single collection of facts about all aspects of U.S. crime and

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

The NCVS began collecting data in 1972. It differs from FBI-sponsored programs in one significant way: Rather than depending on reports of crimes to the police (as does UCR/NIBRS), the data contained in the NCVS consist of information from interviews with members of randomly selected households throughout the nation. Hence, the NCVS uncovers a large number of crimes that may not have been reported; therefore, compared to the UCR/NIBRS, the NCVS is regarded by many researchers as being a more accurate measure of the actual incidence of crime in the United States.

NCVS interviewers ask questions about the incidence of rape, personal robbery, aggravated and simple assault, household burglary, personal and household theft, and motor vehicle theft as they have affected household members during the past six months. Information is gathered on victims (including sex, age, race, ethnicity, marital status, income, and educational level), offenders (sex, age, race, and relationship to the victim), and crimes (time and place of occurrence, use of weapons, nature of injury, and economic consequences of the criminal activity for the victim). Questions also cover protective measures used by victims, the possibility of substance abuse by offenders, and the level of previous experience victims may have had with the criminal justice system.

The number of victimizations counted by the NCVS for any single reported criminal occurrence is based on the number of people victimized by the event. Hence, a robbery may have more than one victim and will be so reported in NCVS data. Although this distinction is applied to personal crimes, households are treated as individual units; thus, all household crimes are counted only once, no matter how many members the household contains.

LEARNING
OUTCOMES
5

Summarize the various ways crime is reported and measured.

GLOSSARY

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) An annual survey of selected American households conducted by the BJS to determine the extent of criminal victimization—especially unreported victimization—in the United States.

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program An FBI statistical reporting program that provides an annual summation of the incidence and rate of reported crimes throughout the United States.

According to the NCVS, on average, only 51% of violent victimizations and close to 39% of property crimes are reported to the police.³² While violent crimes are most likely to be reported to the police, personal thefts are the least likely crimes to be reported. NCVS data show that around 83% of motor vehicle thefts are reported to the police, making this the most highly reported crime. Larcenies, at 32%, are least likely to be reported. An interest in recovering property or in receiving insurance payments motivates many victims of property crimes to report their victimization to the police. The two most common reasons for not reporting violent victimizations are that the crime is a personal or private matter and that the offender was unsuccessful and the crime was only attempted.

32% Larcenies are the least likely crime to be reported at 32%.

available before 1973. As with the UCR/NIBRS, definitions of crimes measured by the NCVS do not necessarily correspond to any federal or state statutes or to definitions used for other purposes, making comparisons with other state and federal crime records difficult. Complicating matters still further, changes in NCVS categories have resulted in the inability to easily compare NCVS findings of even a decade ago with current NCVS data.³³

Critique of the NCVS

Just as the UCR/NIBRS has been criticized for underestimating the actual incidence of criminal activity in the United States, the NCVS can be criticized for possible overreporting. It is difficult to verify the actual occurrence of crimes reported to NCVS interviewers. Hence, no reliable measure exists as to the number of crimes that might be falsely reported or of the number of crimes that might be underreported in NCVS data. Although the proportion is not known, some individuals, when approached by NCVS interviewers, may be unable to resist embellishing crime reports pertaining to their households and may even concoct criminal incidence data for purposes of self-aggrandizement or in an attempt to please the interviewer by providing copious amounts of data.

The NCVS program is much newer than the FBI's UCR Program, and comparisons between the programs are not

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

The UCR Program was created by the FBI in 1929 as an official crime data-gathering program covering the entire United States. The UCR Program developed out of a national initiative by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), whose goal was to develop a set of uniform crime statistics for use by police agencies and policy makers. The FBI was designated to serve as a national clearinghouse on crime facts, and police agencies around the country began submitting data under the UCR Program. In its initial year of operation, 400 police departments representing cities and towns in 43 states participated in the program.

Early UCR data were structured in terms of seven major offense categories: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. These crimes, called **Part I offenses**, formed the FBI's Crime Index. The Crime Index provided a crime rate that could be compared over time from one geographic location to another. (See Figure 1-6.)

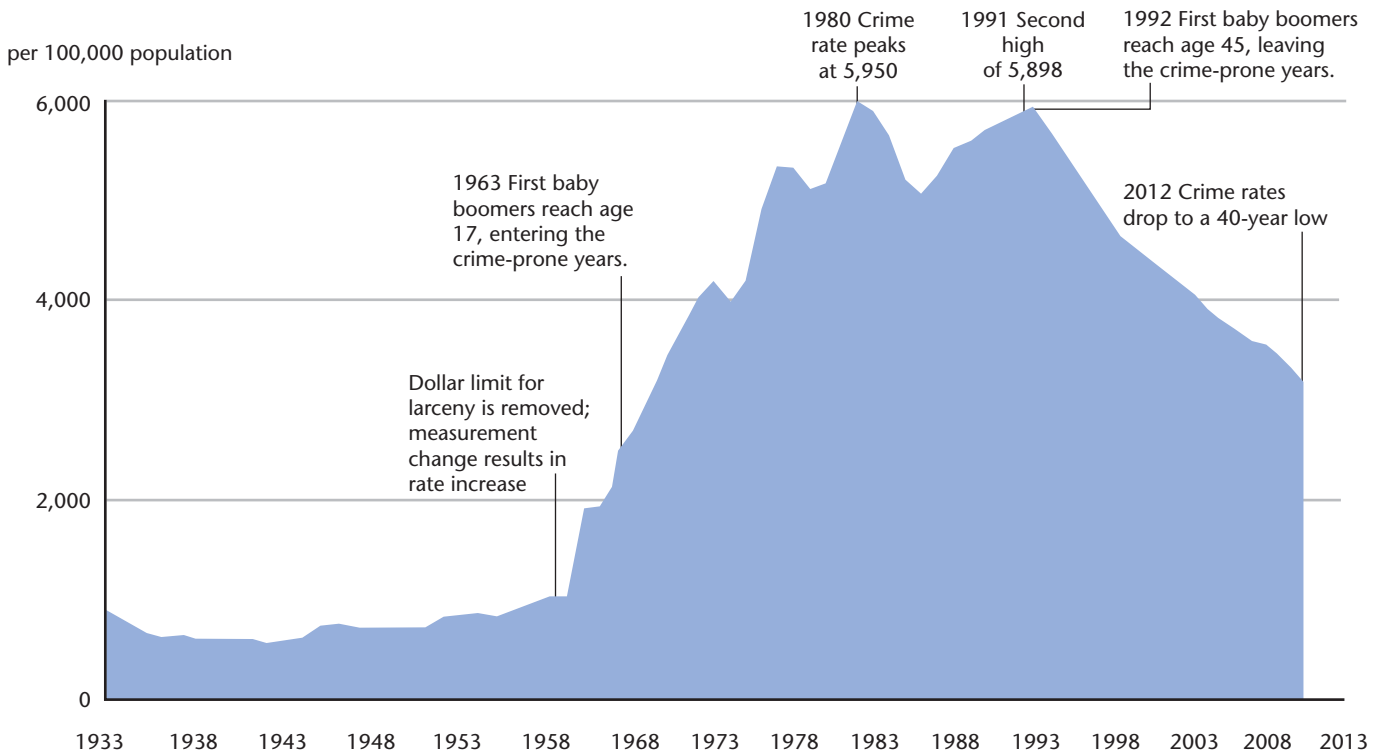


FIGURE 1-6 Crime Rates in the United States, 1933-2012

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

2010 CRIME CLOCK STATISTICS

A Violent Crime occurred every	25.3 seconds
One Murder every	35.6 minutes
One Forcible Rape every	6.2 minutes
One Robbery every	1.4 minutes
One Aggravated Assault every	40.5 minutes
A Property Crime occurred every	3.5 seconds
One Burglary every	14.6 minutes
One Larceny-theft every	5.1 minutes
One Motor Vehicle Theft every	42.8 minutes

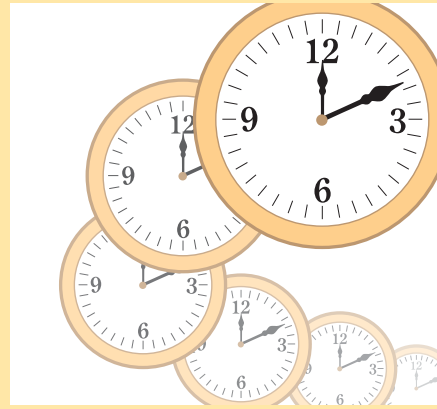


FIGURE 1-7 The FBI Crime Clock

100^k Rates of crime are generally expressed at number of offenses per 100,000 people.

Rates of crime under the UCR/NIBRS Program are generally expressed as “x number of offenses per 100,000 people.” The 2010 rate of criminal homicide, for example, was 4.8 murders for every 100,000 people in the United States.

In 1979, Congress mandated that arson be added to the list of major crimes offenses. Unfortunately, the inclusion of arson as an eighth index offense made it difficult to compare pre- and post-1979 Crime Indexes. For this and other reasons, the FBI officially discontinued use of the term *crime index* beginning with its report of crime data for 2005.³⁴

In today’s UCR/NIBRS reports, Part I offenses are subdivided into two categories: violent personal crimes consisting of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (which will be discussed in Chapter 8) and property crimes consisting of burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson (which will be discussed in Chapter 9). Figure 1-7, the FBI’s Crime Clock, is a graphic

representation of how often each major crime occurs. The data in the figure, however, should not be interpreted to mean that there is any regularity in the occurrence of a particular crime.

Each year, when the FBI issues its annual report, *Crime in the United States*, it includes information within each Part I offense category on the percentage of crimes that have been “cleared.” *Cleared crimes* are those crimes for which an arrest has been made or for which the perpetrator is known but an arrest is not possible (as when the offender is deceased or is out of the country). Cleared crimes are also referred to as “solved.” Those charged with a crime that is scored as cleared by the FBI may not yet have been adjudicated. In official UCR/NIBRS terminology, a Part I offense is regarded as cleared or solved when (1) “a law enforcement agency has charged at least one person with the offense” or (2) “a suspect has been identified and located and an arrest is justified, but action is prevented by circumstances outside law enforcement control.”³⁵ Clearance rates are reported for each Part I crime category. A **clearance rate** is the proportion of reported or discovered crimes within a given offense category that are solved. Figure 1-8 shows 2010 clearance rates for major crimes.

The most significant feature of the UCR Program is indicated by its name. It is a *reporting* program. In other words, only crimes that are reported to the police (or that are discovered by the police or by others who then report them to the police) are included in the statistics compiled by the program. Most complaints are made by victims.

Because UCR/NIBRS data are based on *reported* crime, the program has been criticized for seriously underestimating the true incidence of criminal activity in the United States—a measurement that would also include unreported crimes. Some experts say, for example, that rape is the most underreported crime in the FBI data, with four to five times as many rapes occurring each year as are reported. Reasons for not reporting a crime such as rape are numerous and include fear of the perpetrator, shame, fears the victim may have of not being believed, and fear of participation in the justice system.

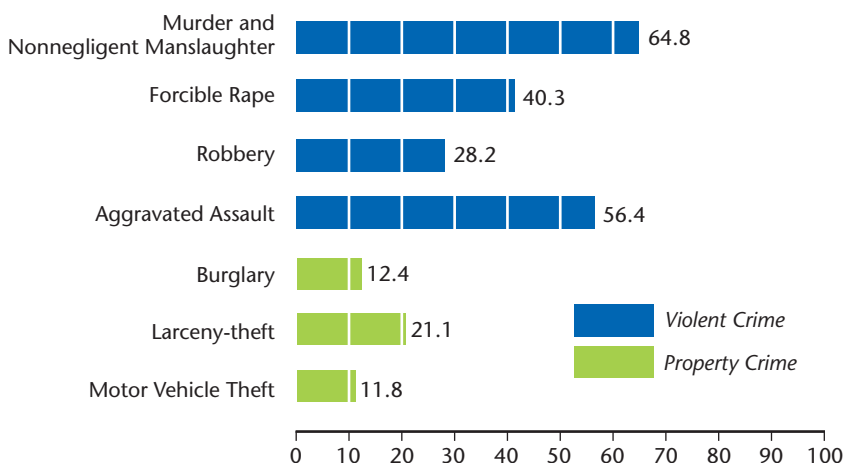


FIGURE 1-8 Percent of Crimes Cleared, 2010
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation.



1933–1959



From 1933 to 1941, the crime rate declined from 770 to 508 offenses per every 100,000 Americans.

In 1941 crime decreased sharply based on the large numbers of young men entering the military during WWII.

Young men make up the most crime-prone segment of the population, and their removal to European and Pacific theaters of war reduced the incidence of offending throughout the country. Crime rates remained low until 1960.

1960–1989

From 1960 to 1980, crime rates rose from 1,887 to 5,950 offenses per every 100,000 Americans.

Starting around 1960, crime rates began to increase based on several factors. The end of the war brought many young men home to the United States, and birthrates skyrocketed in the years between 1945 and 1955. By 1960 these baby boomers had become teenagers and had entered a crime-prone age.

Also, reporting procedures were simplified and publicity surrounding crime increased the number of reports. Police agencies were becoming more professional, resulting in increased data and more accurate data collection. Moreover, the 1960s were tumultuous years. The Vietnam War, civil rights struggles, and an influx of drugs combined to create an imbalance in society that led to an increase in crime.



Source: Schmallegger, Frank, *Criminal Justice Today: An Introductory Text for the 21st Century*, 11th ed., ©2011. Reprinted and Electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Although rape is indeed seriously underreported (a conclusion drawn from comparison of NCVS and UCR/NIBRS rape statistics), many other crimes are underreported as well. The most seriously underreported crime may be larceny because the theft of small items never make it into official police reports.

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

A new and enhanced statistical reporting system that collects data on each single incident and arrest within 22 crime categories. NIBRS expands the data collected under the UCR Program.

Part I offenses The crimes of murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft, as defined under the FBI's UCR Program. Also called *major crimes*.

clearance rate The proportion of reported or discovered crimes within a given offense category that are solved.

NIBRS: A Newer UCR Data Format

Recently, the UCR Program has undergone a number of significant changes, and more are scheduled to be implemented shortly as a new, enhanced, incident-driven crime-reporting system is phased in. The new system, the NIBRS, revises the definitions of a number of offenses for reporting purposes, but its "incident-driven" nature is its most important feature. Incident-driven means that the FBI will use the NIBRS system to collect detailed data on the circumstances surrounding

each serious criminal incident. NIBRS reports are more detailed than those previously provided under the UCR Program. The NIBRS data-collection format focuses on each single incident and arrest within 22 crime categories, with incident, victim, property, offender, and arrestee information being gathered when available.

The 22 NIBRS crime categories are, in turn, made up of 46 specific crimes called "Group A offenses" (as compared with only 8 major offenses on which the old UCR Program gathered data). In addition to Group A offenses, there are 11 Group B offense categories for which only arrest data are reported. The goal of NIBRS is to make data on reported crime more useful by relating them more completely than the old system did to other available information, such as victim and offender characteristics.³⁶ Because the UCR Program is currently undergoing a transition in format that involves more complete use of NIBRS data, we refer to UCR information cited in this book as UCR/NIBRS data.

► Changing Crime Patterns

Since official crime statistics were first gathered around 1930, there have been three major shifts in crime rates. The first occurred during the early 1940s at the outbreak of the Second World War, when crime decreased sharply due to the large number of young men who entered military service. Young males make up the most "crime-prone" segment of the population, and their participation in the war efforts abroad did much to lower crime rates at home. From 1933–1941, the Crime Index declined from 770 to 508 offenses per every 100,000 members of the U.S. population.³⁷

The second significant shift in offense statistics was a dramatic increase in most forms of crime that began in the 1960s and ended in the 1990s. Many criminologists believe that this shift also had a link to World War II. With the end of the war and the return of millions of young men to civilian life, birth rates skyrocketed between 1945 and 1955, creating a postwar baby boom. By 1960, baby boomers were entering their teenage years.

1990–2010



From 1991 to 2010, crime rates dropped from 5,897 to 3,345 offenses per every 100,000 Americans. Strict laws, an expanded justice system, and increased police funding for personnel and for crime-fighting technologies are cited as reasons for the drop in crime.

Other changes beyond the control of the police may have played a role as well and include economic expansion and an aging population. During the 1990s, unemployment decreased by 36% and likely contributed to the decline in crime rates.

2011–present



In recent years some cities have experienced increases in homicides and other violent crimes. A fourth shift in crime trends may be about to begin. Economic uncertainty, increased jobless rates, a growing number of ex-convicts back on the streets as well as an increase in teen populations and gang activity may soon lead to sustained increases in crime.

A disproportionate number of young people in the U.S. population produced a dramatic increase in most major crimes.

Other factors contributed to the increase in reported crime during the same period. Crimes that may have gone undetected in the past began to figure more prominently in official statistics. Similarly, the growing professionalization of some police departments resulted in more accurate and increased data collection, making some of the most progressive departments appear to be associated with the largest crime increases.³⁸ Finally, the 1960s were tumultuous years, punctuated by the Vietnam War, a vibrant civil rights struggle, the heady growth of secularism, dramatic increases in the divorce rate, diverse forms of “liberation,” and the influx of psychedelic and other drugs. As a consequence, social norms were blurred and group control over individual behavior declined substantially. According to the FBI, from 1960–1980, crime rates rose from 1,887 to 5,950 offenses per every 100,000 members of the U.S. population.

Crime rates recorded by the FBI continued to remain high, with the exception of a brief decline in the early 1980s, when postwar boomers began to “age out” of the crime-prone years and U.S. society emerged from the cultural drift that had characterized the previous 20 years. About the same time, however, an increase in drug-related criminal activity led crime rates to soar once again, especially in the area of violent crime. Crime rates peaked around 1991 and have since shown a third major shift, with decreases in the rates of most major crimes being reported since that time. Between 1991 and 2010, the crime rate decreased from 5,898 to 3,345 offenses per every 100,000 citizens, sending it to levels not seen since 1968.

Decreases in crime since the mid-1990s may have been largely due to an “aging out” of the post-World War II baby-boomer

generation (members of which are now mostly too old to continue active criminal lifestyles), new strict laws, expanded justice system and police funding, changes in crime-fighting technologies, and economic factors.

While the two-decade-long decline in crime that took place beginning in 1991 is noteworthy, it did not even begin to bring the overall rate of crime in this country anywhere close to the low crime rates characteristic of the early 1940s and the 1950s. From a long-term perspective, even with recent declines, crime rates in this country remain more than seven times what they were in 1940. (See the Timeline of American Crime Rates: Historical Trends.)

Recent evidence seems to indicate that the decline in crime is ending and that we may be on the cusp of a new cycle of increased crime. Some criminologists think that recent economic uncertainty, an increased jobless rate among unskilled workers, growing state budget deficits resulting in prison closures and an ever-larger number of ex-convicts back on the streets, the recent growth in the teenage population in this country, the increasing influence of violent gangs, copycat crimes, and the overall reduction in justice systems resources brought about by the recent recession may soon lead to sustained increases in crime.³⁹

LEARNING OUTCOMES 6

Summarize statistics and trends in U.S. crime rates.

GLOSSARY

dark figure of crime The large number of unreported and undiscovered crimes that never make it into official crime statistics.

self-report surveys A survey in which anonymous respondents, without fear of disclosure or arrest, are asked to report confidentially any violations of the criminal law they have committed.

Unreported Crime

As a comparison of NCVS and UCR/NIBRS data shows, many crimes are not reported, leading criminologists to talk about the “dark figure of crime.”⁴⁰ The **dark figure of crime** refers to the large number of unreported and undiscovered crimes that never make it into official crime statistics. (See Figure 1–9). Crime’s dark figure is sometimes glimpsed through offender self-reports, also known as offender **self-report surveys**, in which anonymous respondents without fear of disclosure or arrest are asked to report confidentially any violations of the criminal law they have committed. Unfortunately for researchers, self-reports of crime are too often limited to asking questions only about petty offenses (such as shoplifting or simple theft), are usually conducted among young people such as high school or college students (and hence may not provide results that are representative of the wider population), typically focus on juvenile delinquency rather than adult criminality, and cannot guarantee that respondents have told the truth. Limitations aside, some criminologists believe that “the development and widespread use of the self-report method of collecting data on delinquent and criminal behavior was one of the most important innovations in criminological research in the twentieth century.”⁴¹

Some criminologists think that recent economic uncertainty, an increased jobless rate among unskilled workers, the growing number of ex-convicts who are back on the streets, the recent growth in the teenage population in this country, the increasing influence of violent gangs, copycat crimes, and the overall reduction in justice systems resources brought about by the recent recession may soon lead to sustained increases in crime.

Some of the more recent and best-known self-report surveys include the National Youth Survey (NYS) and the Monitoring the Future study. Begun in 1976, the NYS surveyed a national sample of 1,725 youths between the ages of 11 and 17.⁴² Members of the group (or “panel”) were interviewed each year for five years between 1977 and 1981 and later at three-year intervals. The survey, which was last conducted in 1993, followed the original respondents into their thirties. Self-report data were compared

with official data over time, and data were gathered on a wide variety of variables. Among other things, researchers found that (1) females are involved in a much higher proportion of crime than previously thought, (2) race differentials in crime are smaller than traditional data sources (that is, the UCR/NIBRS) indicated, and (3) violent offenders begin lives of crime much earlier than previous estimates provided by official statistics indicated. The NYS also found a consistent progression from less serious to more serious acts of delinquency over time.

Monitoring the Future⁴³ is an ongoing national self-report study of the behaviors, attitudes, and values of U.S. secondary

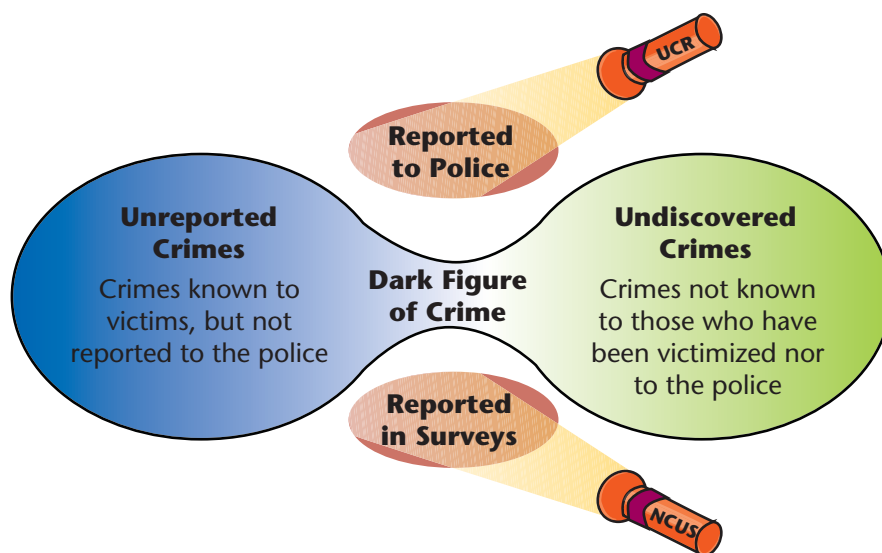


FIGURE 1–9 The Dark Figure of Crime

school students, college students, and young adults. The study began in 1975, and each year a total of almost 50,000 eighth-, tenth-, and twelfth-grade students are surveyed. (Twelfth graders have been surveyed since 1975; eighth and tenth graders, since 1991.) In addition, annual follow-up questionnaires are mailed to a sample of each graduating class for a number of years after students' initial participation.

► **Criminology and Social Policy**

Criminologists make use of contemporary social scientific research methods in the development of criminological theories. The use of rigorous social scientific techniques to develop knowledge in the field of criminology is referred to as **evidence-based criminology** (also called *knowledge-based criminology*). The research conducted by today's criminologists results in a body of scientific evidence applicable to the problems and realities of today's world. Because contemporary criminology is built on a social scientific approach to the subject matter of crime, the discipline has much to offer as we attempt to grapple with the problems of crime and crime control.

In 2009, in recognition of the growing significance of evidence-based criminology, the executive board of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) established a new division of experimental criminology; the division's purpose is "the promotion and improvement of experimental evidence and methods in the advancement of criminological theory and evidence-based crime policy."⁴⁴

Today, evidence-based criminology is given voice by the Academy of Experimental Criminology, which is based at the University of Pennsylvania, and by a number of important new journals including the *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, which is the first journal in the field of criminology to focus directly on experimental methods.⁴⁵

The ultimate outcome of criminological research is effective social policies based on scientific evidence. Translating the results of research in the field of criminology into workable social policy is sometimes referred to as **translational criminology**. The NIJ, an arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, explains it this way: "The idea of translational criminology is simple, yet powerful: If we want to prevent, reduce and manage crime, we must be able to translate scientific discoveries into policy and practice."⁴⁶

Evidence-based criminology is an increasingly popular form of contemporary criminology that is founded on the experimental method.

It is not always easy to translate research into practice, however, even when solid evidence points to needed changes in policy. Some policy implications, such as those relating to the physical environment, are relatively easy to implement. Most criminologists agree that such changes, such as installing brighter lighting in crime-prone areas, can be effective at preventing crime and must be easy to implement.⁴⁷

Other policy innovations, especially those calling for cultural or social changes, can be difficult to implement, even when there is strong evidence for their likely success. In a recent example, an editorial in the highly regarded British magazine *New Scientist* asked this question: "Why are we so reluctant to accept that on-screen violence is bad for us?"⁴⁸ The article, entitled "In Denial," noted that "by the time the average U.S. schoolchild leaves elementary school, he or she will have witnessed more than 8,000 murders and 100,000 other acts of violence on television." For children who play computer games and watch cable TV, the numbers will be far higher. Scientific studies show the obvious detrimental effects of media violence, according to the article, "yet every time a study claims to have found a link between aggression, violence, educational, or behavioral problems and TV programs or computer games, there are cries of incredulity..."⁴⁹

A number of professional groups—including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry—agree that violence in television, music, video games, and movies leads to increased levels of violent behavior among children.⁵⁰ A joint statement issued by those organizations says that the effects of violence in the media "are measurable and long-lasting." The groups reached the conclusion "based on over 30 years of research ... that viewing entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values and behaviors, particularly in children." Moreover, "prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to emotional desensitization toward violence in real life." Similarly, some years ago, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a report⁵¹ on teenage violence that concluded that "Hollywood aggressively markets violent movies, music and electronic games to children even when they have been labeled as appropriate only for adults."⁵²

LEARNING OUTCOMES 7

Explain how criminology works with other disciplines and how it impacts the making of laws and social policy.

GLOSSARY

evidence-based criminology A form of contemporary criminology that makes use of rigorous social scientific techniques, especially randomized controlled experiments, and the systematic review of research results; also called *knowledge-based criminology*.

translational criminology A form of contemporary criminology that seeks to translate research findings in the field into practical and workable policy initiatives.

social policy A government initiative, person, or plan intended to address problems in society.

Think About It . . .

This chapter says that in an ideal world, evidence-based criminological research should be translated into effective social policy. What is evidence-based criminology? Why doesn't the evidence of "what works" always lead to effective social policy?



© jpainting/Fotolia

Even after these results, however, policy makers are reluctant to slow the production of violent media. For this reason, violence on TV and in video games is still prominent in the United States.

8,000 By the time the average U.S. school child leaves elementary school, he or she will have witnessed more than 8,000 murders on television.

New Scientist says media vendors dissuade "any criticism of a multibillion-dollar business" where they would lose profits resulting from any policies aimed at crime reduction.⁵³

Professional criminologists understand the necessity of linking sound **social policy** to the objective findings of well-conducted criminological research. In the words of NIJ, "Successful dissemination of the results of criminological research" requires that the evidence be implemented correctly. In other words, "it is not just about finding evidence that something works; it is figuring out why it works and how to implement the evidence in real-world settings."⁵⁴

Colton Harris-Moore (The Barefoot Bandit)

On January 27, 2012, Colton Harris-Moore, 21, was sentenced to six and one-half years in federal prison for dozens of crimes he had committed in three different countries. Harris-Moore, who gained celebrity for his widely publicized attempts to evade arrest, came to be known as the “Barefoot Bandit” because he reportedly committed some of his crimes while barefoot.ⁱ

Harris-Moore began living a survivalist lifestyle in his home state of Washington at age 7 and would break into homes and businesses to steal food, blankets, and other supplies. At 12, he was convicted of possessing stolen property, and he quickly built a record of continued juvenile offenses. Diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and depression, he was ordered to community service or brief stays in a detention facility following each offense. By 2008, then 17-year-old Harris-Moore was stealing ever more expensive items and was sentenced to spend three years in a halfway house. He fled soon after arriving at the home.ⁱⁱ

His criminal career eventually expanded to include more than 100 larcenies, involving thefts of cars, bicycles, boats, and airplanes. Eventually, Harris-Moore went on the run, leaving a trail of thefts and stolen vehicles from the state of Washington to Indiana. He became a sensation on Facebook when a fan page was created to follow his exploits. On July 4, 2010, he stole a Cessna single-engine airplane from the Bloomington, Indiana, airport and, using skills he had learned from flight simulation software and airplane manuals, flew it to Great Abaco Island in the Bahamas, where he crash-landed in water. After drinking beer in a local bar, Harris-Moore stole a 44-foot power boat from a marina on Great Abaco and used it to travel to nearby Eleuthera Island. Spotted by authorities, he attempted to flee, but officers shot out the engine and captured him.

On December 16, 2011, Harris-Moore was sentenced in Island County, Washington, to more than seven years in prison on charges ranging from identity theft and theft of a firearm to residential burglary. His lawyers had argued that he was abused as a child,

suffered from prenatal alcohol exposure, and was raised by a drunken mother. In a statement provided to the judge, Harris-Moore said that his childhood was one he wouldn't wish on his “darkest enemies.” Judge Vickie Churchill apparently agreed, saying, “This case is a tragedy in many ways, but it's a triumph of the human spirit in other ways.” Describing Harris-Moore's childhood as a “mind numbing absence of hope,” she stated that the 20-year-old was genuinely remorseful for his crimes.ⁱⁱⁱ

In an e-mail a few days after his sentencing in state court, Harris-Moore wrote to his supporters, saying, “When all the acting and spreading of high propaganda on the part of the state was over and my lawyers argued the true facts, the judge gave me a much-appreciated recognition and validation, calling my story a ‘triumph of the human spirit.’ She wasn't having none of the weak argument the prosecution tried to peddle, and ended up handing down a sentence that was the lowest possible within the range. . . . Once again, I made it through a situation I shouldn't have.”^{iv}

Harris-Moore has said that he plans to study in preparation for applying to college to earn a degree in aeronautical engineering. Fox bought the movie rights in a deal that could be worth \$1.3 million, and Dustin Lance Black, who won an Academy Award for writing the movie *Milk*, about the gay rights activist Harvey Milk, is working on the screenplay.

ⁱLaura L. Myers, “‘Barefoot Bandit’ gets 6.5 Years of Federal Time,” *Chicago Tribune* via Reuters, January 27, 2012, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-barefoot-bandit-sentencingtre80q1tm-20120127,0,4418476.story> (accessed March 1, 2012).

ⁱⁱManual Valdes, “‘Barefoot Bandit’ Sentenced to 6½ Years,” *Pantagraph.com* via AP, January 31, 2012, http://www.pantagraph.com/news/weird-news/barefoot-bandit-sentenced-to-years/article_e671e808-4c28-11e1-81c6-0019bb2963f4.html (accessed May 2, 2012).

ⁱⁱⁱCharles Montaldo, “‘Barefoot Bandit’ Gets 6½ Federal Years,” *About.com/Crime and Punishment*, January 28, 2012, <http://crime.about.com/b/2012/01/28/barefoot-bandit-gets-7-federal-years.htm> (accessed March 2, 2012).

^{iv}Gene Johnson, “‘Barefoot Bandit’ Emails Ridicule Law Enforcement,” *Associated Press*, January 25, 2012, http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/barefoot-bandit-emails-ridicule-law-enforcement-15432245#.Tyn_mNSRak (accessed May 1, 2012).

The case of the Barefoot Bandit raises several interesting questions:

1. What led Harris-Moore to embark on a crime spree?
2. What role did his mother and father (or his mother's boyfriends) play in contributing to Harris-Moore's criminal lifestyle?
3. Would Harris-Moore have turned to crime had he been raised under different circumstances? Explain.



LEARNING
OUTCOMES

1

Differentiate between crime, deviance, and delinquency.

Crime is human conduct that violates the criminal law. Without a law defining a particular form of behavior, there is no crime, no matter how deviant or socially repugnant the behavior in question may be. Many crimes are deviant or abnormal forms of behavior. Not all deviance, however, is criminal, and some crimes are not seen as deviant by those who commit them—or by significant segments of the population.

1. What is crime? Who determines what is and is not criminal? How are such determinations made?

2. What is deviance? How do we know what is and is not deviant?

3. How does delinquency differ from crime?

crime Human conduct that violates the criminal laws of a state, the federal government, or a local jurisdiction that has the power to make and enforce the laws.

criminalize To make an act illegal.

deviant behavior Human activity that violates social norms.

statute A formal written enactment of a legislative body.

delinquency Violations of the criminal law and other misbehavior committed by young people.

LEARNING
OUTCOMES

2

Explain how the consensus perspective differs from the pluralist perspective.

While it is easy to agree that certain behaviors, such as murder, should be criminal, it is not so easy to agree on other forms of behaviors—especially those that seem to involve willing participants.

1. What is the consensus perspective?
2. What is the pluralistic perspective?
3. How does the consensus perspective differ from the pluralist perspective?

consensus perspective A viewpoint that holds that laws should be enacted to criminalize given forms of behavior when members of society agree that such laws are necessary.

pluralist perspective A viewpoint that recognizes the importance of diversity in our society and says that behaviors are typically criminalized through a political process.

LEARNING
OUTCOMES

3

Describe criminology and the role of criminologists.

Criminology is the scientific study of crime and criminal behavior. Criminologists are credentialed individuals holding advanced degrees in the field and studying crime, criminal behavior, and crime trends.

1. What does a criminologist do?
2. How do the duties of a criminologist differ from those of criminalists?
3. How is a criminologist different from a police officer?
4. What is criminology?
5. What do criminologists study?

6. How does criminology cooperate with other disciplines to prevent and solve crimes?

criminologist A person trained in the field of criminology who studies crime, criminals, and criminal behavior.

criminalist “A specialist in the collection and examination of the physical evidence of crime.”

criminology The scientific study of crime and criminal behavior, including their manifestations, causes, legal aspects, and control.

criminal justice The scientific study of crime, criminal law, the criminal justice system, police, courts, and correctional systems.

LEARNING
OUTCOMES

4

Summarize the theoretical perspectives of criminology.

While some crimes are especially difficult to understand, our natural tendency is to seek out explanations for such behavior, and we look to criminology for answers about how to prevent crime. Crime, however, is not an isolated individual activity, but a social event. Consequently, every crime has a unique set of causes, consequences, and participants.

1. What is theoretical criminology?
2. What is a general theory?
3. What does theory integration mean within the context of the study of criminology?

4. Explain how the concept of social relativity applies to crime and to particular types of crimes.

theoretical criminology The type of criminology that is usually studied in colleges and universities, describes crime and its occurrence, and offers explanations for criminal behavior.

general theory A theory that attempts to explain most forms of criminal conduct through a single, overarching approach.

unicausal Of or having one cause. Theories posing one source for all that they attempt to explain.

integrated theory An explanatory perspective that merges concepts drawn from different sources.

social relativity The notion that social events are interpreted differently according to the cultural experiences and personal interests of the initiator, observer, or recipient of that behavior.

LEARNING
OUTCOMES

5

Summarize the various ways crime is reported and measured.

To fully understand the nature of crime, it is necessary to gain an appreciation for crime statistics—including how they are gathered, how they affect our understanding of crime, and how they are accessed. Such an appreciation helps criminologists keep types of crime in perspective and allows criminologists to track increases and decreases in kinds of criminal activity.

1. What federal agency runs the Uniform Crime Reporting Program?
2. What are the eight major crimes about which the Uniform Crime Reporting Program gathers data?
3. What is NIBRS? How does it work to improve the Uniform Crime Reporting Program?
4. What is the National Crime Victimization Survey? How does it differ from the Uniform Crime Reporting Program?

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) An annual survey of selected American households conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics to determine the extent of criminal victimization—especially unreported victimization—in the United States.

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program An FBI statistical reporting program that provides an annual summation of the incidence and rate of reported crimes throughout the United States.

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) A new and enhanced statistical reporting system that collects data on each single incident and arrest within 22 crime categories. NIBRS expands the data collected under the Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Part I Offenses The crimes of murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft, as defined under the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Also called *major crimes*.

clearance rate The proportion of reported or discovered crimes within a given offense category that are solved.

LEARNING
OUTCOMES

6

Summarize statistics and trends in U.S. crime rates.

Since official crime statistics were first gathered around 1930, there have been three major shifts in crime rates. The first occurred during the early 1940s at the outbreak of the Second World War, when crime decreased sharply. The second was a dramatic increase in most forms of crime that began in the 1960s and ended in the 1990s. Crime rates peaked around 1991 and have since shown a third major shift, with decreases in the rates of most major crimes being reported since that time.

1. What are the three major shifts in crime rates that have occurred in the United States since the 1930s?
2. Explain what is meant by the term *dark figure of crime*. Why are many crimes not reported?
3. Why are self-report surveys useful in uncovering the true extent of crime in American society?

dark figure of crime The large number of unreported and undiscovered crimes that never make it into official crime statistics.

self-report surveys A survey in which anonymous respondents, without fear of disclosure or arrest, are asked to report confidentially any violations of the criminal law they have committed.

LEARNING
OUTCOMES
7

Explain how criminology works with other disciplines and how it impacts the making of laws and social policy.

More important than criminological theorizing are social policies based on research findings. Nonetheless, policy innovations, especially those calling for cultural or social changes, can be difficult to implement, even when there is strong support for their likely success.

1. What is evidence-based criminology? How does the meaning of the word *evidence* in *evidence-based criminology* differ from criminal evidence?
2. How might theoretical understandings of crime causation lead to policies intended to prevent criminal activity?

3. How can evidence-based criminology contribute to the creation of effective social policy?

evidence-based criminology A form of contemporary criminology that makes use of rigorous social scientific techniques, especially randomized controlled experiments, and the systematic review of research results; also called *knowledge-based criminology*.

translational criminology A form of contemporary criminology that seeks to translate research findings in the field into practical and workable policy initiatives.

social policy A government initiative, person, or plan intended to address problems in society.

MyCJLab

Go to Chapter 1 in *MyCJLab* to test your mastery of chapter concepts, access your Study Plan, engage in interactive exercises, complete critical-thinking and research assignments, and view related online videos.



Review: Complete the pre-test in the Study Plan to confirm what you know and what you need to study further. Then complete the post-test to confirm your mastery of the concepts. Use the key term flash cards to review key terminology.



Apply: Complete the interactive simulation activity.



Analyze: Complete assignments as directed by your instructor.



Current Events: Explore CJSearch for current topical videos, articles, and news pieces.

Additional Links

Visit the home page of the CBS hit show *CSI* at <http://www.cbs.com/shows/csi> and become a fan of *NCIS* on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/NCIS>.

Watch dozens of YouTube videos from the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at <http://www.youtube.com/user/cisMason/videos>.

Learn more about the public's view of crime from opinion polls at <http://www.pollingreport.com/crime.htm#Fear>. Read about the interdisciplinary nature of criminology at <http://www.csudh.edu/dearhabermas/osgood.htm>.

See a Federal Trade Commission publication on marketing violent entertainment to children at <http://www.justicestudies.com/pubs/vioreport.pdf>.

Visit the American Society of Criminology and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences on the Web at <http://www.asc41.com> and <http://www.acjs.org>.

Learn more about contemporary crime and public policy at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=719766>.

Follow the author's tweets about the latest crime and justice news at <http://twitter.com/@schmallegger>.