

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Nature and Extent of Crime

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### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the student should be able to:

1. Be familiar with various forms of crime data
2. Know the problems associated with collecting data
3. Be able to discuss recent trends in the crime rate
4. Be familiar with the factors that influence crime rates
5. Compare crime rates under different ecological conditions
6. Be able to discuss the association between social class and crime
7. Know what is meant by the term *aging out* process
8. Recognize that there are age, gender, and racial patterns in crime
9. Be familiar with Wolfgang, Figlio and Sellin's pioneering research on chronic offending
10. Understand the suspected causes of chronicity

### SUMMARY

Criminologists measure crime trends and rates using the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), and self report surveys. These are primary sources of crime data. Secondary sources, such as cohort research, observational research, and meta-analysis, supplement primary data sources and are used by criminologists to identify specific crime problems and trends, to examine the lives of criminal offenders, and to assess the effectiveness of crime control efforts.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation publishes the UCR that contains data provided by law enforcement agencies across the country. Once compiled, data are reported as Part I and Part II crimes. Part I crimes include murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft and arson. Part II crimes are all other offenses not included in Part I. Crime data in the UCR are expressed three ways: as raw figures and arrests made, rates per 100,000 people, and changes in the number and rate of crime over time. The main weaknesses impacting the validity of the UCR are that not all crimes are reported, law enforcement practices that distort reporting, and methodology issues. The FBI is looking to eventually replace the UCR with the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) that was started in 1982 and collects information on 22 categories and 46 specific offenses and includes more comprehensive information than the UCR.

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is designed to overcome the problems of the UCR by including crimes not reported to the police. Sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Census Bureau, the NCVS includes information from a large nationally representative sample and reports the victimization experiences of individuals and households. Weaknesses associated with the NCVS include underreporting, overreporting, and misinterpretation of events. Due to budget constraints, the NCVS's sample size and methodology have recently been altered. Consequently, the NCVS now has to combine multiple years of data in order to comment on change over time.

Like the NCVS, self-report surveys help to illuminate the "dark figure of crime." Most of these studies focus on delinquency and youth crime. One of the most important self-report surveys is the Monitoring the Future study that is considered the national standard to measure substance abuse trends among American teens. The main weaknesses of self-report surveys are: 1) a lot of trivial offenses are included in self-reports, 2) participants may exaggerate, be confused, or forget; 3) subjects may not candidly admit illegal acts, and 4) the "missing cases" phenomenon. Although the data from the UCR, the NCVS, and self-report surveys are not completely in sync, the crime patterns and trends they indicate are quite similar.

Secondary data sources include cohort research, experimental research, observational and interview research, meta-analysis, data mining, and crime mapping. Cohort research involves observing a group of people who share a like characteristic over time. Most experimental research in criminology is quasi-experimental as "true" experiments are difficult and expensive to conduct. There are also ethical and legal roadblocks to manipulating subjects' lives, and they require extended follow-up to verify results. Meta-analysis involves gathering data from a number of previous studies. Data-mining is a type of meta-analysis using multiple advanced computational methods to analyze large data sets from one or more data sources. Criminologists are now using crime mapping to create graphic representations of the spatial geography of crime.

Crime rates have risen and fallen over the many years our nation has been in existence. A number of factors affect crime trends, including the age distribution of the population, the economy, social malaise, abortion, the availability of guns, gangs, drug usage, the media, medical technology, justice policy, and crime opportunities. Overall, there has been a significant downward trend in the rate of crime for more than a decade, including a decline in juvenile crime. Most currently, the violent crime rate has risen slightly but it is unknown if this trend is short or long-term. Property crime rates have declined in recent years, although the drop has not been as dramatic as the decrease in the violent crime rate. These trends are apparent in the UCR and are confirmed by the NCVS. Self-report surveys, however, indicate that crime rates are more stable than the UCR indicates. Crime trend projections for the future are mixed.

Crime has followed several predictable patterns over the years. Most crimes occur during the warm summer months of July and August. Murders and robberies, however, are also frequent in December and January. Traditionally, the association between crime and temperature has been thought to be an inverted U-curve with crime rising with temperature then beginning to decline around 85 degrees. Crime rates are also highest in urban areas and in the southern and western United States. Although crime rates are highest in inner city high poverty areas, there is little support for the idea that crime is

primarily a lower-class phenomenon. One reason may be that the methods used to measure social class vary widely. A second reason may be that the association between social class and crime may be more complex than a simple linear relationship.

Age is inversely related to crime – younger people commit more crime than their older peers. Aging out refers to the process by which offenders reduce the frequency of their offending behavior as they age. Aging out may be a function of the natural history of the life cycle. Some criminologists contend that the population may contain different sets of criminals: one group whose criminal behavior declines with age, another whose criminal behavior remains constant through maturity.

Firearms play a dominant role in criminal activity and impact crime trends and justice policy. The banning of firearms, even if only handguns, is controversial. Some experts propose strict gun control, and there is research to suggest defensive gun use deters crime. However, some criminologists question the benefits of carrying a handgun, and research also shows that defensive gun use may be more limited than believed.

Primary and secondary sources of crime data confirm that male crime rates are higher than those of females. Over the years, a variety of reasons have been given for this phenomenon such as the masculinity hypothesis, the chivalry hypothesis, socialization and development, and liberal feminist theory. Self-report studies indicate that the pattern of female criminality is similar to that of male criminality. Recent data also indicate that female crime rates are rising faster than male crime rates and that females are joining gangs in record numbers.

Minorities are involved in a disproportionate share of criminal activity, and racial differences in the crime rate remain an extremely sensitive issue. However, research indicates no relationship between race and self-reported delinquency. Some of the reasons for high minority levels of criminal activity may be true racial differences in the crime rate, racial bias in justice processing including increases in social control that police direct at minority group members (racial threat hypothesis), racism and discrimination, institutional racism, economic disparity, social disparity, and family dissolution. If social and economic obstacles are removed, convergence of majority and minority crime rates is possible.

Most offenders commit a single crime and discontinue after arrest. Nevertheless, as Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin found, there is a small group responsible for the majority of all crimes. The offenders in this group are called chronic offenders or career criminals. The chronic offender has been the central focus of crime control policy resulting in “get tough” measures like “three strikes” and “truth in sentencing” legislation.

## **CHAPTER OUTLINE**

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. Primary Sources of Crime Data**

#### **A. Official Record Research**

1. Records of government agencies
  - a. Examine crime rates and trends
  - b. Analyze individual and social forces that affect crime

- c. Most important crime record data is FBI's Uniform Crime Report
- B. The Uniform Crime Report (UCR)
  - 1. Introduction
    - a. Includes crimes reported to local police departments and number of arrests made by police agencies
    - b. Index or Part I crimes: murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, arson, motor vehicle theft, and arson
  - 2. Compiling the Uniform Crime Report
    - a. Monthly reports of known crime from law enforcement agencies
    - b. Unfounded or false claims eliminated
    - c. Three methods to express crime data
      - i. Number of crimes reported and arrests made – raw data
      - ii. Crime rates per 100,000 people
      - iii. Changes in rate of crime over time
  - 3. Clearance Rates
    - a. Crimes cleared in two ways
      - i. When at least one person is arrested, charged, and turned over to courts for prosecution
      - ii. By exceptional means
    - b. Also reported
      - i. Data on clearances involving juveniles
      - ii. Data on stolen and recovered property
      - iii. Detailed information pertaining to criminal homicide
    - c. Slightly more than 20 percent of reported index crimes are cleared via arrest each year.
    - d. Serious crimes cleared at higher rate than less serious crimes because
      - i. Media attention to serious crime impacts police practices.
      - ii. There is more likely to be an association between victims/offenders – a factor that aids police investigations.
      - iii. Even when previously unknown to one another, violent crime victims/offenders interact, facilitating identification.
      - iv. Violent crimes often produce physical evidence that aids in identification of suspects.
  - 4. Validity of the Uniform Crime Report
    - a. Reporting practices
      - i. Not all crimes are reported.
      - ii. Victim surveys indicate less than 40 percent are reported.
    - b. Law enforcement practices
      - i. How various departments record and report criminal activity
      - ii. Law enforcement interpretation of the definitions of index crimes
      - iii. Systematic errors in UCR reporting
      - iv. Deliberately altering reports to improve department's public image
      - v. Boosting police efficiency may increase crime rates.
      - vi. Higher crime may result from improved technology or better-qualified personnel.

- c. Methodological problems
  - i. No federal crimes are reported.
  - ii. Reports are voluntary and vary in accuracy and completeness.
  - iii. Not all police departments submit reports.
  - iv. The FBI uses estimates in its total crime projections.
  - v. If an offender commits multiple crimes, only the most serious is recorded.
  - vi. Each act is listed as a single offense for some crimes but not for others.
  - vii. Incomplete acts are lumped together with completed ones.
  - viii. Important differences exist between the FBI's definition of certain crimes and those used in a number of states.
- 5. National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)
  - a. NIBRS: Starting in 1982 – five-year redesign effort undertaken to provide more detailed and comprehensive crime data
  - b. Includes a brief account of each incident and arrest
  - c. Information provided on 22 crime categories and 46 specific offenses
  - d. Hate and bias crime information provided
  - e. When fully implemented will provide:
    - i. Expansion of the number of offense categories included
    - ii. Details on individual crime incidents
    - iii. Linkage between arrests and clearances
    - iv. Inclusion of all offenses in an incident rather than only the most serious offense
    - v. The ability to distinguish between attempted and completed crimes
    - vi. Linkages that will permit examination of interrelationships between crime variables
  - f. Over twenty states have implemented NIBRS; twelve others are in the process of finalizing their data collections.

### **III. Survey Research**

#### **A. Process**

- 1. People are asked about their attitudes, beliefs, values, characteristics, and experiences with crime and victimization.
- 2. Involves sampling
  - a. Process of selecting a limited number of subjects who are representative of the entire group sharing similar characteristics – called the population
  - b. Cross-sectional survey: a survey that is representative of all members of society

#### **B. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**

- 1. Process
  - a. Started, in 1973, to address the non-reporting issue; sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- b. Large nationally representative sample – Currently: 76,000 households, 135,000 people age 12 or older, interviewed twice a year, households in sample for three years
    - c. NCVS collects information on crimes suffered by individuals and households, regardless of whether the crimes were reported to police.
    - d. NCVS provides detailed information about
      - i. The victims, offenders, and crimes
      - ii. Victims' experiences with the criminal justice system
      - iii. Self-protective measures used by victims
      - iv. Possible substance abuse by offenders
  - 2. NCVS: Advantages and Problems
    - a. Greatest advantage: The NCVS can estimate the total amount of annual crimes, not just those that are reported to the police.
    - b. Issue of non-reporting, circa 2006
      - i. Only 49 percent of violent victimizations and 38 percent of all property crimes were reported to police.
      - ii. Rape and attempted rape
        - a. UCR indicated 92,000
        - b. NCVS indicated 270,000
    - c. The NCVS helps us understand why crimes are not reported to the police.
    - d. Methodological problems with the NCVS
      - i. Overreporting due to misinterpretation of events
      - ii. Underreporting due to embarrassment, fear, or forgetfulness
      - iii. Inability to record the personal criminal activity of those interviewed
      - iv. Sampling errors
      - v. Inadequate question format that invalidates responses
  - 3. The Future of the NCVS
    - a. For the past 30 years, the NCVS has been (with the UCR) one of the two major indicators of crime and victimization in the U.S.
    - b. NCVS effectiveness has been undermined by budget limitations.
      - i. Sample size and data collection methods have been altered.
      - ii. NCVS now has to combine multiple years of data in order to comment on change over time.
    - c. Significant changes made to the NCVS in 2006
      - i. New sampling method
      - ii. Change in methods for handling first-time interviews with households
      - iii. Change in method of interviewing – some areas dropped, other added
      - iv. Computer-assisted interviewing replaced paper and pencil interviewing.
- C. Self-Report Surveys
  - 1. Process

- a. Used to measure participants recent and lifetime participation in criminal activity
  - b. Generally given anonymously in groups
  - c. Secrecy and anonymity essential to honesty and validity of responses
  - d. Most focus on juvenile delinquency and youth crime
  - e. Also used with prison inmates, drug users, police officers
- 2. Self-Report Patterns
  - a. Monitoring the Future (MTF) study – University of Michigan Institute for Social Research
    - i. Annually since 1978; asks 2,500 high school seniors about their substance abuse
    - ii. Data indicate the number of people who break the law is far greater than the number projected by official statistics.
- 3. Validity of Self-Reports
  - a. Critics suggest
    - i. Unreasonable to expect respondents to candidly admit illegal acts
    - ii. People may exaggerate criminal acts, forget some of them, or be confused about what is being asked.
    - iii. Some surveys contain an overabundance of trivial offenses.
    - iv. Comparisons between groups can be highly misleading because trivial offenses are often lumped together with serious crimes to form a total crime index.
  - b. “Missing cases” phenomenon is a concern.
  - c. Reporting accuracy differs among racial, ethnic, and gender groups.
    - i. Girls more willing than boys to disclose drug use, but Latino girls significantly underreport drug usage.
    - ii. African-Americans less willing to report traffic stops than Caucasians; this prevents accurate assessments of racial profiling.
  - d. The “known group method” is used to verify self-report data.
- D. Evaluating the Primary Sources of Crime Data
  - 1. UCR
    - a. Strengths
      - i. Contains data on number and characteristics of people arrested
      - ii. Arrest data can provide a measure of neighborhood criminal activity for serious crimes such as drug trafficking.
      - iii. Sole source of data on homicide
      - iv. Standard upon which most criminological research is based
    - b. Weaknesses
      - i. Omits those crimes not reported to the police
      - ii. Subject to reporting caprices of individual police departments
  - 2. NCVS
    - a. Strengths
      - i. Includes unreported crimes
      - ii. Includes important information on the personal characteristics of victims
    - b. Weaknesses

- i. Limited samples
    - ii. Relies on personal recollections
    - iii. Does not include data on important crime patterns, including murder and drug abuse
3. Self-Report Surveys
  - a. Strength: can provide information on personal characteristics of offenders
  - b. Weakness: relies on honesty of criminal offenders and drug abusers, a population not generally known for accuracy and integrity
4. Overall
  - a. Crime patterns and trends often quite similar
  - b. Agreement re: personal characteristics of serious criminals
  - c. The problems inherent in each source are consistent over time.
  - d. Reliable indicators of changes and fluctuations in yearly crime rates

#### **IV. Secondary Sources of Crime Data**

- A. Cohort Research
  1. Observing a group of people who share a like characteristic over time
  2. Difficult, expensive, and time consuming to follow a cohort over time
    - a. Sometimes researchers do retrospective studies.
      - i. Involves taking an intact cohort from the past and collecting data from their educational, family, police, and hospital records
- B. Experimental Research
  1. True experiments have three elements.
    - a. Random selection of subjects
    - b. Control or comparison group
    - c. An experimental condition
  2. Quasi-experimental design if it is impossible to randomly select subjects or manipulate conditions
  3. Criminological experiments
    - a. Relatively rare because they are difficult and expensive to conduct
    - b. Ethical and legal roadblocks to manipulating subjects' lives
    - c. Require long follow-up to verify results
- C. Observational and Interview Research
  1. Sometimes researchers focus on a relatively few subjects.
  2. Sometimes researchers observe criminals firsthand to gather insight into their motives and activities.
    - a. Researchers may conduct field studies by observing and interacting with their subjects.
    - b. Researchers may conduct field studies but remain in the background, observing but not interacting with their subjects.
- D. Meta-Analysis and Systematic Review
  1. Meta-analysis
    - a. Gathers data from a number of previous studies
    - b. Compatible information and data are extracted and pooled together.



- c. When analyzed, more powerful and valid indicator of results than a single study
  - 2. Systematic review
    - a. Collect findings from previous studies addressing a particular problem
    - b. Appraise and synthesize the evidence
    - c. Use collective evidence to address a particular scientific question
- E. Data Mining
  - 1. Using multiple, advanced, computational methods to analyze large data sets from one or more data sources
    - a. Goal: identify significant and recognizable patterns, trends, and relationships not otherwise detected
    - b. Used to predict future events or behaviors
    - c. Permits proactive or “risk-based” deployment of police resources
      - i. Richmond Police Department’s targeting of New Year’s Eve random gunfire incidents via data mining identification of problem areas.
- F. Crime Mapping
  - 1. Creating graphic representations of the spatial geography of crime
    - a. Simple maps indicating crime locations or concentrations
    - b. Used to predict future events or behaviors
    - c. CATCH – the Crime Analysis Tactical Clearing House
      - i. Federal program that supports local law enforcement agencies with crime series and patterns
      - ii. Uses next-event forecasting – looking at where previous crimes occurred to predict where the next crime will happen

## **V. Crime Trends**

- A. Changes in Crime Trends Over Time
  - 1. 1830 – 1860: gradual increase in violent crime
  - 2. Post Civil War: significant increase for approximately 15 years
  - 3. 1880 – World War I: reported crimes decreased
  - 4. WWI – Depression: crime rates decreased until 1930
  - 5. 1930 – 1960: crimes rates increased gradually; homicide rate declined
  - 6. 1960 – 1970: sharp increase in homicide rate
  - 7. 1981 – 1984: a consistent decline
  - 8. 1985 – 1991: crime rate increased
  - 9. 1991 – 2005: declines in all crime, including juvenile crime
  - 10. 2008-2009: all crime types recorded significant declines
- B. Trends in Violent Crime
  - 1. Violent crimes: murder, rape, robbery, assault
  - 2. 2006 violent crime rate: 474 per 100,000
    - a. Overall, 1 percent violent crime rate increase over 2005
    - b. Number of murder and nonnegligent manslaughters increased 1.8 percent
    - c. Estimated 7.2 percent increase in the number of robberies
    - d. Estimated 0.2 percent decrease in the number of aggravated assaults

- e. Estimated 2 percent decrease in the number of forcible rapes
- 3. Too soon to know if crime rates are once again increasing
  - a. Between 2009 and 2010 violent crime dropped 6 percent.
- C. Trends in Property Crime
  - 1. Property crimes: larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson
  - 2. 2006 property crime rate: 3,334.5 per 100,000
    - a. 2.8 percent decline from 2005
  - 3. Not as dramatic as drop for violent crime rate but still declining (unlike the recent uptick in violent crime)
  - 4. Between 1995 and 2006, property crime rate declined more than 25 percent.
  - 5. Between 2009 and 2010 property crime dropped by 3 percent.
- D. Trends in Victimization Data (NCVS Findings) – rates of both violent and property victimizations have been in decline
- E. Trends in Self-Reporting
  - 1. Self-report results appear more stable than results indicated in UCR.
  - 2. Use of drugs and alcohol: marked increase in the 1970s, leveled off in the 1980s, increased in mid-1990s, then declined
  - 3. Self-report surveys: crime wave has not occurred, neither has there been any visible reduction in self-reported criminality.
  - 4. MTF data
    - a. Youth crime problem is much greater than FBI data indicate.
    - b. Youth crime trends more stable than trends reported in the UCR
- F. What the Future Holds
  - 1. Levitt predicts that if teens commit more crime in the future, their contribution might be offset by a large number of senior citizens and elderly.
  - 2. Technology and Internet e-commerce have created new classes of crime.
  - 3. Too early to predict if the downward trend in crime will continue.

## **VI. Crime Patterns**

- A. The Ecology of Crime
  - 1. Day, Season, and Climate
    - a. Most crimes occur during the warm summer months of July and August.
    - b. Murders and robberies also occur frequently during December and January.
    - c. Crime rates are higher on the first day of the month.
  - 2. Temperature
    - a. Association between temperature and crime resembles an inverted U-curve.
    - b. Crime rates rise with rising temperatures.
    - c. Crime rates decline around 85 degrees.
    - d. Some research indicates that a rising temperature will cause some crimes to continually increase (domestic violence) while others (rape) decline after temperatures rise to an extremely high level.
    - e. The relationship between temperature and crime may be due to stress and tension caused by extreme temperature.

- i. Stress hormones are generated in response to excessive heat; hormonal activity has been linked to aggression.
  - f. Rotton and Cohn found assaults in air conditioned settings increased as the temperature rose; assaults in non-air-conditioned settings declined after peaking at moderately high temperatures.
- 3. Regional Differences
  - a. Large urban areas have the highest violence rates.
  - b. Exceptions to this trend are resort areas with large transient or seasonal populations.
  - c. Western and southern states have consistently higher crime rates than the Midwest and Northeast.
  - d. Some criminologists believe regional cultural values may influence crime; others believe regional differences are explained by economic disparities.
- B. Use of Firearms
  - 1. Play a dominant role in criminal activity
  - 2. Zimring and Hawkins believe that the proliferation of handguns and the high rate of lethal violence they cause separate the crime problem in the United States from the rest of the world.
  - 3. Kleck and Gertz maintain personal gun use may be a deterrent to crime.
- C. Social Class, Socioeconomic Conditions, and Crime
  - 1. Crime is a lower-class phenomenon.
    - a. Instrumental crimes
    - b. Expressive crimes
  - 2. UCR data indicate higher crime rates in inner-city, high-poverty areas.
  - 3. Surveys of inmates indicate that prisoners were members of the lower class, unemployed, or underemployed before incarceration.
  - 4. Alternative explanation – relationship between social class and crime may be a function of law enforcement practices.
    - a. Police devote more resources to poor areas and apprehension rates are higher there.
    - b. Police are more likely to arrest and prosecute lower class citizens.
  - 5. Class and self-reports
    - a. 1950s – studies showed no direct relationship between social class and youth crime
      - i. Lower- and middle-class youths self-reported equal amounts of crime; lower-class youths had a greater chance of being arrested.
    - b. Little support for the idea that crime is primarily a lower-class phenomenon
    - c. Self-report survey methods measuring social class vary widely.
    - d. Relationship between social class and crime is complex.
      - i. Cannot be explained with a simple linear relationship
      - ii. Some population subgroups more deeply impacted by economic factors
- D. Evaluating the Class-Crime Association

1. Recent evidence suggests that serious, official crime is more prevalent among the lower classes; less serious and self-reported crimes are more evenly spread throughout the social structure.
  2. Research shows that community level indicators of social inequality are significantly related to crime rates.
    - a. Communities lacking in economic and social opportunities produce high levels of frustration.
    - b. When the poor are provided with economic opportunities via welfare and public assistance, crime rates drop.
- E. Crime and the Economy
1. Aggregated crime rates and aggregated unemployment rates are weakly related
  2. Crime rates sometimes rise during periods of economic prosperity and fall during periods of economic decline.
  4. There are four views on the association between the economy and crime rates
    - a. Bad economy means higher crime rates
    - b. Good economy means higher crime rates.
    - c. Good economy means lower crime rates.
    - d. Crime and the economy are not related.
- E. Age and Crime
1. Age is inversely related to criminality.
  2. Younger people commit crime more often than do their older peers.
  3. Early starters tend to commit more crime and are more likely to be involved in criminality for a longer period of time.
  4. Most research disputes the “co-offending” hypothesis and suggests crime is an individual act.
  5. Youth under 18 years comprise 6 percent of U.S. population.
    - a. Account for 25 percent of serious crime arrests
    - b. Account for 17 percent of arrests for all crimes.
    - c. Peak age for property crime is believed to be 16.
    - d. Peak age for violent crime is believed to be 18.
  6. Contrasting youth data to adult data
    - a. Adults 45 and over comprise a third of the U.S. population.
    - b. Account for 7 percent of serious crime arrests
    - c. The elderly crime rate is very low and has remained stable for the past 20 years.
  7. Aging out of crime
    - a. Crime peaks in adolescence then declines rapidly thereafter.
    - b. Agnew – the peak in criminal activity can be linked to essential features of adolescence in modern, industrial societies.
      - i. A reduction in supervision
      - ii. An increase in social and academic demands
      - iii. Participation in a larger, more diverse, peer-oriented world
      - iv. An increased desire for adult privileges

- v. A reduced ability to cope in a legitimate manner and increased incentive to solve problems in a criminal manner
  - c. Aging out is a function of the natural history of the human life cycle.
    - i. The young are impatient and unwilling or unable to delay gratification.
    - ii. As they mature, youths develop a long-term life view and resist the need for immediate gratification.
    - iii. In adulthood, people begin taking responsibility for their behavior and adhere to conventional norms.
  - d. It is possible the population contains different sets of criminal offenders.
    - i. One group whose criminal behavior declines with age
    - ii. Another group whose criminal behavior remains consistent throughout maturity
- F. Gender and Crime
  - 1. Male crime rates are much higher than those of females.
    - a. UCR (2006): Males account for 80 percent of all arrests for serious, violent crimes, almost 70 percent of arrests for serious property crimes;
    - b. Ratio of murder arrests: 8 males to 1 female
  - 2. In self-reports, males report criminal behavior more than females but not to the degree suggested by official data.
  - 3. Explaining gender differences in the crime rate
    - a. Early criminologists pointed to emotional, physical, and psychological differences to explain crime rate differences.
      - i. Masculinity hypothesis – a few “masculine” females were responsible for the few crimes women committed.
      - ii. Chivalry hypothesis – female criminality is hidden due to society’s generally protective and benevolent attitude toward women.
    - b. Some criminologists still believe gender based traits are key determinants of crime rate differences.
      - i. Physical strength
      - ii. Hormonal differences
        - a. Male androgens account for aggressive male behavior.
  - 4. Socialization and Development
    - a. Girls socialized to be less aggressive than boys.
    - b. Girls supervised more closely by parents.
    - c. Girls encouraged to develop prosocial behaviors, including caring, sensitivity, and understanding.
      - i. Males taught to seek approval physically.
    - d. Girls more verbally efficient – allows for conflict resolution without resorting to aggression
    - e. Differences when provoked
      - i. Girls are taught to respond by feeling anxious and depressed.
      - ii. Boys are taught to retaliate.
      - iii. Although females get angry, they are taught to blame themselves for harboring negative feelings.

- iv. Males react by looking to blame others.
- 5. Cognitive differences
  - a. Girls are superior to boys in verbal ability.
  - b. Girls are more empathetic than boys.
- 6. Feminist Views
  - a. Liberal feminist theory – traditionally lower crime rates for women could be explained by their “second-class” economic and social position.
  - b. As women’s social roles changed and their lifestyles became more like men’s, it was believed that their crime rates would converge.
  - c. Self-report studies
    - i. Indicate that the pattern of female criminality is similar to that of male criminality.
    - ii. Indicate that factors that predispose male criminals to crime have an equal impact of female criminals.
- 7. Is convergence likely?”
  - a. Female arrest rates seem to be increasing at a faster pace than males.
  - b. The “emancipation of women” may have had relatively little influence on female crime rates.
  - c. Offense patterns of women are quite different from those of men.
  - d. Changes in police activity may explain differences in arrest trends.
- G. Race and Crime
  - 1. Minorities involved in a disproportionate share of criminal activity.
  - 2. Comprise 12 percent of general population
    - a. Responsible for nearly 40 percent of Part I violent crime arrests
    - b. Responsible for 30 percent of property crime arrests
    - c. Responsible for disproportionate number of Part II arrests
  - 3. Possible reasons
    - a. Data reflect racial differences in the crime rate.
    - b. May reflect police bias in the arrest process
  - 4. Research – no relationship between race and self-reported delinquency
    - a. MTF: black youths self-report less delinquent behavior and substance abuse than white youth.
    - b. Arrest rate differences may be an artifact of criminal justice system bias.
    - c. Racial profiling and “DWB”
    - d. Improbable that police discretion or bias could alone account for disparity in arrest rates
  - 5. Racism and discrimination
    - a. Economic deprivation
    - b. Legacy of racism and discrimination
    - c. Black crime may be a function of the socialization process.
    - d. Butterfield: contemporary black violence is a tradition inherited from white southern violence.
      - i. The need for respect has turned into a cultural mandate.
  - 6. The Racial Threat Hypothesis

- a. Racial Threat Theory – as the percentage of minorities in the population increases, so too does the amount of social control that police direct at minority groups.
- b. Proponents point to research showing justice system may be racially biased.
  - i. Minority members less likely to receive bail.
  - ii. Minority members receive longer prison sentences.
  - iii. Perpetrators of victimization against whites receive harsher punishment than perpetrators of victimization against blacks.
  - iv. Crow and Johnson: race and ethnicity still impact sentencing (2008 Florida study)
- 7. Economic and Social Disparity
  - a. Racial and ethnic differentials in crime rates may also be tied to economic and social disparity.
  - b. Minorities face greater degree of social isolation and economic deprivation.
    - i. Even during times of economic growth, minorities are left out of the economic mainstream.
  - c. Minorities living in lower-class inner-city areas may be disproportionately violent because they are exposed to more violence in their daily lives.
  - d. Quality of available education elevates likelihood of adult incarceration
- 8. Family dissolution
  - a. Low employment rates among African American males places a strain on marriages.
  - b. Large number of female-headed households due to high mortality rate among African American males
- 9. Is Convergence Possible?
  - a. Convergence possible if economic and social obstacles can be removed
  - b. The causes of minority crime have been linked to poverty, racism, hopelessness, lack of opportunity, and urban problems.
- H. Chronic Offenders/Criminal Careers
  - 1. Most offenders commit a single criminal act and discontinue antisocial activity after arrest.
  - 2. Small group of persistent offenders account for a majority of all criminal offenses.
  - 3. Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin – 1972 study *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*
    - a. “Chronic 6 percent” of total sample were arrested five or more times
    - b. Responsible for 51.9 percent of all offenses
    - c. Arrests and court experience did little to deter the chronic offender.
    - d. Wolfgang’s cohort research replicated domestically and abroad
  - 4. What causes chronicity?
    - a. Kids exposed to a variety of personal and social problems at an early age are the most at risk to repeat offending; referred to as “early onset.”
    - b. Chronic offender factors identified via research
      - i. Problems in the home and school

- ii. Getting arrested before age 15
- iii. Low intellectual development
- iv. Parental drug involvement
- 5. Persistence – the Continuity of Crime
  - a. Tracy and Kempf-Leonard follow-up of second 1958 cohort
    - i. Two-thirds of delinquent offenders desisted from crime.
    - ii. Those who started delinquent careers early and who committed serious violent crimes throughout adolescence were the most likely to persist as adults.
  - b. Children who are disruptive and antisocial at age five or six the most likely to exhibit stable, long-term patterns of disruptive behavior throughout adolescence.
  - c. Persisting youthful offenders are more likely to abuse alcohol, get into trouble while in military service, get divorced, have a weak employment record, and to be economically dependent.
  - d. Persistent offenders do not specialize in any one type of crime.
- 6. Implications of the chronic offender concept
  - a. Discovery of chronic offender has revitalized criminological theory.
  - b. Chronic offender is the central focus of crime policy.
    - i. “Three strikes” policies
    - ii. “Truth in sentencing” policies

## VII. Summary

### KEY TERMS

**Aging Out** – The process by which individuals reduce the frequency of their offending behavior as they age. It is also known as spontaneous remission, because people are believed to spontaneously reduce the rate of their criminal behavior as they mature. Aging out is thought to occur among all groups of offenders.

**Career Criminal** – A person who repeatedly violates the law and organizes his or her lifestyle around criminality.

**Chivalry Hypothesis** – The idea that low female crime and delinquency rates are a reflection of the leniency with which police treat female offenders.

**Chronic Offender** – According to Wolfgang, a delinquent offender who is arrested five or more times before he or she is 18 and who stands a good chance of becoming an adult criminal; such offenders are responsible for more than half of all serious crimes.

**Cleared Crimes** – Crimes are cleared in two ways: when at least one person is arrested, charged, and turned over to the court for prosecution; or by exceptional means,



when some element beyond police control precludes the physical arrest of an offender (for example, the offender leaves the country).

**Cohort Research** – A research methodology that involves observing a group of people who share a like characteristic over time.

**Continuity of Crime** – The view that crime begins early in life and continues throughout the life course. Thus, the best predictor of future criminality is past criminality.

**Cross-Sectional Survey** – Uses survey data derived from all age, race, gender, and income segments of the populations measured simultaneously. Because people from every age group are represented, age-specific crime rates can be determined. Proponents believe this is a sufficient substitute for the more expensive longitudinal approach that follows a group of subjects over time to measure crime rate changes.

**Early Onset** – A term that refers to the assumption that a criminal career begins early in life and that people who are deviant at a very young age are the ones most likely to persist in crime.

**Expressive Crimes** – Crimes that have no purpose except to accomplish the behavior at hand, such as shooting someone. These crimes typically express anger, jealousy, rage, and frustration.

**Index Crimes** – The eight crimes that, because of their seriousness and frequency, the FBI reports the incidence of in the annual Uniform Crime Report. Index crimes include murder, rape, assault, robbery, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

**Instrumental Crimes** – Offenses designed to improve the financial or social position of the criminal.

**Liberal Feminist Theory** – Theory suggesting that the traditionally lower crime rate for women can be explained by their second class economic and social position. As women's social roles have changed and their lifestyles have become more like those of men, it is believed that their crime rates will converge.

**Masculinity Hypothesis** – The view that women who commit crimes have biological and psychological traits similar to those of men.

**Meta-Analysis** – A research technique that uses the grouped data from several different studies.

**National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)** – The ongoing victimization study conducted jointly by the Justice Department and the U.S. Census Bureau that surveys victims about their experiences with law violation.

**National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)** – A relatively new program that requires local police agencies to provide a brief account of each incident and arrest within twenty-two crime patterns, including incident, victim, and offender information.

**Part I Crimes** – Another term for index crimes; eight categories of serious, frequent crimes.

**Part II Crimes** – All crimes other than index and minor traffic offenses. The FBI records annual arrest information for Part II offenses.

**Persistence** – The idea that those who started delinquent careers early and who committed serious violent crimes throughout adolescence were the most likely to persist as adults.

**Population** – All people who share a particular characteristic, such as all high school students or all police officers.

**Racial Threat Hypothesis** – A hypothesis espousing that as the percentage of minorities in the population increases so too does the amount of social control that police direct at minority group members.

**Retrospective Cohort Study** – A study that uses an intact cohort of known offenders and looks back into their early life experiences by checking their educational, family, police, and hospital records.

**Sampling** – Selecting a limited number of people for study as representative of a larger group.

**Self-Report Survey** – A research approach that requires subjects to reveal their own participation in delinquent or criminal acts.

**Systematic Review** – A research technique that involves collecting the findings from previously conducted studies, appraising and synthesizing the evidence, and using the collective evidence to address a particular scientific question.

**Three Strikes** – Policies whereby people convicted of three felony offenses receive a mandatory life sentence.

**Uniform Crime Report (UCR)** – Large database, compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, of crimes reported and arrests made each year throughout the United States.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Gun Control is a hot topic in the United States. Poll the class about their views on gun control. Divide the class into two groups. One group will be pro-gun control and the second group will be anti-gun control. Have each group prepare a presentation for their side. Poll the class again to see if the views have changed after the presentations.
2. Break students into groups and have them construct a short self-report survey on underage drinking at their previous high schools. What questions should be included? How easy or difficult is it to construct a proper survey? How might they sample their fellow students? How might different sampling procedures lead to different results? What problems may arise – for example, memory problems, lying, and revelations of other illegal behaviors?
3. This chapter examines differences between females and males in their levels of criminal involvement. Compile a list of 30 delinquent acts including alcohol and drug use, minor criminal acts, and more serious criminal acts. Hand this form out to the students asking them to identify whether they are female or male and have them check each item they committed prior to the age of 18. To preserve anonymity have students submit their forms and then redistribute them. On the board, create two columns numbered one to thirty (one column for male responses and one for female). Have students place check marks on the board respective to those on the form they now hold. Discuss the delinquent acts where females and males report similar levels of offending and those acts where there is a clear disparity.

## STUDENT EXERCISES

1. Have students go to the UCR website and look up the crime rate on their college campus. Ask them to record how many violent crimes have been reported for the previous year? How many property crimes have been reported? Have them compare the rates at their college with another college in the state. Ask them to note some ecological differences between the two locations that might account for some of the variation in the crime rates.
2. Police departments have recently been actively using crime mapping to determine how to best allocate their resources in the community. Have students locate a police departments crime maps. Ask them to discuss how this information is beneficial to police departments.
3. Ask students to think about the current economic climate. Thinking about the four possible relationships between the economy and crime, ask them to make a prediction of what the crime rate will do in the next decade. Have them justify their prediction using the information presented in the chapter.