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CRIMINOLOGY

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Criminology is the body of knowledge regarding crime as a social phenomenon. In an early analysis, Edwin Sutherland (1947) observed that criminology examines the processes of making laws, breaking laws, and reacting to the breaking of laws.

These processes are three aspects of a somewhat unified sequence of interactions. Certain acts which are regarded as undesirable are defined by the political society as crimes. In spite of this definition, some people persist in the behavior and thus commit crimes; the political society reacts by punishment or other treatment or by prevention. This sequence of interactions is the object-matter of criminology. (P. 1)

Accordingly, criminology can be divided into three branches: the study of law making, the study of law breaking, and the study of reactions to law breaking. Because the subjects of law making and reactions to law breaking are considered elsewhere in this *Handbook*, we will focus on the second branch, law breaking.

With respect to crime, sociologists have pursued several lines of investigation. They have sought to determine the patterns of crime—the manner in which criminal behavior is distributed along dimensions of time and space as well as social structure. They have endeavored to explain crime, determining the conditions that not only differentiate criminals from noncriminals but also account for the occurrence of crime. And they have explored the manner in which crime can be prevented. We will discuss these lines of inquiry in turn. Before we take up the distribution of crime, though, we need to consider its measurement.

MEASURING CRIME

A basic question of any intellectual discipline is “How do we know what we know?” Criminology is an empirical discipline and therefore relies on the scientific method to observe and document crime. Researchers rely on a variety of methods to measure the nature and extent of crime phenomena. Most of the scientific methods that criminologists use are quantitative, seeking to count the number and type of crimes and the correlates of crime. Researchers use two main types of quantitative data: secondary data generated from official sources and primary data generated from self-reports of offending and victimization.

The most important source of information used to measure the nature and extent of crime is official data drawn from police records. Since 1930, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has sponsored a nationwide program to compile a statistical description of crime in the United States. Today, more than 17,000 police agencies participate each year in this data collection and reporting program, known as the Uniform Crime Report (UCR). The UCR contains information about crimes that are known to police and crimes that have been cleared by police, commonly through arrest. Criminologists often use UCR data to construct a crime rate based on crimes reported to police or arrests made by police. A crime rate is preferable to a crime count because the rate takes into account the population of the area being described. For example, in the United States, UCR data for 2003 show a total of 16,503 murders known to police, a seemingly large number.

However, given the size of the nation's population—nearly 280 million people—the murder rate in 2003 was 5.7 murders per 100,000 people, among the lowest in the past four decades (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2004). The UCR provides information about crime by region, community type, and locality. Information regarding the age, race, and sex of criminals is limited to crimes known to police that have been cleared by arrest.

Until recently, the UCR classified serious crimes as "Index" or Part I crimes and less serious crimes as Part II crimes. Eight crimes are catalogued as index crimes: murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Criminologists, policymakers, and the media have traditionally relied on index crime data to track changes in serious crime over time and across space. Index data are a composite that belie large differences in the frequency of any particular offense. For example, the least serious offense, larceny-theft, accounts for more than 60 percent of Part I crimes as a group (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2004). Thus, fluctuations in more serious crimes, such as murder and rape, may be masked by the sheer volume of property crimes, like larceny. Crime researchers have recognized this fact and typically divide index crimes into two categories: violent crimes and property crimes.

The FBI is currently implementing a new data collection program, called the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The NIBRS is designed to improve on the UCR by including more-detailed information about criminal events—the circumstances of the offenses and characteristics of the participants—that become known to police. This is a new approach in two respects. First, the NIBRS uses incidents as the primary unit of analysis. Second, it expands on the UCR by providing more detail about the nature and types of specific offenses in each crime incident, including information about the victim(s) and offender(s) involved in the incident, the type and value of property stolen, and the characteristics of those arrested.

Although the UCR and NIBRS contain a wealth of information, official records are problematic. Perhaps the most significant problem is that a substantial proportion of all crime goes unreported to police. Unreported crimes represent the so-called "dark figure" of crime because their nature and extent are unknown. Another weakness of official records is that they are collected, recorded, and reported by persons other than researchers and thus are secondary data. As Thorsten Sellin (1931) stated, each layer of administration in the collection of official crime data increases the potential for distortion, bias, or error, simultaneously decreasing the value of the data. Data derived from police records have also been criticized as political artifacts that reflect the interests and internal operational logics of law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, UCR data collection guidelines employ a decision rule, known as the hierarchy rule of classification, which

sacrifices information about criminal episodes involving more than one crime. It is frequently the case when a crime occurs that several laws are broken. However, the hierarchy rule means that police report to the FBI only the most serious crime in the incident. The rule systematically biases UCR data downward. A final weakness is that official records provide limited information about the correlates of crime, such as victim and offender relationship, sex by race composition of offender and victim, and offender drug and alcohol use. The NIBRS is designed to improve official records with regard to the last two criticisms—namely, the hierarchy rule and the limited correlates of crime.

Largely in response to concern about the validity of official data, researchers have devised other methods of collecting information about crime. Chief among these are self-report surveys. The advantage of survey methodology is that researchers are directly involved in collecting primary data from participants in crime. This provides researchers with more control over data collection and facilitates hypothesis testing. Self-report surveys typically come in two forms. One type asks participants to report on their own offending. The other type asks participants to report on their victimization experiences.

A self-report survey of offending asks a sample of individuals whether and how often they have engaged in any of a number of offenses during a particular period of time. Thornberry and Krohn (2000) trace the advent of self-report methodology to Sutherland's (1940) observation that respectable, middle-class people are likely to commit crimes but unlikely to wind up in police records. Perhaps inspired by Sutherland's observation, Porterfield's work (1946) was the first to employ the self-report method in studies of criminal and delinquent behavior. His work demonstrated the utility of self-reports for studies of crime and delinquency. The research of Short and Nye (1958) is most responsible for establishing self-reports as a methodological pillar of criminology. Over the years, criminologists have invested substantial resources in improving the self-report method by developing techniques to increase both the validity and the reliability of self-reported crime and delinquency (Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981).

Self-report surveys of offending can be distinguished by their substantive focus and sample design. A common approach has been to survey adolescents by using schools as sampling points. Among the most prominent examples of this is the Monitoring the Future project, an annual survey regarding drug use conducted with a nationally representative sample of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders (Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman 1996). Other survey approaches employ general population samples in an effort to survey criminal or delinquent behavior. One of the major national surveys of delinquency is the National Youth Survey (NYS) (Elliott 1983). The NYS uses a national probability sampling design to sample over 1,700 youth ages 11–17 and questions respondents about their delinquent involvement as well as matters reflecting a variety of attitudinal

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and experiential issues. Like many other self-report surveys, the NYS provides criminologists with data that enable them to address etiological questions. Further, the NYS employs a panel design, allowing researchers to follow youth into adulthood.

The other type of self-report survey is the victimization survey. Here, researchers ask a sample of individuals whether and how often they have been the victims of particular criminal acts during a particular period of time. The best-known victimization survey is the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which began in 1973. This is a national household survey that is conducted twice a year. Unlike self-report surveys of offending, which were inspired by the empirical limitations associated with the police focus on crimes of the lower classes, the NCVS was motivated by concern about the failure of citizens to report crimes to police. Approximately 85,000 households and over 150,000 respondents participate each year, yielding the best estimate of actual crime committed in the United States. Unlike the UCR, the NCVS provides information about crimes that people have experienced as victims, whether or not the offenses were reported to police. Questions cover crimes suffered by individuals and their household, whether the crimes were reported to police, as well as characteristics of the victim, the household, and the offenders in personal crimes. Questions also cover the respondents' attitudes about the criminal justice system and their reasons for reporting or not reporting crimes to police. By and large, victimization surveys are restricted to the more conventional and readily recognized crimes against persons and property. They do not cover "victimless" crimes, such as drug use and gambling, and they ignore crimes committed on behalf of corporations, such as fraudulent advertising and price-fixing.

Both types of self-report surveys share certain advantages over official crime data and are an important source of information on crime. They can access a wide variety of offenses, from serious violations to petty offenses that are unlikely to be reported to police. Furthermore, by measuring the personal and social characteristics of offenders and/or victims, they can provide a rich source of data with which to assess theories of crime. Both types of self-reports also share certain limitations that are characteristic of the self-report method. The primary weaknesses of self-report surveys are a function of the adequacy of the sample and the accuracy of measurement. The issues bearing on the adequacy of a survey's sample are ensuring representative participation and receiving cooperation throughout the survey questionnaire. Measurement accuracy is an outcome of asking questions correctly and respondent candor and

memory. Although it appears that respondents are generally truthful in reporting their experiences as offenders and victims, there is evidence that underreporting is a threat to validity for self-report studies of both offending (Hindelang et al. 1981) and victimization (Murphy and Dodge 1981). Respondents may not reveal some of their criminal experiences out of embarrassment or a concern for privacy. In addition, respondents do not always remember the violations they committed or the violations committed against them, and they may remember crimes as more recent or more distant than they really were.

Statistics on crime are vital to the criminological enterprise. They help establish the basic social facts of crime, and these facts constitute the objects of explanation and provide evidence for the assessment of explanations. Unfortunately, crime statistics are among the most unreliable and difficult of all statistics on social phenomena. It is impossible to determine accurately the amount of crime in any given place at any given time. As indicated above, many crimes go undetected; others are detected but not reported, either to police or to researchers; still others are reported but not officially recorded. Thus, any record of crimes can be considered at most an index of the crimes actually committed. This fact has spurred both caution about sources of crime data and further inquiry to validate and improve empiricism in the field. A common solution is to compare the "behavior" of crime indexes across multiple data sources. Figure 39.1 illustrates how victimization data compare with official data since 1973. Although it

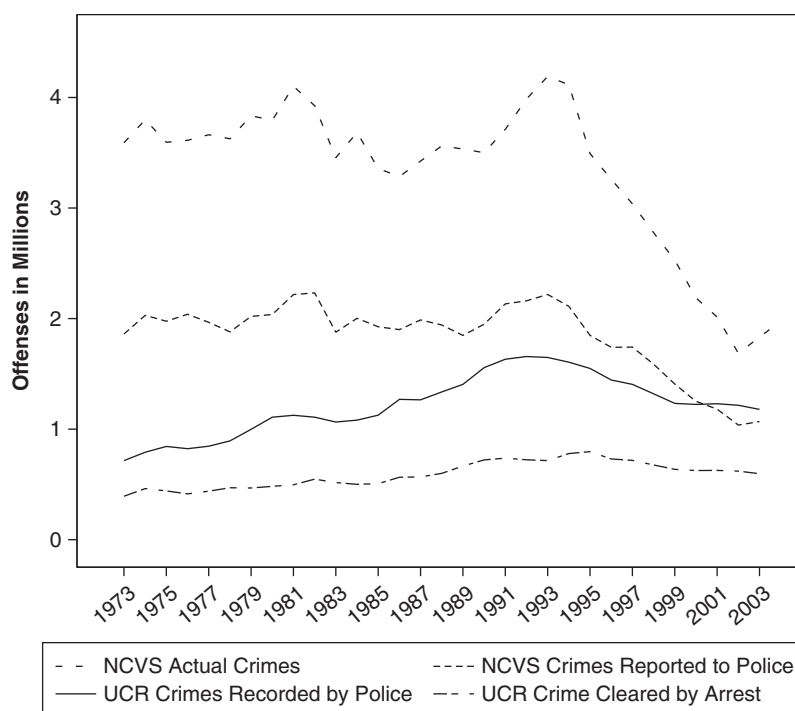


Figure 39.1 Comparing Four Measures of Violent Crime, 1973 to 2003

SOURCE: National Crime Victimization Surveys and Uniform Crime Reports. Adapted from Maston and Klaus (2005).

appears that victimization data provide a better measure of the true extent of crime, both data sources yield indexes that behave (increasing and decreasing) similarly during this time period.

PATTERNS OF CRIME

Criminologists endeavor to document patterns of crime in order to understand the nature and extent of crime. While the public regards many crimes as random acts, criminological inquiry shows that crime is not randomly distributed across individuals or groups. Criminological research on the patterns of crime focuses on the relationship of criminal behavior to dimensions of time and space and dimensions of social structure. One important insight in documenting patterns of crime is that crime tends to be an “intrastatus” activity. For a large proportion of crime, the statuses that describe offenders also describe victims. Criminology has paid close attention to a variety of contextual and structural dimensions that underlie the basic patterns of crime. These include the temporal and spatial distribution of crime as well as the age, sex, race, and social class of the participants.

Time and Space

Criminologists have long been interested in the social contexts that shape criminal offending. Social context is defined in terms of the temporal and spatial features that are correlated with crime. Criminologists have been concerned with at least three metrics of time: annual patterns, seasonal patterns, and daily patterns. Historical studies of crime in the United States suggest that serious crime increased in the decades prior to the Civil War and continued to increase following the war. Except for the years before and after World War I, reported crime experienced a general decline from about 1880 until the 1930s. Since this time, serious crime has generally grown slowly, with a more rapid increase beginning in the late 1960s (Gurr 1981). It peaked in 1981 and again in 1991 but declined in the middle and late 1990s and has been declining steadily ever since (see Figure 39.2).

Apart from annual changes, which reveal historical fluctuations, criminologists have determined that crime varies by other units of time. For example, crimes tend to increase around the time of the month that most people receive their paychecks, typically the beginning of the month. Crimes occur most frequently in the warmer months of summer, when youths are out of school and people spend longer periods of time outside, away from their homes. Murder tends to occur in the

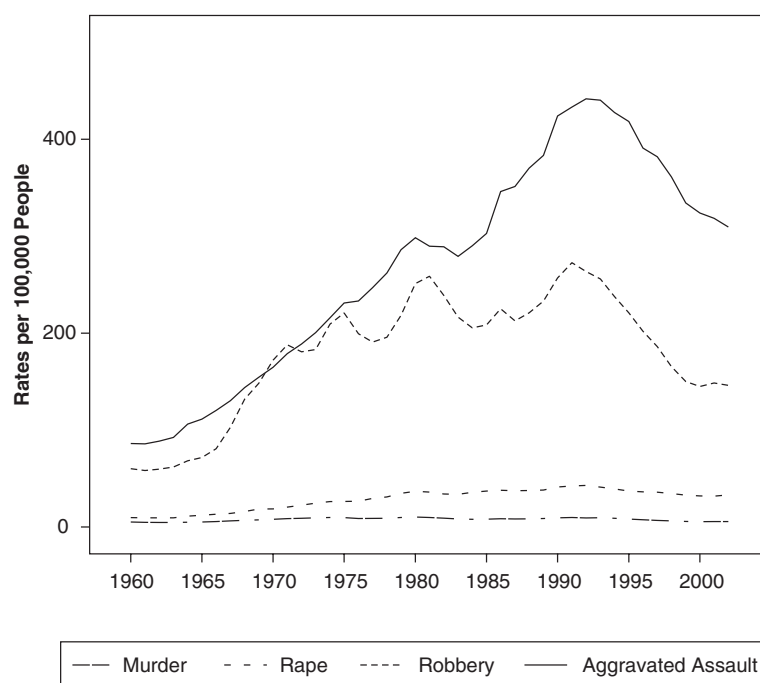


Figure 39.2 Violent Crimes Known to Police, 1960 to 2002

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation (2003, 2005).

evening, when more people are at leisure, and residential burglary tends to occur during the day, when more people are at work or school and less able to monitor their homes.

Criminologists also have sought to document the spatial patterns of crime. Researchers have determined that the rate of serious crime tends to increase with the size of the community. In general, urban areas have higher crime rates than suburban areas, and suburban areas have higher crime rates than rural areas. Consistently, victimization and self-report data show that crime is concentrated in large cities (Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill 1992:176–81). However, it is noteworthy that in the United States, the extent to which the urban crime rate exceeds the rural rate varies over time. There is reason to expect that as improved communication and transportation have reduced the differences between urban and rural areas, the differences in the crime rates of the two areas have decreased and that rural and suburban crime rates have increased more rapidly than the urban rate. Within local communities, crime tends to be concentrated in neighborhoods that are marked by social deprivation. High-crime neighborhoods tend to possess higher-than-average rates of poverty, rental and vacant properties, single-parent households, and population mobility, all of which inhibit neighborhood organization to prevent crime.

Age

Crime is a young person’s activity. Indeed, researchers have observed that age is the best predictor of criminal

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behavior. The relationship between age and crime is curvilinear. Criminal activity increases with age into adolescence, peaks in late adolescence or early adulthood, and then declines fairly quickly with age and continues to decline more slowly to death. This pattern generally holds regardless of sex, race, and class, as well as across time periods and places, leading some to argue that the age-crime relationship is invariant (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1986) (see Figure 39.3).

Criminologists have used the term “desistance” to describe the termination of criminal behavior as age increases past the peak offending years in late adolescence or early adulthood (Laub and Sampson 1993). Although most offenders “age out” of crime by early adulthood, a small percentage continues to offend over the life course. This observation has sparked interest in the role that age plays in distinguishing between different types of offenders. Contrary to the age invariance position, research on the effects of age at first offense and the trajectory of crime over the life course suggests the existence of distinct types of criminal careers that vary in terms of onset, duration, and intensity. Individuals who become involved in crime at an early age and those who have contact with the legal system earlier in adolescence are more likely to become chronic offenders or “life-course persisters.” Laub and Sampson (1993) have shown that even among early-onset and chronic offenders, desistance from crime is possible. Research in this realm has also verified that the most common type of criminal career is “adolescent limited,” meaning that criminal behavior is generally confined to the adolescent and early adult years, at which point desistance rapidly occurs.

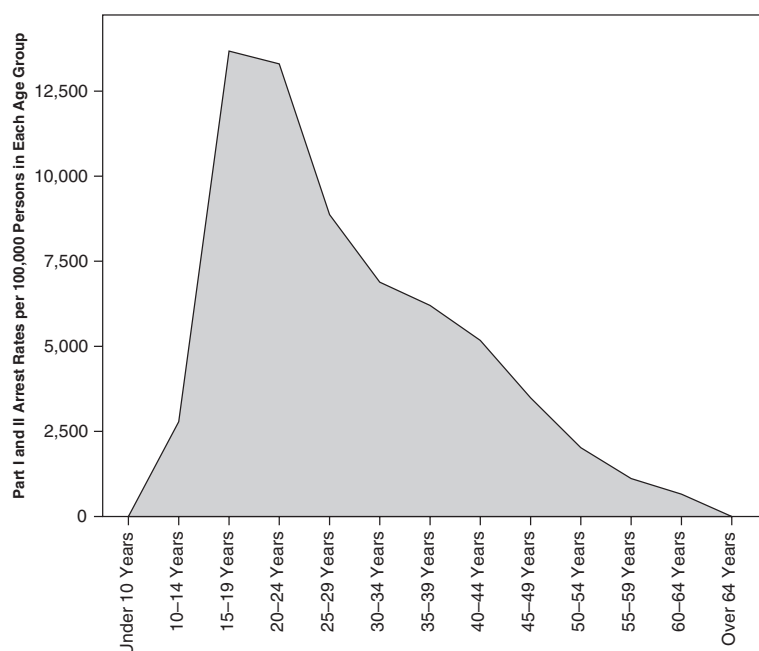


Figure 39.3 Distribution of Age-Specific Arrests, 2003

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation (2004, adapted from table 38, pp. 280–81).

Sex

Males have a higher rate of crime than females. Comparisons of sex-specific criminal behavior are frequently reported as a ratio of the frequency or rate of male offenses to female offenses. Although the gap in the sex ratio of offending varies for different types of crime, it is greatest for more serious types of crime. In the United States, for example, the sex ratio in arrests for murder in any given year is about eight male arrests to one female arrest. In contrast, the sex ratio in arrests for larceny, among the least serious crimes, is two male arrests for each female arrest. Self-report data confirm that males are more likely to be involved in crime than females, though these data tend to reveal less disparity in the sex ratio of criminal offending than official data, especially for less serious crimes (Triplett and Myers 1995). Some criminologists have argued that the discrepancy between arrest statistics and self-reports is related to the chivalrous approach criminal justice authorities take when females become the focus of law enforcement (Steffensmeier 1993).

Race

Official data paint a striking portrait of criminal activity in terms of racial status. Although whites account for the vast majority of all arrests, African Americans are much more likely to experience an arrest than whites. For example, African Americans account for over 40 percent of arrests for serious violent crimes and more than 25 percent for serious property crimes but represent just 13 percent of the population of the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2004). Whites, in contrast, are disproportionately arrested for certain Part II crimes, such as alcohol and driving under the influence crimes. Recently, the size of the racial disparity in arrests for serious crime has declined, though race-specific risk of arrest is much larger for African Americans than for whites (see Figure 39.4).

Some criminologists have argued that racial discrimination in criminal justice may explain much of the race disparity observed in official data (Tonry 1995). Others have claimed that the justice system and its agents are reasonably objective in processing defendants, suggesting that racial disparity in official statistics reflect actual racial differences in crime (Wilbanks 1987). One way in which criminologists have attempted to settle this debate is by using self-report and victimization data to examine race-specific involvement in criminal behavior. The evidence from self-report studies of delinquency by African American and white youth suggests that race differences are much smaller than arrest statistics indicate (Elliott and Ageton 1980).

Social Class

Criminologists have long assumed a negative correlation between social class and crime: Those at the lower end of the class system are more likely to be involved in crime than those at the upper end. Official statistics confirm that lower-class status is associated with greater involvement in crime. For example, residents of impoverished neighborhoods have the highest arrest rates, and those convicted of crime and sentenced to prison are more likely to be poor, unemployed, or underemployed.

Despite such evidence, criminologists have argued that the relationship between class and crime is less certain than official statistics indicate. The first criminologist to question the class-crime connection was Sutherland (1940). He observed that white-collar crimes—crimes committed by persons of respectability and high social status in the course of their occupations—are common though usually ignored in official crime statistics. Sutherland's insight has led to many criticisms of those who assume a negative correlation between class and crime.

Conclusions about the class-crime connection may reflect the source of information employed. Studies using self-report data tend to show that juveniles from all socioeconomic backgrounds engage in delinquent behavior (Tittle, Villamez, and Smith 1978). However, these studies have been criticized for failing to clearly conceptualize class status (Braithwaite 1979) and for confusing delinquency with serious crime (Farnworth, Thornberry, Krohn, and Lizotte 1994).

In summary, criminologists have invested considerable effort in documenting the patterns of crime. These patterns

are meaningful for policymakers in evaluating and planning societal responses to crime. These patterns are also meaningful for criminologists because correlating crime across dimensions of social context (time and space) and social structure (age, sex, race, and social class) reveals the empirical facts that theory must explain.

EXPLAINING CRIME

Over the past two centuries, various schools of criminology have flourished. A school of criminology is a system of thought that consists of a theory of crime causation integrated with policies of control implied in the theory. One of the first schools of criminology was the classical school, which developed in Europe during the eighteenth century through the efforts of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham. The classical school views crime as a rational means for maximizing self-interest. Individuals are seen as hedonistic, pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, and rational, calculating the pleasures and pains of alternative actions and choosing those actions that promise the greatest pleasure and least pain. It follows that individuals will choose to engage in crime when they determine that crime offers the most pleasure and least pain relative to other courses of action. It also follows that to control crime, the state need only convince people that crime will entail more pain than pleasure, and it can accomplish this by increasing the punishment of crime. When people realize that crime is less pleasurable, they will choose to engage in more satisfying actions. The positive school of criminology developed during the nineteenth century

largely through the work of Cesare Lombroso and his followers. Grounded in the physical sciences, the positive school views crime as the product of personal defects or disorders. It maintains that the physical constitution influences behavior and that defects in biological structure or processes engender criminal behavior. The positive school insists that punishment will not control crime, because criminals do not calculate the pleasures and pains of alternative actions and choose those that maximize pleasure. Rather, it contends that the only reasonable way to control crime is to discover and manipulate its causes. Given that crime is the product of a personal defect or disorder, it follows that the best way to control crime is to treat that defect or disorder. This school fell from favor in the early twentieth century with the rise of the sociological school, which views crime as a function of the social environment. The sociological school has evolved over the course of the twentieth century, and it has come to dominate scholarly efforts to explain crime.

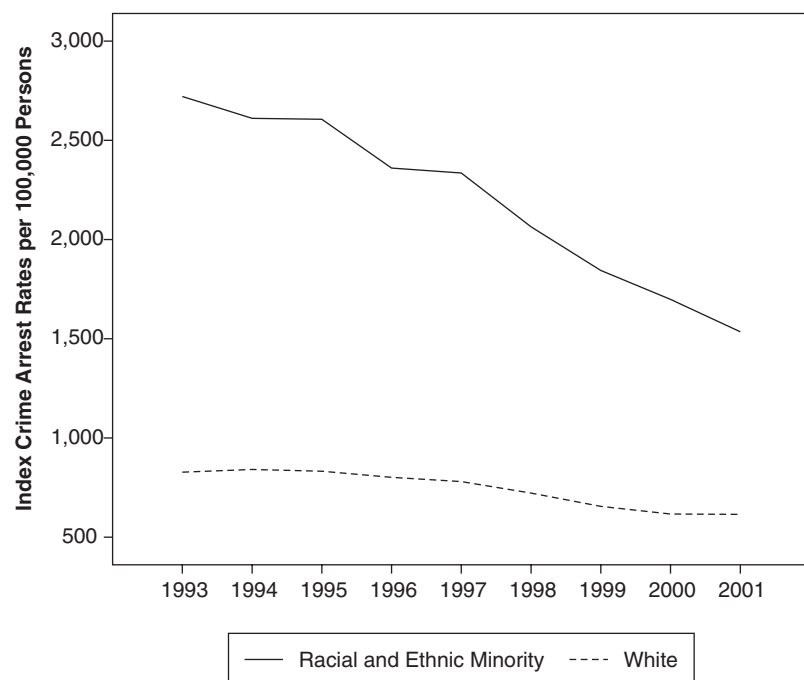


Figure 39.4 Race-Specific Arrest Rates, 1993 to 2001

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation (2003:55–57).

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The sociological school developed primarily in the United States. In the late nineteenth century, criminology was accepted as a field of study by the growing university departments of sociology, and since that time systematic studies of crime and criminals have been made mostly by sociologists. A survey conducted in 1901 revealed that criminology and penology were among the first courses offered under the title of sociology in American colleges (Tolman 1902–1903), and the *American Journal of Sociology* included articles and book reviews on criminology when it was first published in 1895. At the same time, though, American sociologists were impressed by many of the arguments advanced by the positive school. It was not until about 1915, after Charles Goring's *The English Convict* (1913) was published, that a strong environmentalist position was cultivated. It was probably this trend that prompted John Gillin (1914) to observe,

The longer the study of crime has continued in this country, the greater has grown the number of causes of crime which may be described as social. This is the aspect in the development of American criminology which has given to that study in this country the title of "The American School." (P. 53)

The central thesis of the sociological school is that criminal behavior results from the same conditions and processes as other types of social behavior. Analyses of these conditions and processes as they pertain to crime have taken two forms. First, criminologists have sought to relate variations in crime rates to variations in social organization. A number of social conditions have been examined in relation to variations in the crime rates of societies and units of societies, including social and economic inequality, political and economic ideologies, and culture and normative conflict. In an early sociological investigation, Clifford Shaw (1929) used the Chicago School's ecological approach, an approach drawing heavily on Durkheim's analogy of society as an organism, to understand the distribution of delinquency across the urban landscape. He discovered that delinquency was concentrated in certain areas of the city and explained this fact in terms of social disorganization. He viewed delinquency as a pathology characteristic of blighted areas of the city, not the people who reside there. These areas featured substantial mobility, heterogeneity, and conflict, conditions that engendered social disorganization, a state in which traditional forms of social control are weak and people are free to participate in delinquent behavior. Durkheim's functionalist ideas about the nature and consequences of change in social solidarity informed strain theories of crime, notably exemplified in Robert Merton's (1938) anomie theory. In a pivotal statement, Albert Cohen (1955) argued that variation in the access of social classes to legitimate means for achieving success is related to variation in their rates of delinquency. In American society, lower-class children are encouraged to pursue the same goals as middle-class children, and they are judged by the same standards as

middle-class children. Yet they lack the cultural and economic capital needed to compete effectively with middle-class children. As a result, many lower-class children experience failure, and they may respond by developing and participating in delinquent subcultures. These two arguments—that high rates of crime can be explained in terms of a breakdown of social organization and that high rates can be explained in terms of a strain between culturally induced aspirations and structurally limited opportunities—have figured in much contemporary theorizing at the macro level.

Second, criminologists have sought to identify the processes by which individuals become criminals. In general, their analyses relate criminality to variations in socialization. One line of thought, promoted by Travis Hirschi (1969) under the banner of control theory, maintains that criminality results from a breakdown of socialization. From this point of view, criminal behavior is an expression of natural impulses. When an individual's bond to society is weak, he or she is unlikely to internalize the values and norms of society or be sensitive to the wishes and expectations of others. The individual is uncontrolled and thereby free to engage in criminal behavior. Another line of thought, advanced by Edwin Sutherland (1947) and extended by Ronald Akers (1998), holds that criminality is a product of social learning. From this point of view, criminal behavior is not an expression of natural impulses. Rather, an individual learns to engage in criminal behavior in much the same way that he or she learns to engage in noncriminal behavior. It is the content of learning, not the process itself, that determines whether an individual becomes a criminal. These arguments—that criminality flows from a breakdown of socialization and that criminality is a product of socialization—continue to dominate thinking about crime at the micro level.

Over the past few decades, criminologists have pursued other forms of analysis. In the 1960s and early 1970s, some criminologists began to question the central assumptions and issues around which criminology had been organized. They observed that criminality is not an inherent property of a given act and that the violation of a criminal law does not necessarily result in an offender's apprehension and punishment. Rather, an act is criminal because lawmakers have created a law that makes it criminal, and those who violate the law are selectively apprehended and punished (Becker 1963). From this perspective, interest shifts from the criminal to the processes of defining and reacting to troublesome behavior (Quinney 1964; Turk 1969). Accordingly, criminologists increasingly turned their attention to patterns of selective law enforcement, asking what kinds of offenses and offenders are likely to be dealt with as crimes and criminals and why such offenses and offenders are subjected to such reactions. Further, in the course of demystifying the legal system, criminologists considered the consequences of being labeled and dealt with as a criminal, arguing that stigmatization reduces an individual's legitimate opportunities for success and alters

the individual's identity and thus facilitates chronic criminality (Kitsuse 1962; Lemert 1972:62–92).

In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of criminologists sought to build integrated theories of crime. Traditionally, criminologists have assessed theories by subjecting two or more to what may be called “theory competition” (Akers and Sellers 2004:267). Recognizing that little is gained from such competition, criminologists have increasingly endeavored to devise more powerful explanatory models that fuse elements of two or more distinct theories of crime. For example, John Braithwaite (1989) drew on elements of control theory, social learning theory, and labeling theory in developing a theory of reintegrative shaming, and Charles Tittle (1995) combined elements of control theory, social learning theory, strain theory, and Marxist theory in building a control balance theory of deviance. Although integrative efforts are important, care must be exercised in this enterprise. As Akers (1989:24) aptly noted, the integration of theories, if done without regard to their incompatibilities, can result in useless “theoretical mush.”

PREVENTING CRIME

Over the years, three methods for preventing crime have been used: punitive, defense, and interventionist. Punitive methods are based on the assumption that criminality and crime rates can be reduced by making people so fearful of being punished for committing crimes that they will refrain from doing so. The idea is that inflicting severe pain on offenders both reforms those who are punished (specific deterrence) and prevents others from committing crimes (general deterrence). Much of the legislation aimed at doing something dramatic about a crime problem is simply an attempt to increase the severity or certainty of punishment (Beckett and Sasson 2004). Defense methods are based on the assumption that crime can be reduced by making it hard for people to carry out crimes. Lighting streets, locking doors, and storing valuables in safes exemplify these methods (Felson 2002:144–64). The segregation of criminals by putting them behind bars so that they cannot victimize outsiders also illustrates defensive measures. Interventionist methods are based on the idea that punishment and defense are not enough. Rather, the assumption is that criminality and crime rates can be effectively reduced by determining the conditions that produce them and changing those conditions. Treatment methods based on the idea that offenders lack basic interpersonal skills try to develop their competence in empathy, problem solving, impulse control, and anger management, and methods based on the idea that offenders have learned to commit crime try to teach them lawful forms of behavior (Cullen 2002). More generally, interventionist methods assume that high crime rates are a product of economic, political, and social organization and that it is foolish to leave this organization intact and hope to reduce crime

rates by punishing criminals produced by it or defending against them. Instead, the idea is to modify the economic, political, or social order so as to reduce crime rates (Currie 1998).

There is considerable evidence that intervention is, or could be, the most effective system for reducing crime (Cullen 2002; MacKenzie 2000). As more is learned about crime, we will have a better basis for interventionist policies. If implemented consistently, these policies would protect society from crime in three ways.

First, they would secure the segregation of persons who have demonstrated their dangerousness by chronic involvement in serious crime. Although segregation will not reform these offenders, it will protect society both by incapacitating them and by expressing disapproval of serious deviation from the law. At present, we can neither change some chronic offenders nor significantly modify the social situations that spawn them. We can only defend ourselves from this small category of dangerous persons.

Second, interventionist policies would integrate into law-abiding society a larger proportion of citizens, including the majority of those who have committed crime but have not demonstrated dangerousness. It is generally acknowledged that social control stems from the rewards secured by lawful conduct rather than from direct fear of punishment. The effective deterrent is not the fear of legal sanctions as such but the fear of loss of status (Grasmick and Bursik 1990). But it is not really fear that inhibits criminal behavior. Rather, the law-abiding citizen is one who feels that doing certain things, such as stealing from a neighbor and assaulting a coworker, is unthinkable. The policies for crime prevention must, therefore, if they are to be effective, give more people a stake in conformity to the laws that prohibit criminal behavior.

Third, interventionist policies would define the social situations from which crimes are most likely to issue and make it possible to attack and eliminate those situations. But rather than trying to eliminate the economic, political, and social attitudes, conditions, and injustices that generate crime, political leaders have generally preferred to rely on fear of punishment (Currie 1998). Punishment seems to be cheaper, but it is not. Further, the emphasis on punishment distracts from the need for developing the conditions necessary for domestic tranquility. If shared attitudes of appreciation for certain values could be developed, punitive laws relating to those values would be unnecessary. If, for example, members of a society acquired an equal stake in the concept of private property, then trying to terrorize people into respecting property rights would become obsolete.

In summary, crime would be reduced by absorbing those criminals who can be absorbed, segregating for defense those who cannot be absorbed, and eliminating the conditions that are most conducive to crime and thus bring about the need to absorb some criminals and segregate others. Vigorous implementation of such policies would be evidence of social disapproval of crime as much as punishment would be. It is approbation and disapprobation

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rather than punishment of criminals that forestall crime among the majority of citizens, including the majority of the poor and powerless, from whose ranks most criminals come.

CONCLUSION

Our understanding of crime is rudimentary. To be sure, we have a sense of how crime is distributed along a number of structural, temporal, and spatial dimensions; we have a sense of the principal variables that affect the occurrence of crime and development of criminality and the general ways in which these variables operate to produce crime and criminality; and we have a sense of the kinds of methods that seem to work in controlling crime. Nevertheless, greater energy must be expended before we have a solid understanding of crime.

As we think about criminology in the twenty-first century, we see the field moving in several directions. We see sustained efforts to construct and improve the methodological tools for documenting crime, testing theories of

crime, and assessing programs to control crime. We also see sustained efforts to formulate integrated theories of crime, theories that draw not only on elements at the sociological level of analysis but also on elements at multiple levels, including the biological and psychological. Integrated theory is moving criminology along a course that may ultimately define it as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry rather than a uniquely sociological specialty. These two tracks—one methodological and the other theoretical—will be increasingly intertwined. For example, the analytical state of the art allows for a wider and more rigorous variety of theory-testing endeavors, which encourages the further refinement of theory. Finally, we see continuing efforts to use criminological knowledge to enhance social welfare—to reduce levels of first crime and repeated crime and to do so in ways that are just to offenders, victims, and the larger community. These lines of development are not unique to the criminological enterprise. Indeed, they parallel trends in sociology where scholars strive to improve methodologies, devise integrated theories, and apply research to inform public policy and enrich collective life.