Chapter 2 Instructor’s Manual

# CH 2 – Summary

# Introduction

Stories about crime are ubiquitous throughout the news. There is a lot of information – and misinformation, and it is easy to see how those stories can generate fear.

In this chapter, we are going to stick with what sociologists and criminal justice experts know about crime, and we are going to examine the data as it relates to crime. This is critically important, because if you don’t balance your own biases about the problem with the actual data that explains both its causes, trends, and solutions, you won’t be any better educated about the problem than the general public. I will also suggest that while the public has heightened levels of fear of being victimized, some of our values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors contribute to the problem. Finally, think about factors that might be important to minimize or eliminate this problem.

# The Extent of Crime in the United States

How much crime occurs in the United States? This may seem to be a simple question, but the answer is extremely complicated. One reason the question is difficult to answer accurately is that a lot of crime goes unreported, or what is known as a dark figure of crime. However, based on the incidence of reported crime, we can use different measures to get an idea of how much actually occurs.

The most common form of data collection is called the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), which is compiled by the FBI and consists of all crimes known to the police across the country in a given year.

## Crime Trends

Two main categories of crime are tracked by the UCR: violent crimes (murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and property crimes (burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson).

According to the UCR for 2018, the estimated number of violent crimes in the nation decreased 3.3 percent from 2017, from 1,247,917 to 1,206,836. Nationwide, in 2018 there were an estimated 7,196,045 property crimes. Overall, property crimes decreased by 6.3 percent from 2017 and witnessed a ten-year decline of approximately 23 percent (Table 2.3).

# Are People Afraid of Crime?

As evident by public opinion polls, people are concerned about crime. over the past five years, about 70 percent of the people polled consistently stated that they were either fairly or a great deal worried about crime and violence. When asked about crime trends, the public does not seem to have a good understanding of the extent of the problem (Davis, 2018). In terms of assessing the problem on a national scale, people’s perceptions become dramatically inaccurate.

Adding to these fears is a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system’s ability to address crime. As Table 2.7 shows, only about a quarter have a lot of confidence in the system, while about a third of the population have very little or no confidence; findings that have been consistent over the past five years (Davis, 2018).

# Why is Crime Bad?

## Harm

When most people think of crime in the United States, particularly as a social problem, they most often think of street crime (e.g. murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft). You might think crime is “bad” because of the harm it does to people. Victims of crime are physically hurt or killed by offenses. However, if harm is the primary reason, consider other events that occur in society that are just as harmful (if not more so) but not criminal (e.g. automobile accidents). So, what makes crime more problematic than these events?

Costs

People lose money or the value of their possessions due to crimes. Additionally, there are costs associated with the apprehension, prosecution, and punishment of offenders. There are also costs related to the prevention of crime and residual costs (e.g. costs to the insurance industry or medical costs). White-collar crime can exceed the costs of all those street crimes combined.

## Psychological Impact

What makes crime bad for society includes the psychological impact it has on people. Street crime is sudden, it directly impacts the victim in meaningful ways, it is likely a surprise event, and it is usually confrontational. when people hear about incidents of street crime, the event serves as a reminder that something like it could happen to them creating a significant amount of anxiety and fear, which in turn changes people’s behavior.

# The Public’s Role in the Crime Problem

It is important to study not just the activities of criminals but also the ways in which the community contributes to the problem. Whether intentionally or not, people sometimes create opportunities for crimes to occur.

For example, studies of auto theft examined the number of vehicles that were recovered after being stolen. The research found that about one in every eight vehicles had no damage to the steering column. One conclusion from such a finding is that the keys were left in the ignition (Tuttle, 2016).

It is also important to acknowledge that, according to the data about violent crimes (which generate the most fear), it is likely that there is some sort of relationship between offender and victim. Again, to study this aspect of the problem is not to engage in victim-blaming, but rather to arrive at a better understanding of why and how crime occurs. That is, while we might be fearful of the unprovoked attack by a stranger, most of the time the offender is an acquaintance, a friend, or even a relative.

This relationship between victims and offenders has implications for the criminal justice system. Finally, the community’s inadvertent role in the problem of crime can result from a lack of understanding of the implications of certain social policies meant to address the problem (The Sentencing Project, n.d.).

# Types of Crime

## Violent Crimes

### Murder

While other countries have noticeably lower rates than the United States, the trend in this country has been downward for the last decade.

Criminal homicide takes two forms: murder, which is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought; and manslaughter, which is unlawful homicide without malice aforethought.

While the public’s perception of the problem suggests a more calculated and intentional type of offender, in reality, most homicides are not planned and are not committed by hardened criminals. In fact, most are a result of a dispute or argument between people that know each other (and are often intimately related), and the deadly outcome occurs when a conflict gets out of hand (Fox, Levin and Firdel, 2018; Katz, 1989).

Race and gender also play a role in understanding homicide, as men are more likely to commit murder than women. Homicide tends to be an intra-racial crime, meaning people of the same race commit the crime against another member of that group (Uniform Crime Reports, 2019).

### Mass Murder and Serial Killers

Another form of homicide is mass murder, or the killing of multiple victims, either at one time or over time. The most frequent type of mass murder is the family killing, where one member of a family kills several of his relatives. Finally, there are the multiple murders of strangers. Unlike the crime-related killings or family slayings, these involve victims chosen almost at random. In some cases, the murders occur all at the same time (Ramsland, 2005).

Another type of murderer, the serial murderer, kills one or two victims at a time but repeats the crime several times over a period of months or years. The research on serial killers suggests that their crimes are difficult for the police to solve because either the murderer, the victim, or both move at the fringes of society (Fox, Levin, and Fridel, 2019).

### Rape and Gender-Based Violence

Rape consists of any type of penetration against anyone without their consent. While this is a more accurate definition of the crime of rape, the statistics on rape continue to show that females are the primary victims, particularly younger ones (Uniform Crime Reports, 2019). Given the circumstances surrounding rape, including the harm it causes its victims and the way the justice system typically responds to these crimes, it is one of the least frequently reported crimes.

Gender-based violence is defined by the United Nations as “any act of violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm and suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”(United Nations Population Fund, n.d.).

## Property Crimes

What distinguishes property crime from violent crime is that they do not usually involve the use or the threat of force. Property crimes are the types of crime that people are most likely to experience. Because these crimes happen so frequently and because there is a lower chance that the crime will be solved, less information is known about offenders.

## Public Order Crimes

Public order crimes sometimes involve the use of violence, but what distinguishes them from other types of crime is the threat of the moral disintegration of society. In terms of sheer numbers, public order offenders are the largest category of criminals, with the incidence of such crimes exceeding those actually reported to the police. These are sometimes called victimless crimes because some people believe they do not result in specific harms to anyone but the offenders.

## Juvenile Crime

The juvenile justice system recognizes that youth are still cognitively developing and can learn valuable lessons from a more rehabilitative approach to punishment. Thus, while juvenile crime can involve both violent and property crimes, the system is distinct from its adult counterpart and its goals are generally to provide individualized justice and rehabilitate young offenders instead of punishing them.

While there may be conflicting explanations for the decline in juvenile crime and arrests, disparities in the system exist. For example, Black and Hispanic youth are much more likely to be processed through the system compared to White offenders (McNamara and Burns, 2020; Smith, 2015). Also troubling is the number of youthful offenders who transferred to adult courts and prisons increased in the early 1990s, when many states passed laws, making it easier for youth to be tried as adults. Finally, the number of female youths arrested has increased significantly, resulting in some experts asserting that females have become more violent than in the past.

## Occupational (White Collar) and Corporate Crime

This describes the behavior of people who commit crimes as part of their normal business activity. An interesting aspect of occupational criminals is that such crimes are not seen as threatening to society compared to other types of crimes. The theory of theory of differential association suggests that occupational crime offenders do not intentionally go into a career with criminal activity in mind. Rather, they likely enter professions where their colleagues view such conduct as “business” or standard industry conduct rather than actual criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1949).

Corporate crime is committed by corporations or people working on behalf of a corporation, usually for some type of financial benefit for the organization. It can include a wide range of activities.

## Cybercrime

One of the fastest growing crimes is cybercrime**,** which is conceptualized as a criminal behavior that includes fraud, theft, computer hacking, bullying, terrorism, and other activities. Because most people are limited in their understanding of protecting information online, they are easily exploited by cybercriminals (Singh and Kumar, 2018).   
Common motives of offenders include:

* **Entertainment.** Some cybercriminals perform their activities of cyberattack to test their hacking abilities while seeking status among their criminal peers, especially for acts that other cybercriminals have failed to accomplish.
* **Hacktivism.** These cyberattacks are motivated by political, religious, and social objectives—either to promote their own particular agendas and/or to discourage others from doing the same things. A recent hacktivist behavior is to expose high profile individuals who are having secret affairs.
* **Financial gain.** Most of the cyberattacks perform cyberattacks to become rich. The target of cyberattacks may be the banking system, big companies, organizations, rich individuals, or wealthy countries.
* **Spying**. These types of cybercriminals, working on their own or as contracted by others, steal confidential information of specific countries, organizations, or individuals.
* **Revenge**. These types of cybercriminals conduct cyberattacks against a company as a form of revenge against it for various reasons, including disgruntled employees (Singh and Kumar, 2018).

Cybersecurity deals with the security of the cyberspace from cybercriminals. The three fundamental principles of cybersecurity are confidentiality, integrity, and availability

# What Role Does Sociological Theory Play in Understanding Crime?

Key sociological theories and concepts we examined in Chapter 1 can help us to better understand and explain crime.

## Anomie and Strain Theory

Anomie occurs when the norms that regulate people’s conventional behavior no longer apply or are ineffective (Durkheim). For example, after a natural disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake, people often feel great fear, anxiety, and concerns about how they are supposed to act.

Anomie has been used to explain crime in other ways, such as strain theory**.** Strain theory describes the tendency for some people to commit crimes due to an inability to achieve the a socially defined goal (Merton, 1938). Merton determined that there are five types of adaptation to this situation: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellionism.

Conformists are those who have the desire but not the opportunity to succeed. Innovators accept the goals but reject the means. Ritualists respond to strain/anomie by focusing on the means of achieving the goal rather than the goal itself. Some retreat from society, rejecting both the conventional goals and the means to obtain them. There are also rebellionists who selectively accept or reject the goals and means of success in society based on a larger objective antithetical to social norms and conventions.

## Conflict Theory and Crime

Marxist theory ideas center around the exploitation of those who do not have access to economic, social, and political power. Those who do have it tend to use that power to further their own interests. This means the type of people who threaten the elite’s, those possessing power, way of life are likely to engage in behaviors that are likely to be identified as criminal.

Applying Marxist theory to crime, a “social reality of crime” offers important insight into how some people are more likely to end up as criminals. The powerful control the criminal justice system, and they are also able to influence what types of actions the general public considers appropriate or inappropriate (Quinney, 1970; Alexander, 2012).

Feminist theory argues that the unequal status of women in society is reflected in the justice system. A feminist theory of crime also criticizes the tendency of existing theories to assume that the motives behind criminality for women are the same as that for men (Simpson, 1989). Research shows that the reasons for committing such a dramatic act are different for men and women (Tragardh, Nilsson, Granth, and Sturup, 2016).

## Symbolic Interactionism and Crime

There is much to be learned about how criminal behavior is a product of social interaction between the individual and the larger society.

Criminal behavior is learned through the process of interacting with others. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes not only the techniques of committing the crime, but also a set of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes that justifies the action. A person becomes delinquent because they associate with others who feel that criminal behavior is an acceptable course of action. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.

A critical element of this theory argues that people become criminal when they are exposed to people who think criminal behavior is more acceptable than conformity. Also important to the theory is the nature of the relationship with those individuals that normalize criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1939).

A related perspective, labeling theory, argues that once a person commits a crime and gets caught, there is a process that reshapes their social identity and limits their opportunities to become full-fledged members of society again (Becker, 1966).

The process of acquiring a label develops in five stages:

* The act (primary deviance): The person has committed the act and been discovered. A person’s identity can tolerate a minor transgression without a change of social standing (Lemert, 1951).
* Status degradation ceremony: Society responds by calling attention to the act and making the offender take responsibility for it. As a result, the person’s societal status is damaged and a negative label is affixed (Garfinkel, 1956).
* Label as master status:While we all occupy many statuses in society, there is usually one that serves to primarily define us, which sociologists refer to as a master status. As a result of the act and the societal response, the person’s new, negative label becomes their master status (Becker, 1966).
* Retrospective interpretation:The negative label causes others to withdraw from social interaction with the labeled person. It also results in people’s recasting of that person’s identity, or retrospective interpretation. All their past, present, and even future behavior will be understood in light of this new negative label (Schur, 1971).
* Internalization of the label:The offender who has been negatively labeled begins to think about themselves in terms of how society has now defined them.
* Deviant subculture/career (secondary deviance): **I**n light of all of these factors, particularly society’s exclusion of the negatively-labeled person from full participation in society, the individual begins to interact with other similarly labeled individuals and embarks upon a criminal or deviant career (Becker, 1966).

## The Criminal Justice System and Its Impact

Society addresses the problem of crime through the primary mechanism is the criminal justice system. This societal institution is comprised of three related agencies: the police, the courts, and correctional institutions.

## The Police

Perhaps the most visible representative of the criminal justice system and it is the agency that most people who come into contact with the system will experience. An important part of the role of the police is the identification and apprehension of criminals and to prevent crime from occurring. Research has shown that while patrol remains an important component of policing, other strategies, such as hot spots analysis, discussed in another section, can be more effective in addressing crime problems in certain areas.

Broken windows theory suggest disorder is a key element in understanding and preventing crime. Disorder, in the form of graffiti, trash, abandoned cars, furniture, poor lighting, and broken windows in abandoned buildings, creates a climate of fear that causes residents to avoid these areas (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Despite its popularity with policymakers, police officials, and even the general public, the research on the effectiveness of the broken windows theory is mixed (Braga, Welsh, and Schnell 2015).

## Courts

While there are several different types of courts in the US that reflect the many local, state, and federal laws, criminal courts are generally tasked with determining whether a suspect is guilty of committing a particular crime.

A plea bargain is a negotiation between the prosecutor and the defense attorney that results in a guilty plea in exchange for a lighter sentence.

If a case goes to trial, judges are responsible for sentencing offenders if they are found guilty. An important issue in the sentencing decision is the rationale or justification for punishing offenders. Generally, there are four philosophies of punishment: deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, and just desserts (Clear, Resig, Petrosino and Cole, 2018).

Deterrence is generally the idea that the punishment is designed to send the message to others about the consequences of their actions

Incapacitation is a philosophy that suggests the person should be punished so that the rest of society is safer while they removed from society.

Rehabilitation is a philosophy that argues people make mistakes and while they should be punished and held accountable for their actions incarcerated efforts should be made to correct their thinking and actions.

Just desserts suggests that the first three philosophies are future-oriented—they are based on what the offender might do in the future.

## Corrections

The third main component of the criminal justice system consists of jails and prisons, at the local, state, and federal levels. [According to a 2018 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics](https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus16.pdf)(BJS), nearly 2.2 million adults were held in America's prisons and jails at the end of 2016 and the prison population [decreased in 2016 for the third straight year](https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/1/11/16880166/prison-rate-mass-incarceration-2016) (Kann, 2019).

According to the report, about 1.3 million people are held in state prisons, while more than 600,000 people behind bars [are in one of the country's local jails](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2018.html). What is interesting about this is that jail is designed for people who have committed minor crimes, those with sentences of up to one year, as well as those who are awaiting trial and cannot afford bail (Kann, 2019).

In the United States is said to incarcerate more criminals than any other country in the world (The Sentencing Project, 2018). However, the data seems to suggest that many people who are incarcerated have not yet even been convicted of a crime.

# What Works? Effective Solutions to Crime

Research shows the public clings to programs that have received a lot of media attention despite the evidence that they are not nearly as effective as initially portrayed. The panacea phenomenon (Figure 2.4), the tendency for the public, policymakers, politicians, and others to seek a single cure-all solution to a problem like crime. This means that virtually every program will be measured against such a benchmark and inevitably fail. This leads to a cycle where an apparent solution leads to disappointing results and discouragement that “nothing works” (Finckenauer, 1982).

In 1999, Finckenauer revisited the landmark findings of the Scared Straight through the lens of the panacea phenomenon concluding that panacea programs tend to remain popular because the public clings to the belief that people’s behavior will change if the consequences are sufficiently severe, regardless of the data suggesting that such an approach lacks an empirical foundation (Gavin and Finckenauer, 1999).

## Big Brothers / Big Sisters Program

The Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS) Community-Based Mentoring (CBM) program is designed to help youth between the ages of 6 and 18, many of who come from single-parent households and neighborhoods where there is a high incidence of poverty, violence and trauma. The program’s philosophy is that if youth can develop strong, positive bonds to the community and to others, they will be less likely to engage in problematic behaviors (Tierney, Grossman, and Resch. 2000). According to studies of outcome measures such as drug or alcohol use, anti-social behavior, or academic performance, participants in the BBS and CBM programs showed far more prosocial behavior than a control group of youths who did not receive mentoring.

## Perry Preschool Project

The Perry Preschool Project, which originated in Michigan, is designed to target African American children ages 3-4 who are living in poverty and considered to be at high risk for school failure. Without a solid educational foundation, as adults, these children are often ineligible for well-paying jobs and are more likely to engage in crime (Schweinhart, Barnes, and Weikart, 1993). The program group’s employment rate was noticeably higher and fewer participants received welfare compared to the control group in the previous ten years (Schweinhart, Barnes, and Weikart, 1993).

## Hot Spots Policing

Suggests policing strategy, a concentrated police effort to address the physical and social disorder in a community, was first implemented by the Lowell (Mass.) Police Department in 2005 (National Institute of Justice, 2011). The strategy is based on the broken windows theory of crime, which postulates that crime is likely to flourish in areas with high levels of physical and social disorder. As a result of these efforts, outcome measures for the program, which included calls for service, observed disorder, and an overall improved physical landscape, indicated the program’s success.

# Popular but Less Effective Programs

Some programs gain media attention, even though their actual impact is limited. This can happen for many reasons, such as policymakers attempting to capitalize on the popularity of a program without waiting for an empirical assessment, or the media searching for a sensational story.

## D.A.R.E.

A school-based drug use prevention program called D.A. R. E., taught by police officers, was created in 1983 by Los Angeles police chief Darryl Gates in response to increases in drug arrests. During the 1980s and 1990s, D.A.R.E. was implemented in nearly 75 percent of all schools in the United States. From the outset, the empirical evaluations of D.A.R.E. not only showed that it had no effect on decreasing drug use, it had what was called a boomerang effect, meaning exposure to the effects of drugs actually caused some youth to experiment with drugs. No statistically significant impact on drug use or attitude towards drug use compared with a control comparison group was found (Cima, 2016).

## Juvenile Boot Camps

Correctional boot camps (also called shock or intensive incarceration programs) are short-term residential programs that resemble military basic training and target both convicted juvenile and sometimes adult offenders. The aim is to reduce recidivism by changing offenders’ behaviors through positive reinforcement and immediate punishment for negative acts.

There is no standard boot camp model, and individual programs can differ greatly. Regardless of the model used, the research shows a limited level of effectiveness in changing the behavior of participants, particularly over time. The weight of the evidence suggests that while boot camps are a popular strategy with many policymakers and politicians, the actual impact of the programs to reduce crime and delinquency are not seen (Wilson, MacKenzie, and Mitchell, 2008).

## Weed and Seed

Weed and Seed is a community-based approach that attempts to reduce and prevent crime, including violent crime, drug trafficking and gang activity, while also attempting to revitalize the community by providing social services aimed at restoring the physical landscape and providing assistance to residents. The “weeding” portion of the program involves aggressive law enforcement activities designed to identify chronic and dangerous offenders, while the “seeding” portion of the program attempts to restore the elements of the community necessary for economic development and social cohesion among residents.

Despite the popularity of Weed and Seed as an idea, and despite considerable funding from the federal government to implement these programs, the overall impact was quite limited in terms of its actual impact on reducing crime (Roman, Cahill, Coggeshall, Lagerson, and Courtney, 2005).

# So, What Can I Do?

Like all social problems, the problem of crime is complex and not easily resolved. However, there are some things individuals can do to contribute to a solution. Reducing the opportunities for crime is perhaps the easiest and most immediate step you can take. Most criminals are opportunistic, and if people can reduce those opportunities, the chances of victimization are greatly reduced. This does not mean you have to become paranoid about your safety; it simply means taking a more intentional approach to reducing the risks of being victimized.

# Conclusion

Crime is a complex problem that involves many variables. Research shows that people are generally afraid of being victimized and think that crime is getting worse. Those fears are real for some people, despite the fact that the data has shown that the crime rate has been decreasing for the past thirty years. We also must consider how the public’s role in the crime problem in this country is often a result of a lack of awareness of the risks as well as an involvement as offenders. Realistically, there is no single answer or solution to the crime problem; rather there are many reasons why people commit crimes, and this means there needs to be a variety of programs to address those motivations.

# CH 2 – Learning Goals (Learning Objectives):

* Describe the extent of crime in the United States.
* Discuss factors that contribute to the public’s fear of crime.
* Summarize what makes crime bad for society.
* Analyze the public’s role in the crime problem in the United States.
* Compare the different types of crime, including crimes of violence, property crime, juvenile crime, white-collar offenses, and cybercrime.
* Explain the role of sociological theory in understanding crime.
* Discuss the components of the criminal justice system and how it addresses crime in the United States.
* Identify several programs that work to reduce crime in the United States.

# CH 2 – Lecture Outline

# Introduction

* Stories about crime are ubiquitous throughout news.
  + A lot of information – and misinformation, and it is easy to see how those stories can generate fear.
* In this chapter
  + Review what sociologists and criminal justice experts know about crime
  + examine the data as it relates to crime
  + factors that might be important contributing factors to minimize or eliminate this problem

# The Extent of Crime in the United States

* Answering the question of “How much crime occurs in the United States?” is extremely complicated.
* Much crime goes unreported, or what is known as a dark figure of crime.
* Based on the incidence of reported crime, we can use different measures we approximate how much actually occurs.
* The most common form of data collection is called the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), which is compiled by the FBI and consists of all crimes known to the police across the country in a given year.

## Crime Trends

* Two main categories of crime are tracked by the UCR:
* violent crimes (murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault)
* property crimes (burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson).

# Are People Afraid of Crime?

* Over the past five years, about 70 percent of the people polled consistently stated that they were either fairly or a great deal worried about crime and violence.
* In terms of assessing the problem on a national scale, people’s perceptions become dramatically inaccurate.
* Compounded by a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system’s ability to address crime (Davis, 2018).

# Why is Crime Bad?

## Harm

* Most people think of crime in the United States as street crime
  + crime is “bad” because of the harm it does to people
* However, other events that occur in society that are just as harmful (if not more so) but not criminal (e.g. automobile accidents).
  + What makes crime more problematic than these events?

Costs

* People lose money or the value of their possessions due to crimes.
* Costs associated with the apprehension, prosecution, and punishment of offenders.
* Prevention of crime and residual costs

## Psychological Impact

* Street crime is sudden, it directly impacts the victim in meaningful ways, it is likely a surprise event, and it is usually confrontational.
* Creates a significant amount of anxiety and fear, which in turn changes people’s behavior.

# The Public’s Role in the Crime Problem

* Whether intentionally or not, people sometimes create opportunities for crimes to occur (Tuttle, 2016).
* It is likely that there is some sort of relationship between offender and victim regarding violent crime.
  + might be fearful of the unprovoked attack by a stranger, most of the time the offender is a known
  + Relationship between victims and offenders has implications for the criminal justice system.
* Community’s lack of understanding of the implications of certain social policies meant to address the problem (The Sentencing Project, n.d.).

# Types of Crime

## Violent Crimes

### Murder

* Criminal homicide takes two forms:
  + murder, which is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought.
  + manslaughter, which is unlawful homicide without malice aforethought.
* most homicides are
  + not planned and are not committed by hardened criminals.

are a result of a dispute or argument between people that know each other (and are often intimately related).

* + occurs when a conflict gets out of hand (Fox, Levin and Firdel, 2018; Katz, 1989).
  + generally intra-racial crime (Uniform Crime Reports, 2019).

### Mass Murder and Serial Killers

* Killing of multiple victims, either at one time or over time.
  + Most frequent type of mass murder is the family killing by a member
  + Multiple murders of strangers, generally involving victims chosen almost at random (Ramsland, 2005).
* A serial murderer repeats the crime several times over a period of months or years.
  + Difficult for the police to solve because either the murderer, the victim, or both move at the fringes of society (Fox, Levin, and Fridel, 2019).

### Rape and Gender-Based Violence

* Any type of penetration against another without their consent.
* Females are the primary victims, particularly younger ones (Uniform Crime Reports, 2019).
* One of the least frequently reported crimes.

## Property Crimes

* Does not usually involve the use or the threat of force.
* Types of crime are most likely to experience.
  + Happens frequently because there is a lower chance that the crime will be solved
  + Less information is known about offenders.

## Public Order Crimes

* Types of crime constructed as a threat of the moral disintegration of society.
  + Largest category of criminals
  + incidence of crimes exceeding those actually reported.
* called victimless crimes because some people believe they do not result in specific harms to anyone but the offenders.

## Juvenile Crime

* Recognizes that youth are still cognitively developing and can learn valuable lessons from a more rehabilitative approach to punishment.
  + Distinct from adult counterpart in that its goals are generally
    - to provide individualized justice
    - rehabilitate young offenders instead only of punishing them.
* Racial and ethnic disparities in the system exist (McNamara and Burns, 2020; Smith, 2015).
  + number of
    - youthful offenders who transferred to adult courts and prisons increased in the early 1990s.
    - female youth arrested has increased significantly

## Occupational (White Collar) and Corporate Crime

* crime committed as part of their normal business activity.
  + not seen as threatening to society compared to other types of crimes
  + differential association suggests that occupational crime offenders do not intentionally go into a career with criminal activity in mind (Sutherland, 1949).
* corporate crime is committed by corporations or people working on behalf of a corporation
  + usually for some type of financial benefit for the organization.

## Cybercrime

* Criminal behavior that includes fraud, theft, computer hacking, bullying, terrorism, and other activities.
* Because most people are limited in their understanding of protecting information online, they are easily exploited by cybercriminals (Singh and Kumar, 2018).   
  Common motives of offenders include:
  + **Entertainment.** to test their hacking abilities while seeking status among their criminal peers
  + **Hacktivism.** motivated by political, religious, and social objectives
  + **Financial gain.** cyberattacks to become rich.
  + **Spying**. theft of confidential information of specific countries, organizations, or individuals.
  + **Revenge**. cyberattacks against a company as a form of revenge (Singh and Kumar, 2018).
* Cybersecurity deals with the security of the cyberspace from cybercriminals.
  + The three fundamental principles: confidentiality, integrity, and availability

# What Role Does Sociological Theory Play in Understanding Crime?

## Anomie and Strain Theory

* Anomie occurs when the norms that regulate people’s conventional behavior no longer apply or are ineffective (Durkheim).
* Has been used to explain crime in other ways, such as strain theory**.**
* Strain theory describes the tendency for some people to commit crimes due to an inability to achieve a socially defined goal (Merton, 1938).
* five types of adaptation:
  + Conformists are those who have the desire but not the opportunity to succeed.
  + Innovators accept the goals but reject the means.
  + Ritualists respond to strain/anomie by focusing on the means of achieving the goal rather than the goal itself.
  + Retreatists from society, rejecting both the conventional goals and the means to obtain them.
  + Rebellionists who selectively accept or reject the goals and means of success in society based on a larger objective antithetical to social norms and conventions.

## Conflict Theory and Crime

* Marxist theory ideas center around the exploitation of those who do not have access to economic, social, and political power.
  + Those who do have it tend to use that power to further their own interests.
  + People who threaten the elite’s way of life are likely to engage in behaviors that are likely to be identified as criminal.
* A “social reality of crime”.
  + powerful control the criminal justice system,
  + able to influence what types of actions the general public considers appropriate or inappropriate (Quinney, 1970; Alexander, 2012).
* Feminist theory argues that the unequal status of women in society is reflected in the justice system (Simpson, 1989).
* Research shows that the reasons for committing such a dramatic act are different for men and women (Tragardh, Nilsson, Granth, and Sturup, 2016).

## Symbolic Interactionism and Crime

* Criminal behavior can be explained as a product of social interaction between the individual and the larger society.
* Learned through the process of interacting with others; includes
  + techniques of committing the crime,
  + set of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes
* Differential associations argue that people become criminal when they are exposed to people who think criminal behavior is more acceptable than conformity (Sutherland, 1939).
* Labeling theory argues that once a person commits a crime and gets caught, there is a process that reshapes their social identity and limits their social opportunities (Becker, 1966).
  + The process of acquiring a label develops in five stages:
    - The act (primary deviance): The person has committed the act and been discovered. A person’s identity can tolerate a minor transgression without a change of social standing (Lemert, 1951).
    - Status degradation ceremony: Society responds by calling attention to the act and making the offender take responsibility for it. As a result, the person’s societal status is damaged and a negative label is affixed (Garfinkel, 1956).
    - Label as master status:While we all occupy many statuses in society, there is usually one that serves to primarily define us, which sociologists refer to as a master status. As a result of the act and the societal response, the person’s new, negative label becomes their master status (Becker, 1966).
    - Retrospective interpretation:The negative label causes others to withdraw from social interaction with the labeled person. It also results in people’s recasting of that person’s identity, or retrospective interpretation. All their past, present, and even future behavior will be understood in light of this new negative label (Schur, 1971).
    - Internalization of the label:The offender who has been negatively labeled begins to think about themselves in terms of how society has now defined them.
    - Deviant subculture/career (secondary deviance): **I**n light of all of these factors, particularly society’s exclusion of the negatively-labeled person from full participation in society, the individual begins to interact with other similarly labeled individuals and embarks upon a criminal or deviant career (Becker, 1966).

## The Criminal Justice System and Its Impact

* Primary mechanism through which a society addresses issues related to crime. is the criminal justice system.
* Comprised of three related agencies: the police, the courts, and correctional institutions.

## The Police

* Perhaps the most visible representative of the criminal justice system
  + Agency that most people who encounter if exposed to the system.
  + An important role is the identification and apprehension of criminals and to prevent crime from occurring.
* Broken windows theory suggest disorder is a key element in understanding and preventing crime (Wilson and Kelling, 1982).
  + Despite its popularity with policymakers, police officials, and even the general public, the research on the effectiveness of the broken windows theory is mixed (Braga, Welsh, and Schnell 2015).

## Courts

* Generally tasked with determining whether a suspect is guilty of committing a particular crime.
  + A plea bargain is a negotiation between the prosecutor and the defense attorney that results in a guilty plea in exchange for a lighter sentence.
  + An important issue in the sentencing decision is the rationale or justification for punishing offenders. Generally, there are four philosophies of punishment (Clear, Resig, Petrosino and Cole, 2018):
    - Deterrence is generally the idea that the punishment is designed to send the message to others about the consequences of their actions
    - Incapacitation is a philosophy that suggests the person should be punished so that the rest of society is safer while they removed from society.
    - Rehabilitation is a philosophy that argues people make mistakes and while they should be punished and held accountable for their actions incarcerated efforts should be made to correct their thinking and actions.
    - Just desserts suggest that the first three philosophies are future-oriented—they are based on what the offender might do in the future.

## Corrections

* Consists of jails and prisons, at the local, state, and federal levels.
  + According to the report, about 1.3 million people are held in state prisons, while more than 600,000 people behind bars [are in one of the country's local jails](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2018.html).
  + Jail is designed for people who have committed minor crimes, those with sentences of up to one year, as well as those who are awaiting trial and cannot afford bail (Kann, 2019).
* In the United States is said to incarcerate more criminals than any other country in the world (The Sentencing Project, 2018).
  + The data seems to suggest that many people who are incarcerated have not yet even been convicted of a crime.

# What Works? Effective Solutions to Crime

* Research shows the public clings to programs that have received a lot of media attention despite the evidence that they are not nearly as effective as initially portrayed.
  + The panacea phenomenon (Figure 2.4), the tendency for the public, policymakers, politicians, and others to seek a single cure-all solution to a problem like crime.
  + Leads to a cycle where an apparent solution leads to disappointing results and discouragement that “nothing works” (Finckenauer, 1982; Gavin and Finckenauer, 1999).

## Big Brothers / Big Sisters Program

* The Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS) is a Community-Based Mentoring (CBM) program is designed to help youth between the ages of 6 and 18, many of who come from single-parent households and neighborhoods where there is a high incidence of poverty, violence and trauma.
* The program’s philosophy is that if youth can develop strong, positive bonds to the community and to others, they will be less likely to engage in problematic behaviors (Tierney, Grossman, and Resch. 2000).

## Perry Preschool Project

* Designed to target African American children ages 3-4 who are living in poverty and considered to be at high risk for school failure.
* The program group’s employment rate was noticeably higher and fewer participants received welfare compared to the control group in the previous ten years (Schweinhart, Barnes, and Weikart, 1993).

## Hot Spots Policing

* A concentrated police effort to address the physical and social disorder in a community based on the broken windows theory of crime, which postulates that crime is likely to flourish in areas with high levels of physical and social disorder.

# Popular But Less Effective Programs

* Some programs gain media attention, even though their actual impact is limited.

## D.A.R.E.

* A school-based drug use prevention program called D.A. R. E., taught by police officers.
* From the outset, the empirical evaluations of D.A.R.E. not only showed that it had no effect on decreasing drug use, it had what was called a boomerang effect, meaning exposure to the effects of drugs actually caused some youth to experiment with drugs (Cima, 2016).

## Juvenile Boot Camps

* Short-term residential programs that resemble military basic training and target both convicted juvenile and sometimes adult offenders.
* Aim is to reduce recidivism through positive reinforcement and immediate punishment for negative acts.
* Limited level of effectiveness in changing the behavior of participants, particularly over time.
* The weight of the evidence suggests that while boot camps are a popular strategy with many policymakers and politicians, the actual impact of the programs to reduce crime and delinquency are not seen (Wilson, MacKenzie, and Mitchell, 2008).

## Weed and Seed

* A community-based approach that attempts to reduce and prevent crime while also attempting to revitalize the community by providing social services aimed at restoring the physical landscape and aiding residents.
* Overall impact was quite limited in terms of its actual impact on reducing crime (Roman, Cahill, Coggeshall, Lagerson, and Courtney, 2005).

# So, What Can I Do?

* Like all social problems, the problem of crime is complex and not easily resolved.
* However, there are some things individuals can do to contribute to a solution.
* Means taking a more intentional approach to reducing the risks of being victimized.

# Conclusion

* Crime is a complex problem that involves many variables.
* Research shows that people are generally afraid of being victimized and think that crime is getting worse.
* The data has shown that the crime rate has been decreasing for the past thirty years.
* We also must consider how the public’s role in the crime problem in this country is often a result of a lack of awareness of the risks as well as an involvement as offenders.

# CH 2 - Key Terms

## Anomie

A sense of social disconnection when the norms that regulate people’s conventional behavior no longer apply or are ineffective.

## Boomerang effect

Documented effect of the D.A.R.E. program where exposure to the effects of drugs caused some youth to experiment with drugs

## Broken windows theory

Understanding disorder and imposing an order is a key element in understanding and preventing crime (, respectively?).

## Conformity

A form of adaptation to strain, where people continue to accept the cultural goals and the institutional means to obtain them.

## Cybercrime

A criminal behavior that includes the use of digital tools and communication networks to engage in criminal activity such as fraud, theft, computer hacking, bullying, and terrorism.

## Dark figure of crime

Unreported incidents of criminal and potential criminal activity.

## Differential association

When individuals enter activities where their colleagues view such conduct as “business” or standard industry conduct rather than actual criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1949).

## Feminist theory

Theoretical framework that when applied to discussions of crime argues that the unequal status of women in society is reflected in the justice system.

## Gender-based violence

Defined by the United Nations as “any act of violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm and suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”(United Nations Population Fund, n.d.)

## Human trafficking

Defined by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation as the illegal exploitation of a person generally for purposes of sex, labor, or domestic servitude.

## Labeling theory

Argues that once a person commits a crime and gets caught, there is a process that reshapes their social identity and limits their opportunities to become full-fledged members of society again.

## Legitimating the ex-status

## A way to cope with the labeling effects of crime, where offenders attempt to cope with negative labels by engaging in conforming behavior.

## Hot spots policing

A policing strategy, a concentrated police effort to address the physical and social disorder in a community, was first implemented by the Lowell (Mass.) Police Department in 2005 (National Institute of Justice, 2011).

## Innovation

Adaption described by Merton where individuals adopt socially legitimate goals but purse them through socially illegitimate means.

## Internalization of label

The offender who has been negatively labeled begins to think about themselves in terms of how society has now defined them.

## Mass murder

The killing of multiple victims, either at one time, or over time.

## Panacea phenomenon

The tendency for the public, policymakers, politicians, and others to seek a single cure-all solution to a problem like crime.

## Plea bargain

A negotiation between the prosecutor and the defense attorney that results in a guilty plea in exchange for a lighter sentence.

## Primary deviance

The person has committed the act and been discovered.

## Rebellionism

Adaption described by Merton where individuals selectively accept or reject the goals and means of success in society based on a larger objective antithetical to social norms and conventions.

## Retreatism

Adaption described by Merton where individuals rejecting both the conventional goals and the means to obtain them.

## Retrospective interpretation

People’s recasting of a person’s identity because of a label attached for a deviant act.

## Ritualism

Adaption described by Merton where individuals express a rejection of conventional goals and but continue to follow the means to obtain them.

## Secondary deviance

A person labeled as deviant begins to interact with other similarly labeled individuals and embarks upon a criminal or deviant career.

## Self-report studies

## A type of research that asks offenders about their experiences with criminal behavior.

## Social reality of crime

Argues that not only do the powerful control the criminal justice system, but they are also able to influence what types of actions the public considers appropriate or inappropriate.

## Status degradation ceremony

Ritual where society responds by calling attention to the act and making the offender take responsibility for it and affixing a negative label to the offender.

## Strain theory

Merton to describe the tendency for some people to commit crimes due to an inability to achieve social goals.

## Uniform Crime Reports

A database compiled by the FBI and consists of all crimes known to the police across the country in a given year.

## Victimization surveys

## A tool that measures crime based on reports from victims of crime.

## Victimless crimes

Crimes where people argue the offenses do not result in specific harms to anyone but the offenders.

## White collar crime

Criminal behavior engaged in as a part of a person’s normal business activity.

# CH 2 – Discussion and Essay Questions

1. What is crime and how is it measured? Why is it difficult to measure crime? Does crime serve any social function?
2. What are the main components of the criminal justice system? What do the intuitions and organizations contained within do?
3. Can cybercrime be white-collar crime? Can you think of an example?
4. What is the difference between primary and secondary deviance? Are they connected, how are how not?
5. Explain how labeling theory works to define criminal behavior. Do you think labeling people has effects in other parts of society too, like the family or classrooms?
6. How is crime related to social norms and values?
7. What are the central principles of differential association theory? How can it be applied to crime in a concrete way?
8. Why and how do societies punish offenders? Does it work?
9. Compare the programs designed to provide solutions to crime mentioned in the chapter? Why do you think some programs are successful while others were less successful?
10. In what ways do Marxist theories of crime connect criminal activity to ideas of power?

# Out of Class Assignments and Projects:

Soc XXX Semester XX – Prompt 1

# Category:

In-Class or Out of Class Activities and Project Assignments

# Objective:

Criminal justice system, social institutions, police, policing

# Review:

[No Special Duty](https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/no-special-duty)

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/no-special-duty>

# Prompt:

What are the police, and what role(s) do they play in the criminal justice system? In what ways does the podcast highlight how the expectation and the reality of what the police “do” might not be one and the same? Be sure to support your answers with material from the podcast and the course.

# Notes and Submission Guidelines:

Questions? [intructor@institution.edu](mailto:intructor@institution.edu)

Soc XXX Semester XX – Prompt 2

# Category:

In-Class or Out of Class Activities and Project Assignments

# Objective:

Criminal justice system, social institutions, policing, criminals.

# Review:

[Radiolab – Why are bad guys bad?](https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/segments/180166-why-be-bad) (<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/segments/180166-why-be-bad>)

[Radiolab – Who’s Bad?](https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/segments/180103-whos-bad)

(<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/segments/180103-whos-bad>)

\*transcript available - <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/episodes/180092-the-bad-show>

# Prompt:

As noted in the text, Americans consistently report fears about being victimized by crime, particularly violent crime. The same people less frequently ask about their thoughts (fears or otherwise) of committing a crime, particularly a violent crime? What is suggested by the podcasts about a person’s propensity to commit violent acts against others. What relevant sociological ideas about crime were alluded and to in the podcasts, and how were they applied to explain why people potentially commit crimes?

Be sure to draw on course materials to support your answers.

# Notes and Submission Guidelines:

Questions? [intructor@institution.edu](mailto:intructor@institution.edu)

Soc XXX Semester XX – Prompt 3

# Category:

In-Class or Out of Class Activities and Project Assignments.

# Objective:

Criminal justice system, social institutions, courts, juries.

# Review:

[Null and Void](https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/null-and-void)

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/null-and-void>

# Prompt:

What are the courts, and what role(s) do they play in the criminal justice system? In the US court system juries play an important role. How does the role of jury nullification impact the criminal justice system? What impacts might this have for the other institutions in the criminal justice system, like the police or corrections.

# Notes and Submission Guidelines:

Questions? [intructor@institution.edu](mailto:intructor@institution.edu)

Soc XXX Semester XX – Prompt 4

# Category:

In-Class or Out of Class Activities and Project Assignments.

# Objective:

Criminal justice system, social institutions, courts, juries.

# Review:

[PBS Frontline – Second Chance Kids](https://www.pbs.org/video/second-chance-kids-ftook9/)

# Prompt:

What makes juvenile crime distinct from other forms of criminal activity? What types of arguments are made in this video concerning juvenile offenders committing acts of murder? In these instances, is it best to treat juvenile offenders differently from adults, why or why not?

# Notes and Submission Guidelines:

Questions? [intructor@institution.edu](mailto:intructor@institution.edu)

Soc XXX Semester XX – Prompt 5

# Category:

Media and data literacy

# Objective:

Use digital research tools to explore uses of various terms connected with the sociological study of different types of crime.

# Review:

Use the following as a reference guide if unfamiliar with using [Google Trends](https://support.google.com/trends) (<https://support.google.com/trends>).

Course Materials

# Prompt:

[Access Google Trends](file:///C:\Users\venugops\OneDrive%20-%20Oxford%20University%20Press\Desktop\Maeve\trends.google.com) ([trends.google.com](file:///C:\Users\venugops\OneDrive%20-%20Oxford%20University%20Press\Desktop\Maeve\trends.google.com)). Run a search query for the words “crime”, “violent crime”, “property crime”, and your own crime type related term (e.g. cybercrime). Run the query under four conditions:

1. Time frame: *Past 12 Months*, Search: *Web Search*
2. Time frame: *Past 12 Months*; Search: *News Search*
3. Time frame: *Past 5 Years*, Search: *Web Search*
4. Time frame: *Past 5 Years*; Search: *News Search*

Complete the following word table to organize your search results. For each cell in the table write three sentences that describes what you found in your search:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Past 12 Months Web | Past 12 Months, News | Past 5 Years, Web | Past 5 Years, News |
| Crime |  |  |  |  |
| Violent Crime |  |  |  |  |
| Property Crime |  |  |  |  |
| (your own crime related term) |  |  |  |  |

What did you find when running these separate reports? How does the usage of the terms compare when searching under the different query conditions? Does there seem to be any discernable patterns that you notice from the results of the queries? Draw on course concepts to describe how the terms are related, and why the patterns observed might be present.

# Notes and Submission Guidelines:

Questions? [intructor@institution.edu](mailto:intructor@institution.edu)